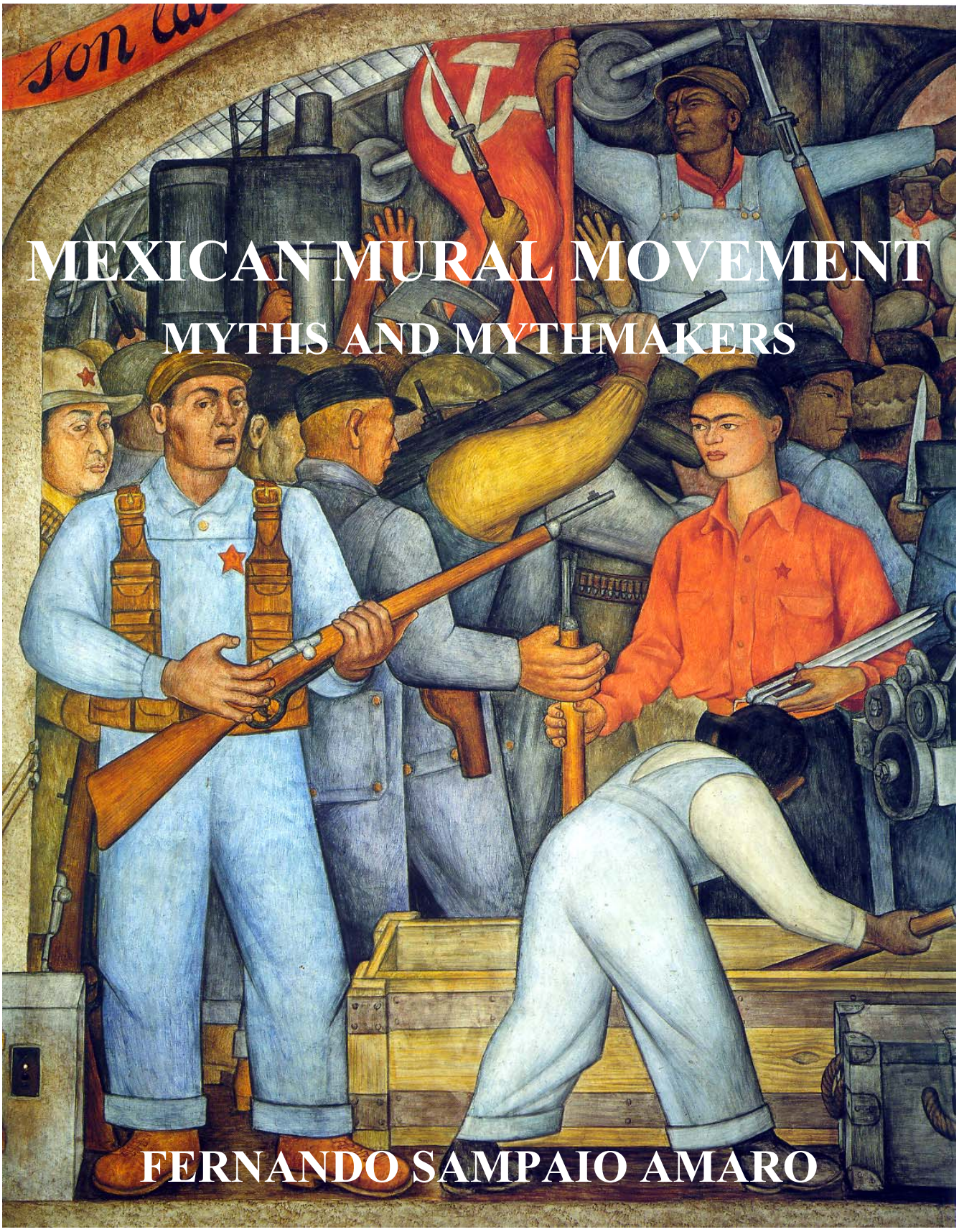


MEXICAN MURAL MOVEMENT

MYTHS AND MYTHMAKERS

FERNANDO SAMPAIO AMARO

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FOREWORD

The present study of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, the myths it expressed and the myths it produced dates back to the time in the '80s when I worked at the *Skissernas Museum – Arkiv för dekorativ konst* in Lund, [1] after the conclusion of my Bachelor of Arts in Art History at the University of Lund. Gunnar Bråhammar, who was in charge of the museum at the time, was aware of my knowledge of Spanish and asked me to update the documentation about the sketches of Mexican Monumental Art exhibited at the museum. The sketches had already been in the museum's possession since the '60s and '70s when Gunnar Bråhammar had acquired them during visits to Mexico, but the documentation about them was inadequate. The basic idea was to translate some data that Mr. Bråhammar had collected during his trips to Mexico from Spanish into Swedish, and at the same time to complete the information in order to help visitors to better understand the Mexican material exhibited.

At that time, my knowledge of Mexican Mural Art was that of a normal History of Art student, that is to say, relatively limited. I was under the impression that the *Mexican Mural Movement* was a result and, at the same time, a kind of mirror of the *Mexican Revolution* of 1910, that it was essentially a social-realist art, epic and didactic, that had had the historical and revolutionary past as background. There were familiar names, persons, legends and myths associated with the history of Mexico and the Conquest: the foundation of Tenochtitlán, Quetzalcóatl, Cortés, Zapata, etc. There were the "Big Three": Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. There were some well known aspects to Rivera; he was a communist, who had painted the portrait of Lenin at the *Rockefeller Center* in New York, the portrait of Karl Marx in the National Palace in Mexico City, the words "God doesn't exist" in the mural at the *Hotel del Prado*, etc. There was also his wife, the painter Frida Kahlo. As to the others, there were some scandals and some more or less anecdotal details, such as Siqueiros's attempt to murder Trotsky. The name of the Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, the initial *Maecenas* of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, was cited as a small parenthesis, with no special significance, and this intrigued me.

In most of the writings about the *Mexican Mural Movement* or about the artists of the movement, I did not find the answers I was looking for, since I was fundamentally motivated by the necessity to study and understand, besides the myths themselves, the process that had led to the inclusion of these myths in the murals. Initially, my intention was to do a survey of the mythological references in the murals, and I did not intend to include the myths that I later came to see proliferating around the movement and its main participants and feeding off the initial myths. The initial aims of my research were to understand Mexican mythology as it appeared in the murals, to understand who started Mexican muralism and, of course, the purposes of that program. Was there an understandable pattern?

I began to study this subject more systematically in the middle of the 1980s and wrote a study, *Cueva del Río and Camarena: an investigation into the problems of information and documentation* [2] with regard to the sketches of two Mexican mural painters based on my first researches and relying essentially on the material in the museum and in local libraries; my sources were books, information written on the back of the sketches, correspondence, notes, etc. As the title of the study shows, my focus was on problems of documentation and information. I then began to establish contacts with institutions in Mexico and garnered important information from them, which helped me to solve some of the problems I had encountered. **Figure 1** shows Camarena's painting, "La Tierra" (Coatlicue?), from 1964, in the *Hotel Casino de la Selva*, Cuernavaca, State of Morelos, a sketch I used in my researche and that is in the Museum of Lund, Sweden. [3]

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[1] Museum of Sketches − Archive for Decorative Art, Lund, Sweden.

[2] Amaro, Fernando, *Cueva del Río och Camarena: En undersökning av två mexikanska muralmålares skisser − Ett dokumentations- och informationsproblem*, Institutionen för Konstvetenskap, Lunds Universitet, Lund 1985.

[3] Reproduced with the name "Jorden" and dated 1964, in Bråhammar, Gunnar, "Ateljébesök i Mexiko", Bosson, Viveka, Hultén, C. O., Bråhammar, Gunnar, *Visionärer och utmanare: Resor och möten med konstnärer*, Skissernas Museum – Arkiv för dekorativ konst Lund 1995, p. 158.

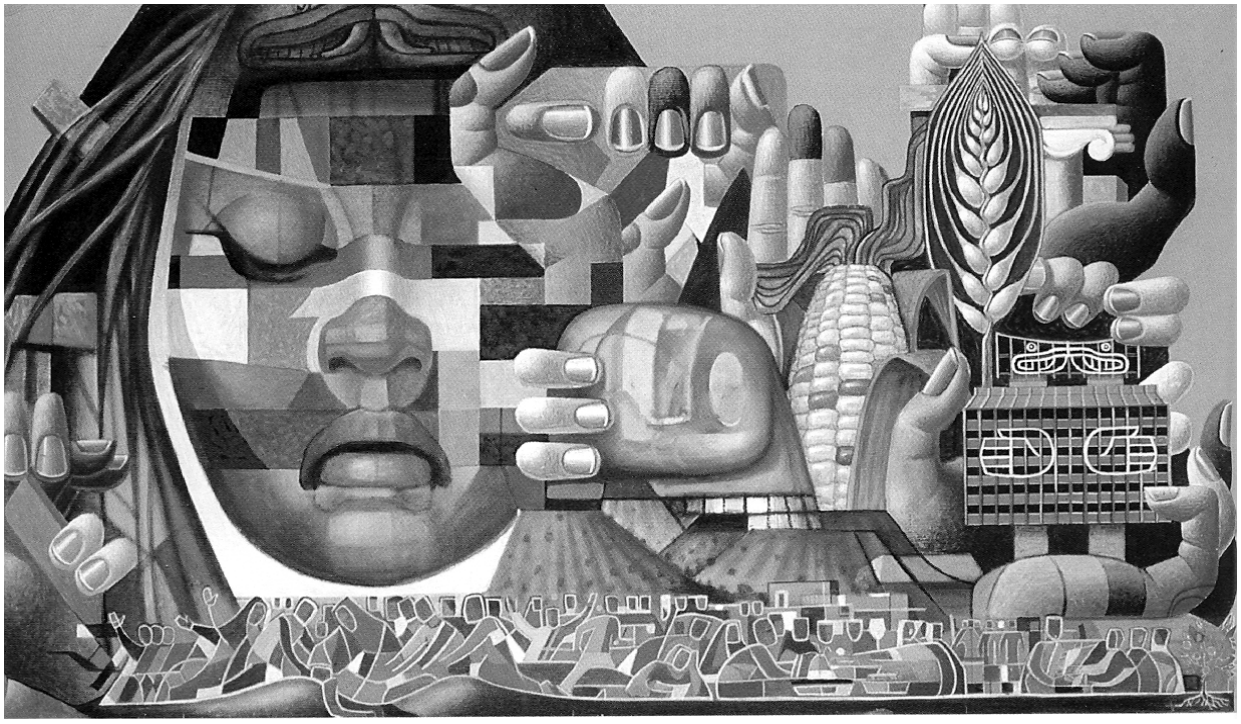


Figure 1. Jorge González Camarena: *La Tierra*, 1964. Sketch for a mural painting in *Hotel Casino de la Selva*, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico.

Some problems were solved but other, increasingly complicated problems arose. I came to see that I was involved in a web, in a tangle of subjects that I had difficulty in unraveling. There were figures and details in the sketches that were difficult to identify and understand, complicated and distant names from long ago in historical time, a mixture of historical and mythological pasts, times gone by, the present day, projections into the future, idealizations, utopias, different references difficult to locate and to understand, polyphonic discourses, disconcerting myths.

What initially seemed to be a fairly simple task, that of identifying the originators, i.e. the persons responsible for the whole program of myths in the *Mexican Mural Movement*, became fascinatingly complicated. The more I studied the material available, the more I was confronted with uncertainties and doubts. The resources and standard works on the subject soon proved insufficient. My visits to Mexico clarified some doubts; however new doubts were appearing all the time. The need to consult experts and original source documents became indispensable. I contacted Mexican authorities on the subject: art historians, artists, writers, critics, etc. I spent days, weeks, and months in libraries, documental research centers, studying the sources; I looked at the murals, of course, and I tried to read every publication I could find on the subject. My problem was that I was not satisfied with the answers I found. Of course I was dealing with myths, and myths are not supposed to be rationally explained. My impression was that this was a mine field. I was warned that the question was very intricate.

Slowly but surely the risk became evident. I was definitely trying to write a whole theory about Mexican Mural Painting, the totality of its history, and its general mythology. I had to stop somewhere in order to reach some meaningful conclusions. The present thesis only accounts for a part of my studies. The rest of the material will, I hope, be published later in book form. Here I simply aim to make some of the most important myths in Mexican Mural Painting more visible and understandable. At the same time, I try to analyze and comprehend the context in which the movement began and to find explanations for the generalizations and myths associated with Mexican Muralism. The two main characters of my study are the minister José Vasconcelos and the painter Diego Rivera, because I believe these two personalities are indispensable for an understanding of the myths surrounding the *Mexican Mural Movement*. While the painter is well known, the personality and work of José Vasconcelos has not received the recognition they deserve.

During my research on Mexican Mural Painting, I have received help and support from individuals, foundations and grant-giving bodies. I want to thank all of them very warmly. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Sven Sandström, the former Director of the Institute of Art History, Lund University, for his initial support and valuable comments. I would also like to express my thanks to Professor Jan-Gunnar Sjölin, the mentor of this thesis and the current Director of the Institute of Art History, for his precious support and enormous patience with my work. I am also grateful to the members of the doctoral seminar in Lund, supervised by Professor Sjölin. Several of their suggestions helped to improve my work.

I would also like to thank the directors and personnel of the *Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas*, the *Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas de la UNAM*, the *Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas de la UNAM*, the *Hemeroteca Nacional*, the *Museo Estudio Diego Rivera*, the *Museo Mural Diego Rivera*, the *Museo Nacional de Arte*, the *Museo Nacional de Antropología*, the *Academia de San Carlos*, the *Centro Nacional de las Artes*, the *Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes*, the *Dirección General de Publicaciones*, the *Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras de la UNAM*, *El Seminario de Códices Mexicanos*, *El Colegio de México*, for the invaluable literature and sources made available to me and for their assistance with the practical aspects of this study.

I also wish to thank Marianne Åkerberg Avila, Raúl Avila, Teresa del Conde, Cristina Hijar, Fausto Ramírez, Jorge Islas, Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin, Antonio Rodríguez, Gilberto Bosques and many others for their support in various ways.

I would also like to express here my appreciation and deep gratitude to Martin Christopherson, who corrected and revised my mediocre English, transforming it so that it could be readable and comprehensible. [4]

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank my family, and in particular my wife Malin and my son Oscar, who with huge patience and love have encouraged me throughout the progress of this work.

[4] All translations from non-English language sources by Fernando Amaro, unless otherwise indicated.

CHAPTER I

1) Introduction

In this study I analyze the origins of the different kinds of myths connected with Mexican Mural Painting and try to identify the structural logic and instrumental aspects of the myths. Previous studies of the mythology of Mexican Mural Painting have left many problems unresolved, and the source material collected is still inadequate. When I saw the intricate web of mythologies connected to the *Mexican Mural Movement*, I became interested to learn what factors, facts, and people determined the representation, the effective presence or absence of particular myths and historical references in the murals. Why did certain historical persons, in certain periods, attain mythical status? Did the mythological references appear spontaneously and at random? Or was there an individual responsible for the mythological program in the mural painting? Was an individual, a collective or an institution at work? Who were, in fact, the agents and participants? Were certain historical or mythical characters portrayed with increasing frequency and re-evaluated in terms of the specific needs of the time, its internal or external tensions? Did investigations and archeological excavations which yielded more information about a period or about specific individuals lead to an increase in their representation in mural paintings? I have thus tried to relate the theoretical conflicts concerning the nature of the *Mexican Mural Movement* to the underlying socio-economic, political, and ideological struggles.

The first purpose of this work is to observe the mythological narrative of the *Mexican Mural Movement*. However, it will soon become apparent to the reader that not only did Mexican Muralism use pre-existing myths, developing and redefining their meanings, but it also itself became the subject of much myth-making.

Whilst studying the sketches of Mexican mural art in the Museum of Sketches of Public Art of Lund, Sweden, I examined the occurrence and the frequency of different types of myths in these murals: pre-Hispanic myths, myths connected with the arrival of the Spaniards and the Conquest, and the more recent myths derived from modern times. Understanding the role played by myths in Mexican Muralism is not easy. On the same wall one can find the migration from Aztlán, the foundation of Tenochtitlán, the arrival of the Spaniards, Montezuma, Cuauhtémoc, Cortés, Malinche, Hidalgo, Zapata, etc. It is evident that in certain periods the torture of Cuauhtémoc appeared more often in the murals. What is the significance of the increased appearance of this theme? One can also see how an individual artist re-evaluated historical moments or persons and represented them differently on different occasions. In this study of Mexican mural painting and its myths, I intend to examine various aspects of the myths, to investigate if there is system to the mythological references that appear painted on the walls. I will concentrate as much on pre-Cortesian myths as on the modern myths. Initially the analysis of the myths is simply binary: is a particular myth featured in the murals or not? Present or absent? This leads to further questions: When, how, and for what reason, do specific myths appear? What aims and interests do they serve? Is there a system, a program? How does the systematic appropriation of pre-Cortesian myths articulate specific political, ideological, ethnic and racial aims?

The appearance and the use of Mexican myths in history, politics and the arts is a European phenomenon. The invaders destroyed many original indigenous documents and artifacts. Thus, important source books were not written by Mexicans but collated by European missionaries and others (*vide* Bernardino de Sahagún). What Mexicans call "Mexican" is thus an indirect and filtered vision, a meta-vision, a citation or paraphrase of the indigenous past. It is colored by the patently ethnocentric European mentality of the 19th century, with its romantic search for national roots, for particularities, for weird and wonderful things, for the picturesque and the eccentric. The *construction* of Mexican mythology began with Bernardino de Sahagún. It is a continuous process. It had its material expression in the murals studied, continued with Octavio Paz, extends to the present day and is projected into the future. I see Vasconcelos and Rivera as the main actors in the mythology of muralism, and they are therefore the main objects of my study.

It was whilst examining the myths featured in the murals that I came to realize how much the muralism movement itself constituted a myth. It proved difficult to find and to confirm reliable data. Despite extensive

consultation of documents and original sources, interviewing experts and artists in the field, crosschecking information, etc., the web became more and more tangled – until I realized that the web itself required study. I sought to identify a pattern in this amalgam, in this confusion, in these contradictions. The antecedents, the origins, the beginning of the movement –everything proved extraordinarily difficult to pin down. In this context several different types of myths operated: what we might call the "classical" pre-Columbian myths (as Quetzalcóatl); myths connected to the periods of the Conquest and the Spanish domination; myths originating in the *Mexican Revolution* (with such characters as Zapata, etc.); Rivera's revolutionary attitudes, his Marxist ideology, the new aesthetics of the movement, etc.

Mexican Muralism has already been analyzed and explained from various points of view by a number of active participants, critics and art historians. One frequently finds a standardized image: often condescending, sometimes passionate, almost always heroic, and replete with fantasies and mystifications. The myths about muralism are articulated at diverse levels. Many commentators equate Muralism directly with the *Mexican Revolution*. Ideas on Mexican muralism remain virtually unchanged, particularly in the United States, as Linda Down points out:

> *Over the past forty years, critical opinion in the United States has remained virtually unchanged: Rivera's work and the Mexican Mural Movement as a whole have been characterized as politically motivated, stylistically retrograde, and historically isolated. Furthermore, Mexican scholars have traditionally emphasized the overt Revolutionary ideals and didactic content of Rivera's murals in Mexico, thus extolling the very aspects of his work that have carried a negative connotation in the United States. In Mexico Rivera's work is synonymous with the institutionalized ideals of the Mexican Revolution, which promoted indigenous culture to the exclusion of foreign influence.* [5]

In this view, Rivera is identified with the *Mexican Revolution*, which is "equal" to *zapatism* or communism, which in turn is impregnated with *indigenismo*, etc. [6] A variation on this theme defines Mexican Muralism as a "direct product of the revolutionary movement", a representation of a unified process which began in the *Mexican Revolution* of 1910 and instigated new aesthetic and social approaches.

For the art historian Esther Acevedo "The idea of muralism as a movement created starting from the Revolution without fissures was a later *ideologización* (sic)":

> *El concepto de muralismo como un movimiento creado a partir de la Revolución sin fisuras fue una ideologización posterior, sin aceptar que en este periodo la denominación era otra. Por el modo de agrupar a los otros se infiere que la decoración en los edificios es para ellos la ruta a seguir. Como críticos empiezan a sentar las bases teóricas de lo que sería el documento del Sindicato de Obreros, Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores (SOTPE) que fue publicado a fines del 23.* [7]

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[5] Downs, Linda, *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, Introduction, p. 18.

[6] The term *Indigenismo*, which can be described as a movement that sought to rediscover pre-Columbian native culture and native themes, grew up in Mexico after the 1910 *Revolution*, thanks mainly to the efforts of the Mexican archaeologist and anthropologist Manuel Gamio. *Indigenismo* become a leading ideological instrument not only in Mexico but also all over Latin America during the twentieth century, as a rupture with history and as a move towards respect for and appreciation of the value of indigenous culture and society, particularly the pre-Columbian.

[7] Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 197.

According to the Mexican investigator and critic Jorge Alberto Manrique: "It would be very limited to explain things by that factor alone."

> *Desde su aparición hasta nuestros días ha sido lugar común entender la pintura de la Escuela Mexicana como producto directo del movimiento revolucionario; pero si bien la coyuntura del régimen de Obregón y el general entusiasmo del país son factores nada despreciables, sería muy limitado explicar las cosas por sólo esa circunstancia.* [8]

For the Mexican anthropologist Roger Bartra: "the Revolution was an explosion of myths, the most important of which is in fact the Revolution itself."

> *[...] la Revolución fue un estallido de mitos, el más importante de los cuales es precisamente el de la propia Revolución. Los mitos revolucionarios no fueron, como en otras naciones, levantados sobre biografías de héroes y tiranos, sino más bien sobre la idea de una fusión entre la masa y el Estado, entre el pueblo Mexicano y el gobierno revolucionarlo. El mito de la Revolución es un inmenso espacio unificado, repleto de símbolos que entrechocan y que aparentemente se contradicen: pero a fin de cuentas son identificados por la uniformidad de la cultura nacional. En el espacio de la unidad nacional ha quedado prisionero y maniatado el ser del Mexicano, como un manojo de rasgos psico-culturales que sólo tienen sentido en el interior del sistema de dominación. La cultura nacional se Identifica con el poder político, de tal manera que quien quiere romper las reglas del autoritarismo será inmediatamente acusado de querer renunciar − o peor: traicionar − a la cultura nacional.* [9]

The murals produced in Mexico from the 1920s onwards are usually associated with the *Mexican Revolution* and the social changes brought about in the previous decade. As regards the continuity postulated between the so-called *Revolution* and the murals, this idea must overcome a difficult hurdle: the fact that the first murals were painted a long time after the *Revolution* had run its course. Muralist art did not begin with the *Mexican Revolution*; it began to ferment in the post-revolutionary period, and it declined when the positions that had produced it were abandoned.

As the art historian Nicola J. E. Coleby said: "To analyze the genesis of the post-revolutionary mural painting in relation to the aesthetics of the *Athenaeum* implies a challenge to the traditional historiography of muralism."

[8] Manrique, Jorge Alberto, "El proceso de las artes, 1910-1970", *Historia General de México*, Vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1365.
[9] Bartra, Roger, *Melancolía y metamorfosis del Mexicano*. Retrieved 2003-06-21 from http://www.hemerodigital.unam.mx/ANUIES/itam/estudio/estudio09/sec_4.html

> *Analizar el génesis de la pintura mural posrevolucionaria en relación a la estética ateneísta implica un desafío a la historiografía tradicional del muralismo. En lugar de una manifestación artística que se consolidó a raíz de los movimientos sociales de la Revolución, surge la imagen de una pintura que se generó principalmente en base a ideas estéticas e intelectuales que antecedieran a la lucha armada; inclusive, el trasfondo intelectual de la inicial estética muralista fue formulado principalmente por un grupo de intelectuales, los ateneístas, quienes en muchos sentidos habían rechazado participar en los levantamientos sociales, condenando su naturaleza "bárbara", y adhiriéndose a los valores atentadores de la cultura clásica − y occidental − frente a la circundante confusión.* [10]

In its heyday, the mission of Mexican Muralism was to give significant form to a movement which sought knowledge about and recognition of Mexico; muralism had an epic-didactical mission. Clearly this view is inadequate, and serious scholars have long regarded it skeptically. It has already been pointed out that the program of the *Mexican Mural Movement* does not in fact have much to do with the *Mexican Revolution*. Mexican Muralism has become a captive or hostage to its own myth, as Desmond Rochfort, the art historian, points out:

> *In standing outside and against the main thrust of modernist practice, Mexican mural painting has often become hostage to critical fortune. Arguments have prevailed for and against its self-proclaimed premise as a Revolutionary art of substantive social function, of creative and aesthetic originality.* [11]

However, this myth *about* Muralism, the identification between the *Mexican Revolution* and Mexican Muralism is resistant to every explanation and attempt at demystification, as are other expressions of the mythology linked to it. Of course this characteristic, this capacity to resist rational analysis, creates an enormous difficulty for those attempting a deconstruction of the historical process and its participants.

Another idea, frequently expressed, is that of the ideological continuity between the pre-Hispanic past and the *Mexican Revolution*. The historian Medardo Castro Gutiérrez points out the absurdity of drawing: "a line of continuity between the pre-Hispanic period and the revolutionary period, jumping gracefully over three centuries of 'obscurantism'; Cortés and Porfirio Díaz shook hands in the luminous colors of Diego Rivera murals."

> *La historiografía pragmática y pedagógica emanada de la Revolución Mexicana heredó una confrontación que mucho tenía de absurda. Se tendió entonces una línea de continuidad entre lo prehispánico y lo revolucionario, saltando graciosamente por encima de tres siglos de "oscurantismo"; Cortés y Porfirio Díaz se dieron la mano en los luminosos colores de los murales de Diego Rivera.* [12]

Another claim made about the movement was that Mexican Muralism represented a new approach to the painting of history and that it became a manifestation and representation of Mexico's history and cultural past, which the Mexicans should identify themselves with. There is frequent reference to its didactic function. Nothing could be more useful to a people of illiterates than to narrate their history on the walls and thus give them a new identity by means of the forms and colors of the murals.

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[10] See for this period the work that Nicola Coleby presented in the Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras of the UNAM to obtain the master grade in History of the Art, Coleby, Nicola J.E., *La construcción de una estética: el Ateneo de la Juventud, Vasconcelos, y la primera etapa de la pintura mural posrevolucionária, 1921-1924*, UNAM, Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras, Mexico 1985.

[11] Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 6.

[12] Castro Gutiérrez, Medardo, *Hernán Cortés: Cartas de Relación*, Editores Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1990, prólogo, p. 15.

The painted walls re-evaluated the pre-Columbian world, and at the same time they created a myth about a world which has often been associated with a *Golden Age* in a distant time before the arrival of the Spaniards. One major task in my work is to study the attitudes of different Mexican artists to the pre-Cortesian past and towards the Indians both individually and as a people.

The Movement is regularly presented as a collective, or it is reduced to the figures of the "Big Three", Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco. Such analyses postulate a single, unifying, national program, representative of the will of the nation as a whole. The formula often used is that the mural program represents the *Mexican Revolution* itself, and that it offered an innovating and *revolutionary* aesthetic program – which is often reduced to a *Riverian* "Social Realism". Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco, even though very different from each other, as we will see, are described as representatives of the specific Mexican perspective in art. Very often we see Rivera described as a classicist, Siqueiros as a Stalinist activist and Orozco as an expressionist, who was rather apolitical. While Rivera was optimistic, Orozco was a pessimist.

Rivera was an *indigenist* who idealized the Indian Mexican civilization and glorified pre-Hispanic culture. In the words of the Mexican art historian Justino Fernández: "Orozco is an artist vividly interested in the drama of the human existence; Rivera is an artist interested in the political-social level; Siqueiros is a politician, interested in art as a means of reaching his objectives."

> *Orozco es un artista interesado vivamente en el drama de la existencia humana; Rivera es un artista interesado en lo político-social; Siqueiros es un político, interesado en el arte como un medio de alcanzar sus objetivos.* [13]

The Mexican State did not identify itself with the apparently progressive program of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, as will later become evident. Or, as Mexico's pre-eminent writer and political philosopher, who won the Nobel Prize in 1990, Octavio Paz, puts it: "- This is the strangest and most astonishing feature of muralism as a historical, political and moral phenomenon. Neither the nation nor the Mexican state was communist; however, the state adopted an art form which expressed different and even contrary ideas to its own."

> *- Este es el rasgo más extraño y turbador del muralismo como fenómeno histórico, político y moral. Ni la nación era comunista ni el Estado Mexicano lo era; sin embargo, el Estado adoptó como suyo un arte que expresaba ideas distintas y aun contrarias a las suyas.* [14]

There are many other myths connected with the movement and the murals. Many can be traced back to Diego Rivera. Other myths can be associated with other artists, art historians, and critics, both inside and outside Mexico. The history and mythology of Mexico's past inspired many myths and not only painters but also politicians and others used and abused the myths to further their own ends. This particular time in art history is, perhaps more than all other periods, replete with anecdotes, controversies, scandals and myths.

Various myths exist about Siqueiros. One myth, reported by Gunnar Bråhammar, runs as follows:

> *Dairy extract 2/10: "I had some difficulty in associating the image that I had made of Siqueiros with this milieu [Cuernavaca] which had begun to become a suburb for the capital's retired rich. Siqueiros, the most violent of the Big Three, of whom it was said that*

[13] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 505.
[14] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 55.

> *in his youth he lay down on the ground and shot the outlines of his monumental figures in the plaster ceiling with a pistol [...]* [15]

This is obviously hard to believe. Another myth about Siqueiros has him threatening to shoot a policeman with a pistol which President Cárdenas had given him in a ceremony honoring Mexican participants in the Spanish Civil War, here in the words of Laurence Hurlburt:

> *A minor incident here illustrates the contradictory aspects of the entire matter: upon his return to Mexico, President Cárdenas publicly presented Siqueiros with a pistol in a ceremony honoring Mexican participants of the Spanish Civil War. With his customary flair for the sensational, Siqueiros, shortly thereafter, when his government-ordered arrest for the stoning of newspaper plants took place, threatened to shoot the police with the honorary presidential gift! In view of Siqueiros' fame and position (and the fact that by this time Trotsky had been killed and his murderer was in prison), a decision to imprison him would have been highly unpopular; the end result, at any rate, was Siqueiros' exile to Chile, arranged primarily by Pablo Neruda, then Chilean consul to Mexico.* [16]

Yet these are not innocent fibs. They form part of a mythical pattern, revealing a complex web of unconfirmed statements, of meta-discourses, which prove typical of the movement and of its main actors.

The basic questions concerning genesis and function of these myths are unanswerable without narrowing the field of research. The huge number of murals produced and the large number of artists who participated would have made it impossible to analyze all the mythical structures and all the mural paintings, their patrons, all the projects throughout the whole period of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, which began around 1921 and, arguably, still continues. I chose to concentrate on the main myths and the most representative artists.

Geographically, my analysis of mural production was restricted to murals in Mexico City, Cuernavaca and Chapingo. Chronologically, I included murals painted between 1921, the year of the first mural commissioned by Vasconcelos, and 1974, the year of the death of the last of the "Big Three," David Alfaro Siqueiros. For various reasons the present thesis concentrates on murals produced between 1921 and 1930, the year when Vasconcelos was forced to leave the country after losing the presidential elections and when Diego Rivera began painting murals in the United States of America. The remaining material will form the subject of a subsequent publication.

I believe that the murals painted during the 1920s are the most interesting and deserve particular attention. Subsequently, Mexican mural painting entered into decadence and decline. To a large extent, this decline was due to Rivera's activities and the determination of the Mexican State to appropriate this form of communication in order to manipulate it and use it for its own interests. According to Octavio Paz: "toward 1930 it reached its noon; then, like every movement, it began to decline."

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[15] Ur dagbok 2/10: "Jag hade lite svårt att förbinda bilden jag gjort mig av Siqueiros med denna miljö [Cuernavaca] som börjat bli en reträttplats för rika människor från huvudstaden. Siqueiros, den våldsammaste av de tre stora, han som i sin ungdom påstods ligga på rygg på golvet och med pistol skjuta konturerna till sina monumentalfigurer i gipstaket". In Bråhammar, Gunnar, "Ateljébesök i Mexiko", Bosson, Viveka, Hultén, C. O., Bråhammar, Gunnar, *Visionärer och utmanare: Resor och möten med konstnärer*, Skissernas Museum – Arkiv för dekorativ konst Lund 1995, p. 149.

[16] Hurlburt, Laurence, "David Alfaro Siqueiros' Portrait of the Bourgeoisie", *Artforum*, February 1977, 15:6, pp. 43-44. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and the creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, pp. 28-29.

> *En su mejor momento la pintura Mexicana fue una vertiente original del arte de la primera mitad del siglo. Hacia 1930 alcanzó su mediodía; después, como todos los movimientos, comenzó a declinar.* [17]

Naturally the demands of my argument have led to some subjects which fall outside of the specified time period being examined, and occasionally themes have been followed right up to the present. Similarly, a brief analysis of the movement's forerunners was unavoidable.

The main figures I study are José Vasconcelos, the minister who initiated the program, and the painter Diego Rivera, the movement's most representative character. Both Vasconcelos and Rivera were, of course, essential figures in Mexican Muralism, and they occupy the major part of this study. These two characters and the force of their discourses dominated the *Mexican Mural Movement*. Today, the status of these two characters is completely different; while Rivera enjoys an enormous popularity, Vasconcelos is an anonymous figure, submerged in a perfect ostracism. The other two artists of the "Big Three," José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, are also studied, mainly in relation to Rivera and in terms of their opposing aesthetic and ideological attitudes. Sometimes they take up positions completely opposite to those of Rivera, especially as regards the pre-Hispanic past and its main characters. Moreover, each protagonist adopted different positions on the same issues at different points in the political and ideological struggle. This was especially true of Siqueiros, which led to heated discussions between him and Rivera. Other figures I discuss include Dr. Atl, Roberto Montenegro, Jean Charlot and certain other artists who participated in the initial period of mural painting.

Clearly it would have facilitated my work, if certain questions, that I considered essential for the understanding of the Mexican Muralism in general, had been left unanswered. But specific questions relating to the main myths had to be answered, although I realized the risks inherent in such an extensive review and had been warned that there were many traps and pitfalls ahead. Roger Bartra reinforces this idea: "the national metadiscourse tends to impede or make more difficult Mexicans' relationship with their past and with the history of the world: history is reduced to hieroglyphics."

> *[...] el metadiscurso nacionalista suele impedir o dificultar la relación de los Mexicanos con su pasado y con la historia del mundo: la historia es reducida a jeroglíficos, a símbolos estáticos destinados a glorificar el poder nacional y adormecer la razón; cuando se despierta de ese sueño resulta difícil reconocer el pasado propio e, incluso, la presencia del mundo. Hemos soñado en mil héroes míticos, pero de la nación sólo quedan sus ruinas.* [18]

I leave it to the reader to judge whether I have been able to avoid these pitfalls.

Source materials used include the murals themselves, the *Codices*, books, magazines, newspapers, articles, testimonials, interviews, mails, chatrooms, and websites with information related to the theme. Much of the source material comes from the writings of Vasconcelos and the "Big Three". There are three biographies on Rivera, which he dictated to three different people: Gladys March, the Cuban writer Loló de la Torriente and Luis Suárez. These are crucial sources concerning the production of mythological discourses, and I refer frequently to them. The writings of Rivera and Vasconcelos are more instructive than those of Orozco and Siqueiros. The latter left their own accounts about the movement and their own participation and visions. Siqueiros made numerous fabrications and tended to idealize – as does Rivera quite blatantly. Orozco's memoirs are more interesting in terms of factual content, but even his case presents complications, as we

[17] Paz, Octavio, "Pintura Mexicana Contemporánea", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 287.
[18] Bartra, Roger, *La Jaula de la Melancolía: Identidad y Metamorfosis del Mexicano*, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1987, p. 241.

shall see. The position of Orozco is revealing: "I don't remember what my opinion was, but the fact is that it was contrary to that of the other two, who also disagreed with one another."

> *No recuerdo cuál opinión era la mía, pero el caso es que era contraria a las otras dos, opuestas entre sí. Si no hubiera conflictos no habría películas, ni toros, ni periodismo, ni política, ni lucha libre, ni nada. La vida sería muy aburrida. En cuanto alguien diga SI, hay que contestar N0. Debe hacerse todo a contrapelo y contra la corriente y si algún insensato propone alguna solución que allane las dificultades, precisa aplastarlo, cueste lo que cueste, porque la civilización misma correría peligro.* [19]

Serious historical studies of Mexican Muralism were all written long after the facts they describe and, furthermore, the authors are mainly outsiders: Charlot in 1963, Wolfe in 1963, Rodríguez in 1969, and Suárez in 1969. Nevertheless much useful information has been gleaned from them and from the works of Raquel Tibol, the art critic. [20]

In the course of this work I will frequently quote these authors (and others, especially the winner of the Nobel Prize in literature Octavio Paz) because these works are essential to an understanding of the ideas of this period of Mexican muralism. I want to make clear immediately that one of the main ideas of my work is to notice how the ideas and the myths about Mexican mural painting are formed through discourses parallel to the paintings themselves. Therefore, I quote repeatedly those who produced those discourses, whether they are the painters themselves, critics, historians, politicians, etc. It is from the totality of these testimonies and opinions that the generic idea that exists about the analysis of this period is formed.

It proved fruitful to analyze the speeches, gestures, attitudes, controversies, polemics, scandals, lies, mystifications, contradictions, incoherencies, incongruities, fights, friendships, enmities, alliances, intrigues, betrayals, blows, disagreements, misunderstandings, generalizations, simplifications, reductions, opportunism, paradoxes, falsehoods, distortions, demagoguery, abuses, manipulations, usurpations, appropriations, empty rhetoric, normative aspects, "standardization," orchestration of platitudes, and the clichés of *Mexican Muralism*.

My method is to try to deconstruct the history and the mythology of Mexico, referring to original sources, documents and other material evidence. This approach seems to me essential for a contextualized understanding of the production of murals (material production, that is to say the murals themselves, and the discourses that accompanied the material production) since history and mythology serve, invariably, as a backdrop to the mural production.

The discourses studied had to include discourses extraneous to *Mexican Muralism*. Specifically ideological and political speeches have been considered, both relating to the artists as individuals and as regards their political praxis, for example, the case of Siqueiros's attempt to murder Trotsky in 1940. [21]

My approach is at the same time synchronous and diachronic; it aims at analyzing the different discourses in different times inside muralism, as well as a whole. I examine the personal participation of the main figures in muralism: artists, politicians, government ministers, intellectuals, as well as their individual and collective myths.

Working with the sources, using the methods described and respecting the limitations imposed, I aim to help the reader acquire a broader and more objective picture of the complex phenomenon known as *Mexican Muralism*. My objective is to uncover the wealth of positions, similarities and differences which the protagonists and proponents of muralism adopted in the successive historical moments of the movement.

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[19] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 69.
[20] Raquel Tibol was born in Argentina in 1923 and was naturalized Mexican in 1961.
[21] On the night of May 23, 1940, David Alfaro Siqueiros participated in an unsuccessful attack on the home of Leon Trotsky, then living in exile in Mexico City.

The themes of many of the murals studied are taken from Mexican history and mythology. Obviously, I am obliged to limit myself to the more important historical and mythological characters, the figures which are portrayed most frequently in the murals painted during the period under consideration (1921-1930). Like parasites, various discourses live off the murals. These discourses are more or less located in cultural and political time and in the ideological space of the intervening time; they also reflect the presence of personal aspects, of controversies, and of meta-speeches.

The importance of myths in *Aztec* society was fundamental. [22] One of my goals is to provide a rational explanation of some of the myths which originated in the *Aztec* culture. According to Octavio Paz: "contemporary man has rationalized the Myths, but he has not been able to destroy them."

> *Para los Aztecas, el tiempo estaba ligado al espacio y cada día a uno de los puntos cardinales. Otro tanto puede decirse de cualquier calendario religioso. La Fiesta es algo más que una fecha o un aniversario. No celebra, sino reproduce un suceso: abre en dos al tiempo cronométrico para que, por espacio de unas breves horas inconmensurables, el presente eterno se reinstale. La fiesta vuelve creador al tiempo. [...] Sin duda la concepción del tiempo como presente fijo y actualidad pura, es más antigua que la del tiempo cronométrico, que no es una aprehensión inmediata del fluir de la realidad, sino una racionalización del transcurrir. La dicotomía anterior se expresa en la oposición entre Historia y Mito, o Historia y Poesía. El tiempo del Mito, como el de la fiesta religiosa, o el de los cuentos infantiles, no tiene fechas [...] El hombre contemporáneo ha racionalizado los Mitos, pero no ha podido destruirlos. Muchas de nuestras verdades científicas, como la mayor parte de nuestras concepciones morales, políticas y filosóficas, sólo son nuevas expresiones de tendencias que antes encarnaron en formas míticas. El lenguaje racional de nuestro tiempo encubre apenas a los antiguos Mitos. La Utopía, y especialmente las modernas utopías políticas, expresan con violencia concentrada, a pesar de los esquemas racionales que las enmascaran, esa tendencia que lleva a toda sociedad a imaginar una Edad de Oro de la que el grupo social fue arrancado y a la que volverán los hombres el Día de Días.* [23]

Much of the content expressed in the murals I study can be explained with reference to the world view of the artists and their position in Mexican society. Yet problems remain: difficulties in corroborating evidence, conjectures, and one unexpected question: "hasn't everything already been said on the subject?" [24]

A public art like Mexican Muralism has different requirements and works from different premises than other kinds of art because of the dialogue between the artist and the public. Information or a "message" has to be expressed in a language that is understood by "all". For this reason I used communication theories and semiological models. The dialogue with the public also incorporates myths, lies, and distortions, verbal and pictorial rhetoric.
Simplified models are accepted by the community for the sake of convenience. A complex reality is turned into a product which everyone can accept without too many problems.

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[22] The term *Aztec* is a confusing term. It is sometimes used to designate only the *Mexica*, who ruled in Tenochtitlán, while at other times the designation refers to all those who spoke *náhuatl*. The term *Nahua* is used to describe the cultural unity, with no specific consideration of political divisions. However, I will from now on use the term *Aztec* in italics.

[23] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 189-191.

[24] The present study was begun some years ago. Therefore many of the sources used are not very recent. However the most recent literature is scarce, repeating in essentials what has been written on the subject for some decades. Apart from Frida Kahlo, recently portrayed in an American film, the theme of the muralism does not seem to arouse great interest, maybe because there is not much more to say on the subject. However, during 2003 Eva Zetterman defended a doctor's thesis on Frida Kahlo (Zetterman, Eva, *Frida Kahlos bildspråk: Ansikte, kropp & landskap. Representation av nationell identitet*, Göteborg 2003). My study had at the time advanced in such a way that I couldn't take into consideration possible conclusions in my own study.

The people mainly responsible for the dialogue between the artist and the public were José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera. Accordingly, I emphasize the material written by them and the dialogues between them and use this material in an attempt to define their myths, comparing them and comparing their statements with the facts.

From my perspective, the myths to be analyzed in this study can be divided into the following categories: pre-Hispanic myths; myths connected with the arrival of the Spaniards, the Conquest and the subsequent Colonial domination; myths related to the Independency, and the more recent myths derived from modern times (connected to the *Revolution*, as Zapata, etc.).

Faced with this diversity, the deconstruction of the myths is of paramount importance. I try to approach the structures of the myths by asking the conventional questions of communication analysis: who says what, when, where, by which form, with which intentions, to what effect? Let us see what Barthes says:

> *D'abord on y voit à plein le caractère impressif du mythe: ce qu'on attend de lui, c'est un effet immédiat: peu importe si le mythe est ensuite démonté, son action est présumée plus forte que les explications rationnelles qui peuvent un peu plus tard le démentir. Ceci veut dire que la lecture du mythe s'épuise tout d'un coup.* [25]

In this work I regard Mexican mural painting as a result of processes in which a number of factors play a part: ideological, political, religious, economic, artistic, social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and national.

There exists a perception about Mexican muralism, more or less widespread, in which Mexico and Mexican muralism are populated entirely by heroes and villains, and this perception in turn increases the myths about it. This perception is largely based on popular culture, in the mass media and in particular in North American movies, as in the case of the recent film *Frida*. In his chapter "Myths and mass media" Mircea Eliade writes:

> *Recent studies have brought out the mythical structures of the images and behavior patterns imposed on collectivities by mass media. This phenomenon is found especially in the United States. The characters of the comic strips present the modern version of mythological or folklore Heroes.* [26]

Among the problems are the different names and titles for the murals. This applies both to the first murals at the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* (National High School) and to the later murals Palacio Nacional (*National Palace*), etc. The varying names given to the works may be a sign that the titles were opportunistically adapted to circumstances and necessities. A representative example of this problem is Rivera's first mural painting, *La Creación* (*The Creation*). He claimed, some years later, that he intended to paint "the whole history of philosophy" in this work. Yet the mural's program is actually only "the different races of the Mexico," an idea which came from Vasconcelos.

The artists often did not give titles to their murals – at least not the titles by which they are known today. The titles changed, and in these alterations or adulterations one can detect other connotations that followed with these changes. Often, it was the specialists and the art critics who determined the titles. Sometimes the titles literally reflect the topics, sometimes not. This confusion is particularly evident concerning the titles of the first murals.

There are many problems relating to authenticity. The revolutionary rhetoric, its myths, and the visual and verbal rhetoric of Rivera obstruct the reading of the history and mythology of muralism and its determinant forces. Rivera was a demagogue whose discourse, at the same time reductionist and complex, was difficult to

[25] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, pp. 216-217.
[26] Eliade, Mircea, *Myth and Reality*, Harper & Row, New York 1963, pp. 184-185.

penetrate and to dismantle. Sometimes one has the impression that it is simpler or rather "more appropriate" to accept this simplistic vision than to deconstruct the reality.

Mexican Muralism and art history generated many generalizations and common approaches. In recent years, there has been a movement towards a critical and historical revision of the *Mexican School of Painting*. One of the larger problems concerns the homogeneity of the movement known as the *Mexican School*, a project supposedly endowed with collective characteristics. That collective never existed in reality. There was a heterogeneous group of personalities who formed an alliance around a cultural project which even at the beginning was not precisely defined. Nevertheless, Jorge Alberto Manrique says that "a group notion existed, and it is legitimate to apply the term 'school' to the movement: all participated in a first moment of common enthusiasm and similar ideals":

> *Aparte del genio de sus mayores creadores, hay varios elementos que es importante tener en cuenta para entender su éxito. En primer lugar, que independientemente de las características personales de cada artista − diferentes y aun en más de un sentido contradictorias − existió una noción de grupo, de ahí lo legítimo del término "escuela" aplicado al movimiento: todos participaron en un primer momento de un entusiasmo común y de ideales similares. Esto dio la cohesión que haría posible más tarde llamar al fenómeno el "Renacimiento Mexicano".* [27]

The central concept of this work is that of the *myth*. Thus I owe it to the reader − before I engage in detailed analysis − to outline my thinking about what a myth is. My conception of a myth relies mainly on Roland Barthes. The semiotic framing of my theory concerning both the myths that Mexican mural painting expressed and the myths that it produced is essentially derived from "Mythologies", the work Barthes published in 1957. [28]

However, I must insist that this work on Mexican muralism and its myths does not attempt to open or deepen any discussion of the concepts and the theories in the field of semiotics. Methodologically, in order to help me explain how myths operate, I use a model close to Barthes' initial ideas about modern myths, as set out in "Mythologies":

Very frequently I use the concept "myth" to designate an idea that is generically accepted and repeated and perpetuated in time, but whose relationship to reality cannot always be established or proven. Accordingly, in many cases, myth and lie are practically equivalent. I try to understand when and how certain uncertainties or even falsehoods become "truths," and are accepted as such.

In order to understand the different functions attributed to myths I will now summarize the views of some authors who studied myth and employed different conceptions of it. These different conceptions can be useful in understanding the different kind of myths that inhabit the Mexican world.

Mircea Eliade, the Romanian-born philosopher and historian of religion, viewed myths not simply as fiction or legends but as powerful stories which relate the actions of gods and provide guidelines for life:

> *It would be hard to find a definition of myth that would be acceptable to all scholars and at the same time intelligible to nonspecialists. Then, too, is it even possible to find one definition that will cover all the types and functions of myths in all traditional and archaic societies? Myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various and complementary viewpoints. Speaking for myself, the definition that seems least inadequate because most embracing is this: Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the "beginnings." In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a*

[27] Manrique, Jorge Alberto, "El proceso de las artes, 1910-1970", *Historia General de México*, Vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1365.
[28] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957.

> *reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it relates how something was produced, began to be. Myth tells only of that which really happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the "beginnings." Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the "supernaturalness") of their works. In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really establishes the World and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of Supernatural Beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal, sexed, and cultural being.* [29]

Myth does not describe what is merely fantastic. It describes that which is most real: namely the spiritual forces that established the world and that continue to permeate it. For Eliade, myth and ritual represent the central language by means of which religious worlds are structured:

> *All the great Mediterranean and Asiatic religions have mythologies. But it is better not to begin the study of myth from the starting point of, say, Greek or Egyptian or Indian Mythology. Most of the Greek myths were recounted, and hence modified, adjusted, systematized, by Hesiod and Homer, by the rhapsodes and the mythographers. The mythological traditions of the Near East and of India have been sedulously reinterpreted and elaborated by their theologians and ritualists. [...] Just like the Great Mythologies that were finally transmitted as written texts, the "primitive" mythologies, discovered by the earliest travelers, missionaries, and ethnographers in the "oral" stage, have a "history." In other words, they have been transformed and enriched in the course of the ages under the influence of higher cultures or through the creative genius of exceptionally gifted individuals.* [30]

And Eliade continues:

> *For the past fifty years at least, Western scholars have approached the study of myth from a viewpoint markedly different from, let us say, that of the nineteenth century. Unlike their predecessors, who treated myth in the usual meaning of the word, that is, as "fable," "invention," "fiction," they have accepted it as it was understood in the archaic societies, where, on the contrary, "myth" means a "true story" and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant. This new semantic value given the term "myth" makes its use in contemporary parlance somewhat equivocal. Today, that is, the word is employed both in the sense of "fiction" or "illusion" and in that familiar especially to ethnologists, sociologists, and historians of religions, the sense of "sacred tradition, primordial revelation, exemplary model."* [31]

One of my objectives is to discuss the myths related to the Mexican state itself and its relations with Mexican muralism. In his book *The Myth of the State* the German philosopher and educator Ernst Cassirer emphasizes the importance of myth to a nation:

> *[...] myth lays the basis for nationhood. It is behind the feeling of nationality, and gives it its force* [32]

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[29] Eliade, Mircea, *Myth and Reality*, Harper & Row, New York 1963, pp. 5-6.
[30] Ibid, p. 4.
[31] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[32] Cassirer, Ernst, *The Myth of the State*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1946, p. 280.

According to Cassirer, the myth of the State appears in times of crisis, and replaces rational and logical thinking. Man creates myths with the intention of rationalizing and bringing order to the inexplicable chaos of the world. For Cassirer:

> *The new political myths do not grow up freely; they are not wild fruits of an exuberant imagination. They are artificial things fabricated by very skillful and cunning artisans. It has been reserved for the twentieth century, our own great technical age, to develop a new technique of myth.* [33]

For Cassirer myths help to create political ideologies, giving the state both a sense of the past and a direction for the future. Myths constitute one of the few ways to link the present with the remote past. When carefully analyzed, a myth helps us to reconstruct that part of human experience which history cannot encompass, that part which is fundamental to understanding the birth and foundation of civilization.

Whereas Freud above all saw the unconscious as entirely personal, Carl Jung identified a stratum of consciousness below this, which he called the collective unconscious. Jung believed that people in all cultures had a collective unconscious and he referred to the cultural myths as its archetypes, or pre-existent forms. Jung believed that myths were the images of this collective unconscious – that is, the unconscious of everyone. According to him, myths are a sort of a reserve of symbols shared by humanity as a whole. And so all cultures can explore their collective impulses, and express them creatively.

The novelist, poet, and critic Ramón Pérez de Ayala says: "The myth is not the equivalent of a lie, but rather it is a poetic interpretation of the unknown reality":

> *El mito no es equivalente de mentira, sino que es una interpretación poética de la realidad incógnita.* [34]

For Gillo Dorfles, "Besides, the myth is, by definition, the means of communication – conceptual, yes, but transrational – that offers a "truth of the imagination" that – with the same justification as "artistic truth" – is often more plausible than a "historical truth":

> *Además de ello, el mito es, justamente, el medio de comunicación − conceptual, sí, pero transracional − que ofrece una "verdad de la imaginación" que − con igual pretensión que la "verdad artística" − es a menudo más atendible que una "verdad histórica". He aquí por qué el arte es necesariamente uno de los primeros instrumentos de todo lenguaje mítico; como la metáfora es el instrumento lingüístico que más fácilmente participa de toda calidad mitopoiética, desde el acto mismo de su constitución.* [35]

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist and scholar, who applied a structuralist approach to social anthropology, also recognized the myth as a communication form, a "structure" related to linguistics, to ethnology and dialectics. He believed that a variety of cultures, of human beings and their behaviors, patterns in language, and myths demonstrate a common framework underlying all human life:

> *Rapprocher le mythe du langage ne résout rien: le mythe fait partie intégrante de la langue; c'est par la parole qu'on le connaît, il relève du discours. Si nous voulons rendre compte des caractères spécifiques de la pensée mythique, nous devrons donc établir que le mythe est simultanément dans le langage, et au-delà. [...] la langue appartient au domaine d'un temps réversible, et la parole, à celui d'un temps irréversible. S'il est déjà possible d'isoler ces deux niveaux dans le langage, rien n'exclut que nous puissions en définir un*

[33] Ibid, p. 282.
[34] Pérez de Ayala, Ramón, *Viaje entretenido al País del Ocio*, Ediciones Guadarrama, Barcelona 1975, p. 55.
[35] Dorfles, Gillo, *La estética del mito* (de Vico a Wittgenstein), Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, Caracas, 1970, pp. 22-23.

troisième. On vient de distinguer la langue et la parole au moyen des systèmes temporels auxquels elles se réfèrent l'une et l'autre. Or, le mythe se définit aussi par un système temporel, qui combine les propriétés des deux autres. Un mythe se rapporte toujours à des événements passés: «avant la création du monde», ou «pendant les premiers âges», en tout cas «il y a longtemps». Mais la valeur intrinsèque attribuée au mythe provient de ce que les événements, censés se dérouler à un moment du temps, forment aussi une structure permanente. Celle-ci se rapporte simultanément au passé, au présent et au futur. Une comparaison aidera à préciser cette ambiguïté fondamentale. Rien ne ressemble plus à la pensée mythique que l'idéologie politique. Dans nos sociétés contemporaines, peut-être celle-ci a-t-elle seulement remplacé celle-là. [...] Nous proposons [...] définir chaque mythe par l'ensemble de toutes ses versions. Autrement dit: le mythe reste mythe aussi longtemps qu'il est aperçu comme tel. [36]

The myth takes reality apart and reduces it to an "image" without content, standing alone, with contours that can be "filled" in as required or desired. Perhaps a myth is created "expressly" and "consciously" by the community in order to solve certain complicated problems. [37]

A further element in my treatment of the myth is Michel Foucault's concept of "discursive authority," which proved fundamental to this study. Thus, I examine the discursive authority of Mexican Muralism and of its agents, mainly of José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera, its two paradigmatic figures.

Foulcault says:

Je suppose que dans toute société la production du discours est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée, organisée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures qui ont pour rôle d'en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers, d'en maîtriser l'événement aléatoire, d'en esquiver la lourde, la redoutable matérialité. [38]

The visible (above all the murals of Rivera, which are not only visible but in highly accessible public places in addition to being reproduced in books, school manuals, art books, etc.) is also made "visible" in discursive mystifications. These are long-lasting and tenacious – typical characteristics of the myth itself. The background, the real explanations of historical fact and the contextualized deconstructions carry very little weight. In the collective imagination and in the disciplinary reductions in the field of art history, nothing exists except the myth.

The myths that are developed within the discussion about the myths form another level. I used Barthes's model of a second semiological system. The levels *1* and *2* turn into level *3* and are then instrumentalized in specific political, ideological and cultural contexts. Roland Barthes, in his "*Mythologies*", defines the myth as a "second semiotic system", as a structure that depends on a secondary discourse. Barthes gives us a definition of the word myth as "une parole":

LE MYTHE EST UNE PAROLE

Naturellement, ce n'est pas n'importe quelle parole: il faut au langage des conditions particulières pour devenir mythe, on va les voir à l'instant. Mais ce qu'il faut poser fortement dès le début, c'est que le mythe est un système de communication, c'est un message. [39]

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[36] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Anthropologie structurale*, Librairie Plon, Paris 1974, pp. 238-249.
[37] One of my hypotheses in this study is the idea that the *Mexican Muralism* is a kind of a product of a collective will of the Mexican people, which Vasconcelos took advantage of, as did later the Mexican State. Some of the main characters in Mexican painting, especially Diego Rivera, profited from this.
[38] Foucault, Michel, *L'ordre du discours*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris 1971, pp. 10-11.
[39] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, p. 193.

In Mexican Muralism one encounters unmistakably contradictory discourses, some of which are deliberately contradictory (especially in the case of Rivera). I have tried to apply a model to help identify the different speeches and the different discourses on a semiological basis. Barthes's model provides a starting point, which enables one to structure the material in a more or less controlled form and to analyze the form of the myths. Barthes's model, in translated form, is as follows:



Figure 2. Barthes's model, in translated form. [40]

My *modus operandi* was based on a communicational perspective, which seemed particularly appropriate as Mexican public art seeks a dialogue with the public. I believed that the model of Barthes would prove helpful in trying to dismantle the structures of the myths. Roland Barthes defines myth as a "second semiotic system", as a structure that depends on a secondary discourse.

Figure 3. Cover of *Paris-Match* with the young Negro dressed in a French uniform and saluting the French flag, mentioned by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, p. 201. [41]



In my view the analytical attitude exemplified in the following quotation from Barthes about the young Negro (**Figure 3**) dressed in a French uniform can serve as an example as regards studying the different levels of significance that many of the representations in Mexican muralism present. This idea was used along with the analysis of the material discourse (the murals) and all other forms of parallel discourse.

Barthes:

> *Et voici maintenant un autre exemple: je suis chez le coiffeur, on me tend un numéro de Paris-Match. Sur la couverture, un jeune nègre vêtu d'un uniforme français fait le salut militaire, les yeux levés, fixés sans doute sur un pli du drapeau tricolore. Cela, c'est le sens de l'image. Mais, naïf ou pas, je vois bien ce qu'elle me signifie: que la France est un grand Empire, que tous ses fils, sans distinction de couleur, servent fidèlement sous son drapeau, et qu'il n'est de meilleure réponse aux détracteurs d'un colonialisme prétendu, que le zèle de ce noir à servir ses prétendus oppresseurs.* [42]

The application of this model is as follows:

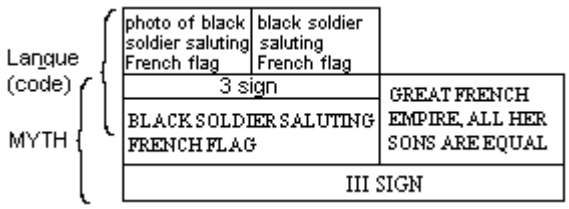


Figure 4. Barthes's model, applied to the picture in the cover of the mentioned *Paris-Match*.

[40] In Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, p. 200.
[41] Picture retrieved 2003-04-05 from http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/~os0tmc/art/saulte.jpg
[42] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, p. 201.

Roland Barthes's model clearly cannot solve all problems, nor can it answer all of the questions that arise. The model simply furnished some working hypotheses for my attempt to identify the communicational components and to structure the myths this subject contains.

Barthes believes that anything can function as myth:

> *Tout peut donc être mythe? Oui, je le crois, car l'univers est infiniment suggestif. Chaque objet du monde peut passer d'une existence fermée, muette, à un état oral, ouvert à l'appropriation de la société, car aucune loi, naturelle ou non, n'interdit de parler des choses.* [43]

The author defines myth as a specific form of communication. Myth is a value, which robs images of their historicity in order to make them serve to perpetuate dominant bourgeois culture. Specifically, myth is a form of signification composed of second-order semiological systems:

> *Nous sommes ici au principe même du mythe: il transforme l'histoire en nature.* [44]

During the course of my research, I noticed that, alongside the myths themselves, there were many downright lies, often originating with Rivera, which became transformed into myths. [45]

Barthes discusses the lie:

> *[...] le mensonge est une richesse, il suppose un avoir, des vérités, des formes de rechange.* [46]

Barthes admits that myths exist on the left political field but they haven't, at all, the same quality as the bourgeois myths:

> *Oui, le mythe existe à gauche, mais il n'y a pas du tout les même qualités que le mythe bourgeois. Le mythe de gauche est inessentiel [...]Et puis, c'est un mythe accidentel, son usage ne fait pas partie d'une stratégie, comme c'est le cas du mythe bourgeois, mais seulement d'une tactique, ou, au pire d'une déviation; s'il se produit, c'est un mythe approprié à une commodité, non à une nécessité.*
>
> *Enfin et surtout. c'est un mythe pauvre, essentiellement pauvre. Il ne sait proliférer; produit sur commande et dans une vue temporelle limitée, il s'invente mal. Un pouvoir majeur lui manque, celui de la fabulation.* [47]

Concerning Rivera's lies, the left-right dimension may not be easy to apply, as we will see later. Regarding his capacity for creating fables makes Rivera maybe an exception to Barthes's theory.

The semiotic questions are: what are the most important signifiers and what do they signify and what is the system within which these signs make sense? I use these tools to deconstruct a kind of meta-myth, a myth which combines several other Mexican myths: classical or historical myths as well as myths the *Mexican Mural Movement* expressed and produced. We are then in the presence of what we may call the myth of

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[43] Ibid, p. 194.
[44] Ibid, p. 215.
[45] By "lie" I mean here for instance some statements of Rivera's which cannot be true (or whose authenticity cannot be verified). By "myth" I use here the common designation, i.e., a thing that cannot be true but is generically accepted as such, and I understand in this particular case the widespread diffusion of those lies of Rivera's. When those lies are repeated in such a way that they are interpreted as truths we are in the presence of what we generically can call "myth".
[46] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies,* Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, p. 236.
[47] Ibid, p. 235.

Mexicanidad – a meta-myth built by the "unconscious will" of the community, in which Muralism plays an important role.

This thesis presents Mexican Muralism, its pre-Cortesian references, the Conquest, its consequences, the history of Mexico, the main characters of the muralist process, that is to say, the painters, benefactors and intellectuals and the myths, the myths at different levels, and investigates its *indigenist* or *indianist* tendency. It is necessary to see the movement's interpreters, its aesthetic, political, ethnic, racial, historical, moral, ideological and social consequences and the legitimizing role of the State as important components in a process of mystification and myth building.

Octavio Paz (1914-1998), the Mexican poet and essayist, who in 1990 became the first Mexican writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature, viewed the muralist movement as "a discovery of Mexico's present and past":

> *El movimiento muralista fue ante todo un descubrimiento del presente y el pasado de México, algo que el sacudimiento revolucionario había puesto a la vista: la verdadera realidad de nuestro país no era lo que veían los liberales y los Porfiristas del siglo pasado sino otra, sepultada y no obstante viva [...] Todos tenemos nostalgia y envidia de un momento maravilloso que no hemos podido vivir. Uno de ellos es el momento en el que, recién llegado de Europa, Diego Rivera vuelve a ver, como si nunca la hubiese visto antes, la realidad Mexicana.* [48]

Different approaches are possible to analyze the myths about *Mexican Muralism*: social, iconological, technical, formal, examination of the artistic evolution of the artists in individual terms, reading of the paintings with reference to their themes, interpretations of allegories or symbols, comparisons of form and content, etc. I believe that one cannot separate mural production from the discourses which developed out of it.

We now come to a methodological point of great importance. In general my intention is not, primarily, the analysis of the "material" production of the Mexican muralism: the murals themselves. There are some works that I consider deserve more attention and therefore I describe them, but my observations concentrate on the discourses produced about those same murals, both by artists and by critics and others. For this reason I frequently quote (sometimes perhaps at too great a length) some authors who contributed to the ideas we, generically, hold today about Mexican muralism. Many of the citations are from those who were directly involved in this particular period, and often they contradict each other. The existence of these contradictions is for us often important, because they produce chains of parallel significances.

There is another reason to quote frequently from different authors. Some authors, especially Mexicans (Paz, Monsiváis, Bartra, etc.), have since long time admitted the existence of repetitive incongruities regarding the historiography of Mexican muralism, thereby noticing and explaining the existing mystification. However, this does not alter the general perception of Mexican muralism. If we consult most of the works on the subject, we can easily verify the prevalence of many oversimplifications and myths about Mexican muralism. In my opinion Barthes explains this phenomenon:

> *En devenant forme, le sens éloigne sa contingence; il se vide, il s'appauvrit, l'histoire s'évapore, il ne reste plus que la lettre. Il y a ici une permutation paradoxale des opérations de lecture, une régression anormale du sens à la forme, du signe linguistique au signifiant mythique.* [49]

[48] Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1422.
[49] Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies,* Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1957, p. 203.

A merely formal analysis, where the murals are analyzed as isolated phenomena, *l'art pour l'art*, must fail because the murals include statements and messages which are clearly didactic and propagandistic. The murals are not pure art. They produce meanings at several levels. A merely formal analysis would have left many problems open.

I see the traditional and recent myths as an appropriation of the primary languages, as a meta-discourse. The myths represented in the murals are themselves bearers of mythological significance of the second degree. A representation of Cuauhtémoc, for instance, is a representation of a historical character, with mythological outlines, but it moves on to a higher level of significance when it is analyzed in terms of who executed it, on what occasion, in which historical, political, ideological, social, cultural context, etc.

According to Barthes: "the sense of the myth is always there to present the form; the form is always there to outdistance the sense."

> *Le mythe est une valeur, il n'a pas la vérité pour sanction: rien ne l'empêche d'être un alibi perpétuel: il lui suffit que son signifiant ait deux faces pour disposer toujours d'un ailleurs: le sens est toujours là pour présenter la forme; la forme est toujours là pour distancer le sens.* [50]

And further:

> *La motivation est nécessaire à la duplicité même du mythe, le mythe joue sur l'analogie du sens et de la forme: pas de mythe sans forme motivée* [51]

If there was a collective artistic language, how was it formulated and how did it develop? What goals does *Mexican Muralism* pursue? What part did Rivera play in the middle of all this? He seems to be the ring of the chain, or the crossroads where the roads meet.

I understand myth as an alternative reality, a substitution of a desirable but impossible reality, a utopia. The myth of *Mexican Muralism* is precisely that; it takes the place of an unattainable reality. Through its discourse it imposes a reality "better" than the chaotic reality in which Mexicans lived. The demystification process involves the analysis of certain mythological themes and figures which appeared again and again during the course of mural painting, for example Quetzalcóatl, Cuauhtémoc, Cortés, Malinche, Montezuma, Zapata, Villa, the whole pre-Hispanic past, Aztlán, Tenochtitlán, *Aztec* society, etc.

Finally, an explanation for the extension of this work: it was my intention to offer as complete as possible an idea of the existing mythological "ramifications" in Mexican culture, to help European readers, who in general are not familiar with the complexity of that culture, understand better certain manifestations of the myths in Mexican muralism, and the chains of significance that follow from this. Therefore I do not merely point out that in certain mural painting a Spanish soldier can be observed burning the feet of an *Aztec*. For me it was fundamental; in order to understand the work better, to know both who Cuauhtémoc was, and his precise historical, cultural and political meaning. For such reasons I read the various sources aware that reading in itself is not enough, for several reasons I will consider later.



Figure 5. Mexican telephone card showing the *Árbol de la noche-triste* (the *Sad Night tree*), after a painting of José María Velasco. [52]

[50] Ibid, p. 209.
[51] Ibid, p. 212.
[52] Retrieved 2003-09-17 from http://www.telmex.com.mx/ladatel/22.html#z

I give here a simple example. In **Figure 5** we see a Mexican telephone card. It shows a tree. For a European it represents only a tree. But it is not a representation of an ordinary tree: it is a very important tree; it is the celebrated *Árbol de la noche-triste* (the Sad Night tree), shown here as painted in 1885 by José María Velasco (1840-1912). [53] The tree, a variety of cedar, is known to Mexicans as the "Ahuehuete".

The supposed remains of this mythical tree can be seen near an old church, near the Popotla subway station in the suburbs of Mexico City, surrounded by a large iron fence, as picture **Figure 6** shows.



Figure 6. Supposed remains of the Sad Night tree, near the Popotla subway station in the suburbs of Mexico City.

According to the legend Cortés is said to have sat under this famous Ahuehuete, lamenting his misfortune after a battle against the Aztecs in 1520. The Spaniards suffered severe losses in that battle and this episode is known as the *Noche Triste*, the Sad Night. Under this very tree Cortés rested, and cried as he sat next to its trunk after the defeat. Next picture (**Figure 7**) shows a drawing by Miguel Covarrubias, representing this episode. [54]



Figure 7. Drawing by Miguel Covarrubias, representing the episode of the *Sad Night*.

As we will see later by analyzing the sources that evoke this episode, there are no objective reasons to believe that the tree in question is really the so-called Sad Night tree, under which Cortés is supposed to have cried. Moreover, there are no reasons to believe that that episode in fact occurred. However, this episode is reproduced in many murals, as well as on telephone cards, etc. Those representations constitute a "proof element", so to speak, reinforcing the myth (i.e., we cannot prove that that fact really happened) that is its origin.

Methodologically therefore I choose to consult and present the sources that provide the origins of this episode, so that the reader may have access to more information in order to understand my line of thought; and in order to present a more complete context, both of the general mythology and of several myths existing within Mexican muralism. My point of departure is the insistence that is not possible to understand Mexican murals, for instance those in the *Skissernas Museum – Arkiv för dekorativ konst* in Lund, without understanding their cultural and mythological motivations.



Figure 8. Jorge González Camarena: *La fusión de dos culturas* (The coalition of two cultures). Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City.

[53] Oil on canvas, 106 x 76 cm, Museo Nacional de Historia – INAH, Mexico.
[54] Reproduced in Martínez, José Luis, *Hernán Cortés*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 271.

Another example: **Figure 8** shows a reproduction of a mural in the *Museo Nacional de Historia*, in Mexico, *La fusión de dos culturas* (The coalition of two cultures) painted in 1963 by the artist Jorge González Camarena. [55] A sketch of that mural is in the *Skissernas Museum – Arkiv för dekorativ konst* in Lund, dated 1960 and bearing the title "The Conquest". This picture by Camarena is reproduced on the Mexican 50 pesos banknote (**Figure 9**). The other side of the banknote shows Cuauhtémoc (**Figure 10**). [56]

The mural of Camarena symbolizes the birth of the Mexican Nation. From the confrontation of two peoples was born the miscegenation: with this the Conquest left its permanent imprint on the culture of the country. I am the sure that a normal visitor to the museum would find it difficult to establish the complex flow of significances which this small sketch contains, as we shall see.



Figure 9. Mexican 50 pesos banknote showing *La fusión de dos culturas*, painted by the artist Jorge González Camarena in 1963.



Figure 10. The other side of the Mexican 50 pesos banknote, showing *Cuauhtémoc*.

[55] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.matemagica.com/Conte7.htm
[56] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://images.google.pt/imgres?imgurl=mgossart.free.fr/images/QUINTA/5_50peso.jpg&imgrefurl=http://mgossart.free.fr/english/fifth/5_50_en.htm&h=250&w=577&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%25225_50peso%2522%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Dpt-PT%26lr%3D%26ie%3DUTF-8%26oe%3DUTF-8%26sa%3DN

2) Structural Overview of the following chapters

Chapter II presents an introduction to Mexican history and mythology, from its origins to the present day, with a particular focus on the principal historical epochs and on the specific historical events and mythological figures which are most often represented in murals of the period studied.

The need to deconstruct the old pre-Columbian myths stems from the fact that many of them, which can be considered first level myths, support a large number of other myths, both modern and ancient. This is especially true of the myths linked to the construction of nationality, many of which originate in the difficult relationship with the United States. Once one has understood the framework of Mexican mythology as a whole, it does not feel strange that the foundation of Tenochtitlán is depicted in the same mural as the martyrdom of Zapata, though several hundred years separate these events.

The most commonly used pre-Cortesian myths originate in the Teotihuacán, Mayan and Zapotec cultures and refer to the migration from Aztlán, the foundation of Tenochtitlán and the historical or mythological characters of Quetzalcóatl, Huitzilopochtli, Tláloc, Coatlicue, etc.

In Chapter II, I examine the mythology of the pre-Hispanic period, the genesis of these myths and the probable adulterations, the censorship, and the adaptations to already existent myths, and the influence of European myths, which inspired several lies and fabrications. The Europeans wanted to see certain things in a reductive and simplistic way. These limitations originated in the Christian religion and in the classic traditions of the missionaries, conquerors and thinkers of the time. As Claude Lévi-Strauss writes in *Histoire de Lynx*:

> *Ces prophéties ne sont connues que par des textes postérieurs à la découverte. Il se peut donc que les chroniqueurs ou leurs informateurs aient arrangé les choses pour donner plus de cohérence aux événements inouïs dont ils avaient été directement ou indirectement témoins.* [57]

Bernardino de Sahagún's compendium clearly illustrates this tendency. It is a classical example of the reinterpretation and the re-elaboration which Lévi-Strauss describes. Sahagún's inclinations and prejudices lead him and other missionaries to read European references into the stories of the natives, especially when the stories were being retold a considerable time after the Conquest. There is often a conflation of references and sometimes "deliberate" confusion in these chronicles or a "filter" that only recognizes what the chroniclers expected to find from the very beginning. From the very beginning, the missionaries tried to "explain" the existence of pre-Cortesian cultures from a biblical perspective. The image of Quetzalcóatl, of his cross, etc., is symptomatic of this.

The myth of Quetzalcóatl, which will occupy a considerable part of this work, is a paradigmatic myth. The prophecy states that the *Aztecs* expected the coming of Quetzalcóatl. For this reason Hernán Cortés, who used certain symbols related to the feathered serpent, was taken to be Quetzalcóatl. Though one cannot provide evidence for what really happened, this could be explained as historical determinism. This was a good, and maybe the only, way to rationalize the defeat of the *Aztecs* by a small number of Spaniards at the time. This myth could be used to justify the whole conquest. Fate is an alibi. Alternative hypotheses to explain the defeat include the smallpox epidemic that befell the *Aztecs* or the Spaniards' alliance with the peoples of Tlaxcala, who had long been enemies of the *Aztecs*.

Claude Lévi-Strauss has shown that many myths are identical in different parts of the world which have had no contact with one another. These "coincidences" in the structures between, for instance, pre-Cortesian and Indo-European myths suggest that it is not necessarily a question of myths being diffused, but rather a predisposition of the human mind which finds "identical" solutions for "identical" problems, often related to existential structures:

[57] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Histoire de Lynx*, Plon, Paris 1991, p. 294.

> *Il est bien connu que l'effondrement des Aztèques et des Inca, incapables d'opposer aux conquérants une résistance efficace, s'explique en majeure partie par le fait qu'ils crurent reconnaître en ceux-ci les divinités disparues dont des traditions sacrées leur laissaient prévoir et même espérer le retour. [...] Aussi, disent les chroniques, quand les Indiens virent les chrétiens, ils les prirent pour des dieux frères et fils de Quetzalcóatl.* [58]

It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the origins and the doubts about the authenticity of individual myths, the credibility of the reports, and all the mystifications which have occurred. I have restricted myself to using some original myths and the incongruencies in the reports about them as examples − in order to understand the controversies about mythical representations in mural art. The myths and main characters are difficult to understand, interpretations vary, and the concepts history, history-myth, myths and mystifications are often very unstable.

George Kubler, of Yale University, who conducted studies of Spanish Colonial archival material on social anthropology, writes:

> *The myths became so intricate in Aztec sources that their historical reduction seems impossible.* [59]

And, further:

> *Our knowledge of the past runs to stereotypes. The archetype for our awareness of antiquity was frozen over five hundred years ago by the phoenixlike relation of Europe to classical antiquity. Of that relation the proportions are now beginning to reappear in the ratio between the American present and precolonial antiquity.* [60]

Similarly, Paul Kirchhoff, the German anthropologist who worked in Mexico for most of his professional life, and who is responsible for the classic definition of the geographic and ethnic composition of the Mesoamerican culture area, is reputed to have said: "I never understood the gods of the *Mexicas* until I understood that Coatlicue is the mother of her own grandmother."

> *Nunca pude entender a los dioses de los Mexicas hasta que comprendí que Coatlicue es madre de su propia abuela* [61]

The Mexican pantheon was inhabited by countless gods. According to one myth, four hundred thousand gods were born when a stone fell to Earth, and these gods in turn multiplied.

Chapter II also analyses later myths including those relating to the Conquest itself, certain characters and events (e.g. the Conquest of Tenochtitlán, the episode of the *Noche Triste*, Montezuma, Cortés, Malinche, Cuitláhuac, and Cuauhtémoc) as well as myths up to the latter part of the 19th century. The myths regarding more recent history and mythology, starting with the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, and the myths from the *Revolution*, about Zapata, Villa, etc. will be studied more closely in the third and fourth chapters.

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[58] Ibid, p. 293.
[59] Kubler, George, *The Art and Architecture of ancient America: The Mexican 'Maya' and Andean peoples*. The Pelican History of Art. Nikolaus Pevsner (ed.), Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondworth, Middlesex, Great Britain, 1962, p. 48.
[60] Kubler, George, *Studies in Ancient American and European Art: The Collected Essays of George Kubler*. Thomas Reese (ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1985, p. 11.
[61] Mentioned on the cover of the book by Fernández, Adela, *Dioses Prehispánicos de México: mitos y deidades del panteón náhuatl*, Panorama Editorial, Mexico 1993.

Chapter III documents the artistic and aesthetic forerunners of the *Mexican Mural Movement* and developments before José Vasconcelos became Minister, with specific reference to the myths and the construction of myths discussed in Chapter II and their use in mural representations.

In Mexican Muralism there is a clear desire to rediscover, and indeed to reinvent, the pre-Hispanic past, an incorporation of the present, and a vision of a promising future. Everything assumes mythical proportions. Literal truth is neither present nor important. At the same time there is a revolutionary explanation (dialectal materialism) for everything. Rivera, for example, provided such "explanations" which found, and still find, widespread acceptance.

Indeed some speak about the Mexican Movement as a process of aesthetic continuity, based on a mural tradition with its origins in Spain and Italy and, before that, in the mural painting of the pre-Cortesian indigenous peoples. As we will see, certain people, both artists and critics, *wanted* to see a continuity in muralism in Mexico, postulating a practice which had its origin in pre-Cortesian cultures, continued during the colonial period and was revitalized in the *Revolution*. Such a view glorifies the artistic history of Mexico; on the other hand it clearly tries to reduce the originality of the ideas and the authority of Minister José Vasconcelos. The art historian Armando Torres-Michúa, among others, says the model is not tenable: "since in the twenties this important pictorial genre was almost completely unknown, as there had been insufficient archaeological discoveries."

> *Se han querido ver antecedentes del Muralismo Mexicano en la pintura mural de los pueblos indígenas precortesianos (teotihuacanos, mayas, zapotecos); en la ornamentación de los muros de iglesias y conventos de la arquitectura novohispana del siglo XVI; en la pintura academicista del siglo XIX. Respecto a nuestros antepasados indígenas no deja de ser un idealismo, ya que en los años veintes era casi desconocido en su totalidad este importante género pictórico, consecuencia de los insuficientes descubrimientos arqueológicos.* [62]

And Torres-Michúa continues with reference to the mural decoration of religious buildings: "As regards the mural decoration of religious buildings, at that time, its importance and extent was still unknown, as were the examples in the big convents."

> *En lo que se refiere a la decoración mural de los edificios religiosos, en esa fecha aún no se conocía la importancia y la extensión, como tampoco los grandes ejemplos conventuales.* [63]

I agree whole-heartedly with these reservations. Whilst accepting that previous experiments with mural paintings were important, I cannot accept the idea (which Diego Rivera constantly repeated) that this tradition was crucial to the emergence of the art of the movement. The chapter features a consideration of the Bonampak murals, the role of the Academies, the outdoor School of Santa Anita and the painters of *pulquerías*, Francisco Goitia, Saturnino Herrán, Gerardo Murillo, *alias* Dr. Atl, whose work included mural activities before the advent of José Vasconcelos. [64]

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[62] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., p. 7.

[63] Ibid.

[64] *According to Charlot: Pulquería painting, the mural painting of the people, derives its name from the Mexican saloon it most often adorned. At least in the capital, the genre has disappeared within the last twenty years, its freehand improvisation replaced by the rigid craft, made in U.S.A., of mechanical squaring and enlarging from standard chromos. In Charlot, Jean, The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925 (First published in 1962 by Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut), Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 36.*

Chapter IV provides an analysis of José Vasconcelos, his background, his career and his program for the *Mexican Mural Movement*. I believe that Vasconcelos's role has been seriously underestimated and his importance underplayed. The main question this chapter seeks to answer is: what role did José Vasconcelos play in the program of Mexican Muralism? The exact extent of José Vasconcelos's role and participation in the mural movement is unknown and has been minimized or even rejected. Yet my studies have indicated that, actually, the figure of Vasconcelos is crucial for an understanding of the process of the Mexican Mural Art. In marked contrast to Diego Rivera, who was in Paris at the time, Vasconcelos was an active participant in the *Revolution* against Porfirio Díaz. Despite this fact, it is Rivera who assumed a revolutionary posture. He was the one connected with the *Revolution*, the murals show him in the middle of the struggle, and he appears as the principal protagonist of the movement, whilst Vasconcelos's role is unknown and even derided. Besides the well-known fact that he was the Mexican Minister of Education between 1921 and 1924, Vasconcelos is known mainly for his unsuccessful presidential campaign of 1929 and the four volumes of his autobiography, published between 1935 and 1939. I have used the autobiography to illustrate his views, which are often distanced and jaundiced.

The art historian and critic, Antonio Rodríguez, who wrote a very comprehensive work on the *Mexican Mural Movement*, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, believes that it has not been established who was responsible for its program and who started it.

> *Someone must have started it, but who he was led to much controversy later on.* [65]

I intend to prove that it was Vasconcelos who started it. In spite of the fact that it was Vasconcelos who initiated the program and was its benefactor, he later expressed open contempt for the pictorial style of his contemporaries. This explains to a large extent why he became a *persona non grata* in the movement. He was the first one to describe figures by Diego Rivera which he considered unsightly as "monotes" (a pejorative term meaning something like "big puppets"). There is of course a contradiction here as it was Vasconcelos who paid Rivera to paint the murals. This contradiction is important, but Mexican history has never been free of such contradictions. Contradiction is a "natural" phenomenon in Mexican culture and helps us to understand the process. All of the characters are contradictory. We cannot, or rather should not, hope that somebody be coherent or consequent. This leads to considerable difficulties in deconstruction (especially in the case of Vasconcelos, Rivera, Paz, etc.).

In an essay on Vasconcelos, Claude Fell notes that "hardly anybody has been interested in the educational and cultural enterprise directed by José Vasconcelos":

> *Prácticamente nadie se ha interesado por la empresa educativa y cultural dirigida por José Vasconcelos, primero durante la presidencia interina de Adolfo de la Huerta, más tarde dentro del gabinete del presidente Obregón, entre junio de 1920 y julio de 1924.* [66]

Vasconcelos was conscious of his role in history and had no illusions about his importance. There is a certain rough honesty in his claim: "I don't make history; I try to create a myth."

> *- No hago historia; intento crear un mito.* [67]

Esther Acevedo believes that a number of myths (mainly the myths relating to racial questions and the redemptive role of muralism in society), which together form what we can call the core mythology of Mexican muralism, were created during the time in which Vasconcelos was directly responsible for the program. Shortly after his departure other kinds of myths (originated by Rivera and the State) were created which were more concerned with the revolutionary rhetoric.

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[65] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 157.
[66] Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 11.
[67] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 132.

> *Escribir sobre el nacionalismo en relación con la producción plástica durante el gobierno del general Álvaro Obregón (diciembre 1920- noviembre 1924) remite al estudio del momento en que se gesta la reconstrucción nacional después de varios años de lucha armada. Lo que ahí se elaboró, los regímenes postrevolucionarios lo recogieron e identificaron como la Revolución misma. La ideologización e institucionalización de mitos fundadores de lo que se debe entender por revolucionario, empezaron a definirse en ese periodo.* [68]

Vasconcelos himself stated that there was no program behind the first murals. There was only improvised "foolishness". His initial program is often described as intuitive and decorative mysticism, but he later distanced himself from this viewpoint. He did not try to claim responsibility for the first murals, and he distanced himself from the later ones, claiming that muralism had lost its way. It became a "whole", a myth, which he needed to distance himself from. In one of his autobiographical books, written when he was no longer Secretary of Public Education, he criticized the topic he himself had proposed to Roberto Montenegro in the first mural as "goethian foolishness":

> *En el ábside de esta ex iglesia inició Montenegro el movimiento de pintura mural que después ha trascendido más allá de la nación y es hoy práctica norteamericana. La obra, sin embargo, adolece de pobreza del asunto. No hallábamos qué representar, y di al pintor como tema una tontería goethiana: «¡Acción supera al destino: vence!»* [69]

It is natural that Vasconcelos spoke of foolishness and no longer recognized his influence on the subsequent evolution of the mural painting after the end of his mandate. He was not interested in legitimizing a process based on populism and demagogy, so far removed from that which he had conceived. In the end, Vasconcelos minimized the importance of the subject, stepping back and speaking about muralism and its main protagonists with contempt.

The chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Vasconcelos's background, his participation in the *Ateneo de la Juventud* and his role as benefactor. I also discuss the projects carried out until his departure from the ministry in 1924, as well as his influence on artists and on Mexican art and culture in general.

One can speak of a *vasconcelist* mythology, a mythology of the *Mexican Mural Movement* as Vasconcelos conceived it. I show that there is continuity between the project that Vasconcelos started and the works that were produced after he left the scene. This idea is developed in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Chapter V presents an analysis of Diego Rivera, whom I see as the greatest mythmaker of the *Mexican Mural Movement*. I analyze his background, his work as a mural painter, and his production of discourses and significations parallel to his mural production until 1930. In my view Diego Rivera is the artist who best illustrates the origins and growth of myths within and related to the *Mexican Mural Movement*. He is often described as a mythmaker and a mythomaniac. With his works and scandals he gave wings to the Mexican people's fantasies about nationality. Studying him, I realized that one cannot vulgarize Rivera's political militancy and ideological somersaults as *fait divers*, as innocent stagings. It would be a tremendous mistake. What Rivera did and what he said had its own opportunistic logic.

A different interpretative error is to simplify Rivera and to link him too tightly to ideology, which many authors do. This leads to a view of the *Mexican Mural Movement* characterised by generalizations,

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[68] Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 173.

[69] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 26.

vulgarizations and simplifications, according to which Rivera was a communist who sought to project his ideas and visions of the world by means of his art. This over-simplification does not correspond to the facts.

I analyze Diego Rivera's role, both the iconical and verbal messages and signifiers that exist on and away from the walls. He was involved in most of the scandals, controversies and myths which characterized the movement and was often responsible for making the interpretation of facts and of the movement as a whole so difficult. Often the answers to many questions lie with the personality of the artist. But what role did the institutions, the State and the different régimes play in maintaining and even fomenting the over-simplification mentioned above?

In an article published in *El Universal* on 31 January, 1978, Antonio Rodríguez describes Diego Rivera as "Painter of the Revolution that was not done":

> *Pintor de la Revolución que no se hizo.* [70]

Diego Rivera is often presented as a mirror of and as a participant in the *Mexican Revolution*. His "participation" in this *Revolution* is well documented on the walls. Yet in reality Rivera did not participate in the *Mexican Revolution*, because he was in Europe at the time. He constantly tried to link his person to that revolutionary reality. Yet he was not the movement; as Alicia Azuela de la Cueva points out: "neither muralism in general [nor] muralism as expressed by its "official" representative Diego Rivera can be considered [...] as a movement or a homogeneous whole representing the Revolution of 1910."

> *[...] no puede considerarse al muralismo en general, y al muralismo tal como lo planteó su representante "oficial" Diego Rivera, [...], en tanto un movimiento o un todo homogéneo representativo de la Revolución de 1910. Este ha de estudiarse y entenderse como un conjunto heterogéneo de obras realizadas por diversos artistas, que no obstante deberse a la Revolución y pretender seguir como grupo, en mayor o menor grado los lineamientos marcados por su manifiesto (manifiesto de Artistas, Pintores y Escultores, 1922) el individualismo de su producción hace imposible que lleguen a constituir un movimiento como tal.* [71]

Diego Rivera was the artist of the "Big Three" who committed himself completely to a form of *indigenismo*. The post-revolutionary movement of *indigenismo* was started by the Mexican archaeologist Manuel Gamio, who sought to uphold the value of the pre-Columbian past and to incorporate Indian cultures into national Mexican life. In Rivera's murals there is didactic, narrative and epic poetry, but unlike Siqueiros, he was uncritical and in his speeches the vision of the pre-Cortesian past was relentlessly optimistic. He criticized and ridiculed the conqueror Hernán Cortés. This was another reduction, a myth, an over-simplification.

In this chapter I discuss how Rivera conceived of his work and relate his statements (articles, interviews, etc.) to what has been said about him and his work. Special attention has been paid to some of his major projects and to his own mythology. The chapter on Riverian mythology and the preceding chapter on Vasconcelos form the principal part of this work.

Rivera is perhaps the most famous Mexican of all time. This is certainly true outside of Mexico. In Mexico his portrait is often in books, etc., and reception studies on Mexican muralism indicates that most Mexicans, when asked which section of the murals they "would like to take home", picked Rivera's vision of the Mexican history as depicted in the National Palace:

> *Para el estrato medio de la pequeña burguesía, lo más atractivo fue también "toda la historia" y "La gran Tenochtitlán". Se explicó en términos de su identidad prehispánica;*

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[70] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Pintor de la Revolución que no se hizo", *El Universal*, 31 January, Mexico 1978.
[71] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 12.

me atrevo a adelantar que han proyectado, entre otras cosas, su preocupación por la calidad de la vida y el bienestar. El estrato alto de la pequeña burguesía (formado sobre todo por estudiantes y profesionistas) prefirió el fragmento "México hoy y mañana" y "toda la historia". Fue la que más se manifestó en términos ideológicos pero también de la nostalgia del paraíso. Aparece así como un sector social dividido entre la posible acción política y la fuga al pasado. [72]

The history that is shown on these walls has become "what really happened," or perhaps a substitute which is better than reality. There are many who believe that the distribution of the weapons to the people by Frida Kahlo, Tina Modotti, Siqueiros and other communist militants as shown in the murals of the Secretariat of Public Education actually took place. This is another level of the myth. It seems irrelevant that this never took place; the image resists all attempts at demystification.

In recent years the painter Frida Kahlo, Rivera's wife, has gained more importance in various publications, films, etc. Her life has often been mystified. One myth about Frida Kahlo concerns her date of birth. Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo Calderón was born July 6, 1907, in the "Casa Azul" on the corner of Berlin and Allende streets in the Coyoacán district of Mexico City, and she died there July 13, 1954. Her ashes rest in a pre-Hispanic urn in the Blue House of San Angel. Although she was born in 1907, she insisted she was born in 1910, the year of the *Mexican Revolution*. This aspect, although a small detail, indicates the atmosphere of the period. Rivera and Frida are mystifications and, as Octavio Paz says, they have been through a kind of "beatification":

- Hoy muy pocos defienden a Siqueiros. En cambio, se exalta la figura de Diego Rivera y, sobre todo, la de Frida Kahlo. − La tentativa de beatificación de estos dos artistas, que no tuvieron escrúpulos en traicionar y difamar bajamente a su antiguo amigo y guía, León Trotsky, me parece un síntoma más de una infección moral muy grave. De nuevo, la alianza entre nacionalismo e ideología, las dos pasiones que han pervertido y desecado las almas. Por lo visto, muchos intelectuales Mexicanos de izquierda han sido incapaces de llevar a cabo una crítica radical de sus actitudes. Porque no basta con denunciar los vicios, errores y perversiones del estalinismo: hay que ir al fondo y examinar las causas − psicológicas, morales, históricas − que hicieron posible la aberración Stalinista. Los casos de Diego y Frida no deberían ser tema de beatificación sino objeto de estudio − y de arrepentimiento. [73]

Many people choose to see Rivera's work in terms of the scandal at the *Rockefeller Center* where Rivera painted Lenin, other "gestures" like the phrase "God doesn't exist" in the mural at *Hotel del Prado*, his portrayal of Hernán Cortés in the *National Palace*, the controversies regarding Cantinflas and Guadalupe [74] and other similar references. The fact that the American ambassador paid for Rivera's work in Palacio Cortés in Cuernavaca is one of the many contradictions which are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter VI draws on the two previous chapters in order to express the incorporative mythology and the meta-myth of the *Mexican Mural Movement*. I demonstrate that there was a logical structure in the myth-making. Vasconcelos, Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco, the Mexican State, the institutions and the conflicting ideologies all obey the same logic of cultural continuity. I try to identify the specifically Mexican

[72] Schmilchuk, Graciela, "El público del muralismo como creador de significados", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 39.
[73] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, pp. 61-62.
[74] More than a religious symbol, Guadalupe is a symbol of national and ethnic identity in Mexico. Mexican actor Mario Moreno (Cantinflas) was the most popular performer in the entire Spanish-speaking world from the 1930's until the 1980's.

component, the background to the concept of *Mexicanidad* within the historical, political, ideological and mythological background. I seek to distinguish the "pattern" in the mythological references to the myths from the pre-Cortesian past, etc.

The construction of a national identity, the myth of *Mexicanidad,* was a national project of pressing necessity. There were several people, groups, etc., that were more or less consciously involved. And in practical and pragmatic terms, supreme ideological responsibility lay with José Vasconcelos. In this construction of a utopia, of a myth, everyone cooperated with each other: José Vasconcelos, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, etc. Each started from different points of view, with different presuppositions, but contributed to the same end, *Mexicanidad*, an abstract but urgent concept of national identification.

As regards the construction and statement of myths, Rivera concentrated on his own myths, while Vasconcelos and the political powers were more interested in the collective myths, despite their frequent opportunistic interventions.

Cuauhtémoc Medina:

> *From Vasconcelos to Octavio Paz, from Diego Rivera to Carlos Fuentes, Mexican intellectuals and artists have constructed a Mythology that is precisely that nation that springs to people's lips when they speak of "Mexico." A construct which, due to various causes and political programs, has ended up as an unsalvageable pile of rubble.* [75]

This collective myth absorbed contradictions as complex as Catholicism, pre-Cortesian traditions, anticlericalism, Marxism, propaganda, and blended them all into a whole. Why? What were its aims? Why is it that this movement and its expressions resist so many attacks and adulterations? Who developed this movement and how? Who are its "agents"? The State, artists, unions, Church, external factors, all had important parts to play. As stated earlier Rivera's contribution to *Mexicanidad* is very important. Rivera built an "image" of Mexico (*vide* his mural *Mexico yesterday, today and tomorrow* in *National Palace*) The reductionist and simplistic formula of this image tries to present an alternative, idealized, utopian and better reality than that which existed outside the murals.

Naturally, Rivera's paintings exist as paintings, and a formal or iconographical analysis can be made of their content, but the interesting thing is to see how they were integrated into the official discourse of diverse régimes and how the myth of *Mexicanidad* took shape in the unconscious discourse of the community.

The chapter also examines José Luís Cuevas and the concept of *La Cortina de Nopal* (the nopal curtain) as well as Siqueiros's dictum "there is no other road than ours". From my perspective, these positions, although contradictory, can be considered as a part of the construction of the meta-myth, and as such far more important than their individual meanings.

Nobody apart from Vasconcelos (because of his resentment) and José Luis Cuevas (who, above all, wanted to draw attention to himself as an artist) seemed very interested in distancing himself from the great stage show which the program of the *Mexican School of Painting* represents. Is Cuevas the little child, in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*, who cried out: "But the Emperor has nothing on at all!"?

Chapter VII contains the conclusions. I summarize the topics discussed and formulate my conclusions.

After the conclusions follows the Appendixes (a time frame, manifestos, etc.) and after that the List of references: works quoted and works consulted.

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[75] Medina, Cuauhtémoc, *Cercanías Distantes,* Irony, Barbary, Sacrilege. Retrieved 2003-08-12 from http://zonezero.com/magazine/essays/distant/fziff2.html.

CHAPTER II. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MEXICAN HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN MURAL WORKS.

In this chapter, I examine two types of myths: cosmological myths and historical myths up until the beginning of the twentieth century. Special emphasis has been laid on the principal myths and mystifications, and the various interpretations of them throughout history. More recent history and mythology, directly connected with the *Mexican Mural Movement* and mainly emanating from the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, which I judge to be the substratum of the statements linked to the process of mural painting, are discussed in detail in chapters three and four. Although my study concentrates essentially on the decade of the 1920s I judged it necessary, the better to contextualize events subsequent to that period, to present a study of historical developments up to the death of the last of the "Big Three", David Alfaro Siqueiros. Obviously there is also a more recent context, but this does not seem relevant for this study. [76]

For this part of my study, I consulted the original versions, revisions and translations of works by Bernardino de Sahagún (Sahagún,Bernardino de, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (ed. Ángel María Garibay Kintana), Editorial Porrúa, Mexico 1989), Bernal Díaz del Castillo (Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Editorial Porrúa, Mexico 1986), Friar Diego Durán (Durán, Fray Diego, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, 3 vols, Editorial Porrúa, Mexico 1967), Hernán Cortés (Cortés, Hernán, *Cartas de Relación*, Editores Mexicanos Unidos, México 1990), Francisco López de Gómara (López de Gómara, Francisco, *Historia de La Conquista de México*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, (2 vol.), Editorial Robredo, Mexico 1943), Friar Bartolomé de las Casas (de Las Casas, Bartolomé, *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*, Red Editorial Iberoamericana Mexico, 1994), Friar Toribio de Benavente (Benavente, Fr. Toribio de, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, Historia 16, Madrid, 1985). I used also such secondary sources as the *Historia General de México*, Vol. 1 and 2, Centro de Estudos Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1990, Jacques Soustelle (*La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*, Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955), Georges Kubler (*Studies in ancient American and European art, The collected Essays of George Kubler*, edited by Thomas F. Reese. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1985), Benjamin Keen (*The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971) and several other sources, which I, partially, refer to and quote in the notes. It is not my intention to analyze in depth the consulted sources since this is not my main goal. However, it is easy to come to the conclusion that many sources are not always trustworthy, leaving many problems to solve.

The history of Mexico can be divided into certain principal periods or movements which provide the historical and mythological context that serves as a background for my work. These periods and some of their main characters are represented in Mexican mural painting, and understanding the immediate context is enlightening. The periods and their political, social, and economic conjunctures are important as they also constitute sources for a number of myths. To analyze the *Mexican Mural Movement*, and Diego Rivera as the best example of this phenomenon, my study will elucidate the political and ideological importance of each period according to its facts, figures, and myths.

I have gone as far back as the existing sources permit. There are real problems with the credibility of these sources. I am not competent to discuss this subject, but I can affirm that the sources that I used rarely agree on the facts, or on the mythology before Columbus, or on the history/mythology during the Conquest, or on the mythologies related to modern Muralism in Mexico. Given these divergences, on several occasions I refer to different sources. In some cases I was not able to find a primary source, or I believed that it was more useful to use a secondary source, given that the secondary sources often contained judgments of value or mystifications that further reinforced the existing myths. Often myths are created based either on the original reports or on their subsequent interpretation. Then those myths were made material in murals by the artists, which in turn reinforced these same myths.

[76] Appendix I, *A Historical Summary*, contains a table listing these periods, linking them with important events and developments both in Mexico and in the rest of the world.

Mexican history can be divided into the following events and periods: the pre-Columbian cultures until the arrival of the Spaniards and the Conquest in 1521; New Spain; the different phases of the fight for the Independence: the conspirators of Querétaro (first phase) (1810-1811); the insurgency (second phase) (1811-1815); the government of Agustín de Iturbide (1821-1823): the period after the fall of Iturbide (1823-1828); the conflicts between the liberals and Conservatives (1829-1835); the loss of Texas (1836); rebellions and coups d'état (1841-1845); the War with the United States (1846-1848); the dictatorship of Santa Anna (1853-1855); the liberal Reformation (1855-1857); the Three Years War (1858-1860); the Reform Laws (1859-1860); European intervention (1861-1863); the Empire of Maximilian (1864-1867); the Restored Republic (1867-1876); the *Porfiriato* (1877-1911); the fall of Porfirio Díaz and the *Revolution* (1910-1911); the government of Francisco I. Madero (1911-1913); the period from Huerta to Carranza (1913-1914); Carranza against Villa and Zapata (1914-1915); Venustiano Carranza (1916-1920); Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924); Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928); the Cristiada (1927-1928); the *Maximato* (1928-1934); Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940); the oil expropriation (1938); Ávila Camacho (1940-1946); Miguel Alemán (1946-1952); Adolfo Ruiz Cortinez (1952-1958); Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964); Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970); the student movement of 1968; Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976). This study does not extend beyond the period of Luis Echeverría Álvarez' presidency (1970-1976), because it was during this period, in 1974, that the last of the so-called "Big Three", David Alfaro Siqueiros, died.

1) Pre-Columbian History and Mythology: The Most Important Cultural Periods in Mesoamerica

The most important cultural periods in Mesoamerica were the Pre-classic period, the Classic period, and the Post-classic period. The Pre-classic period lasted from the arrival of man in Mesoamerica up to 300 B.C., when man started to live in villages. A settled, agricultural way of life marks the beginning of the Classic period, from 300 to 400 A.D., when government was theocratic and large cities formed around ceremonial centers. In this period the Mesoamerican culture reached the height of its splendor. The Post-classic period, from 900 to 1521 A.D., was characterized by various struggles between the priests and the military, and the big indigenous civilizations declined. Some authors define the Post-classic period as the period between 1325 and 1521. It covers the period from the foundation of Tenochtitlán to the arrival of the Spaniards. This period can be termed historical, because there is more precise data, such as the *Codices*. These were sacred books which preserved information about rites, genealogy, astronomy, and glyptography, or contained ideographic signs that represented words, sounds, numbers, and dates. Other written testimonies and documents from this period have also been preserved.

By the time the Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica, there were more than fifty different languages spoken, reflecting the variety of peoples and races on the continent. The most important cultures had already disappeared, or they were in decline with their main cities in ruins. The reigning culture was *Aztec* or *Mexica*, with its center of power at Tenochtitlán, located on the site of today's Mexico City. Most of the surrounding towns had been conquered by the *Aztecs* and were subject to large tributes.

There were only a small number of Spaniards, but they found allies en route to Tenochtitlán among the peoples of the towns subject to large tributes. Hernán Cortés' strategic skills also played a big part in the conquest of the Aztec Empire. Less than a thousand Spanish soldiers, with some fifty thousand of their indigenous allies, mainly *Tlaxcaltecs*, arrived at Tenochtitlán. The Spanish armour, the presence of horses, and the religious predictions about the arrival of the conquerors influenced the defeatist spirit of Montezuma. Another important factor was a smallpox epidemic which occurred during the siege of Tenochtitlán; the epidemic weakened the *Aztecs* and precipitated the city's fall.

How large the *armada* that came with Hernán Cortés to Mexico really was varies according to which source one consults. Bernal Díaz del Castillo talks of 508 soldiers, plus almost 100 sailors and 16 horses and mares on 11 ships, with 14 cannons, 32 crossbows, and 13 shotguns:

> *De ahí a tres días que estábamos en Cozumel, mandó hacer alarde para saber qué tantos soldados llevaba, y halló por su cuenta que éramos quinientos ocho, sin maestres y pilotos*

y marineros, que serían ciento; y diez y seis caballos y yeguas: las yeguas todas eran de juego y de carrera; y once navíos grandes y pequeños, con uno que era como bergantín, que traía a cargo un Ginés Nortes; eran treinta y dos ballesteros, y trece escopeteros, que así se llamaban en aquel tiempo, y 1s tiros de bronce, y cuatro falconetes, y mucha pólvora y pelotas; y esto de esta cuenta de los ballesteros no se me acuerda muy bien. [77]

However, Francisco López de Gómara says there were 550 Spaniards, of whom 50 were sailors, and he adds that the main ship had 100 *tonnes*, while the other three had between 70 and 80.

Francisco López de Gómara describes the flag that Hernán Cortés raised: "of white and blue fires with a red cross in the middle, and surrounded by a sign in Latin that says: Friends, let us follow the cross; and us, if we have faith in this sign, we will win":

[...] de fuegos blancos y azules con una cruz colorada en medio, y alrededor un letrero en latín, que romanzado dice: Amigos, sigamos la cruz; y nos, si fe tuviéremos en esta señal, venceremos [...] [78]

Bartolomé de las Casas repeats Francisco López de Gómara's figures for the main army, but he adds that they also took 200 or 300 Indians, men and women, and a number of black slaves with them. He specifies that the *armada's* chief pilot was Antón de Alaminos. On the other hand, the *Carta del Cabildo*, of July 10, 1519, which replaced the lost *Carta de relación,* mentions 12 ships with 500 Spaniards in the *Preámbulo*, and 10 caravels with 400 men of war, plus the 16 horses and mares mentioned above. In his *Relación*, Andrés de Tapia gives a figure of 560 people on 13 ships. In the *Carta del Ejército* which Hernán Cortés addressed to the Emperor in October 1520, 534 signatures appeared, including those of soldiers and sailors, but there are notable absences, such as that of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who was sick with fever when this letter was written.

What sort of culture did the Spaniards encounter? What sources of information are available about these events of almost 500 years ago?

According to George Kubler we don't know much about the Aztec world:

The truth is that we are ignorant of all but the main outlines of Aztec religion. Popular worship and priestly lore were different. The priesthoods were concerned with political power; for the monarch was a priest, and the state was served by the performance of religious duties. The confused and confusing notices of Aztec religion collected during the sixteenth century by Spanish scholars from native sources suggest that Aztec political life in its entirety unfolded within the rituals and ceremonies of the festival calendar, under the direction of priestly corporations with conflicting interests and ambitions. [79]

Benjamin Keen notes that sources of information about the *Aztecs* are relatively abundant, but that they are colored by a myriad of ideological views. The objectivity of those sources is therefore questionable. Speaking of the sources, he writes:

What loyalties or interests influenced their judgments? How did such intellectual movements as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Positivism, and Marxism color the

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[77] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Mexico 1986, cap. XXVI, p. 42.
[78] López de Gómara, Francisco, *Historia de La Conquista de México*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Editorial Robredo, Mexico 1943, cap. VIII.
[79] Kubler, George, *The Art and Architecture of ancient America: The Mexican 'Maya' and Andean peoples*. The Pelican History of Art. Nikolaus Pevsner (ed.), Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondworth, Middlesex, Great Britain, 1962, p. 59.

interpretation of Aztec society over the centuries? The intense interest that the Aztec theme has held for Western man from Cortés to D. H. Lawrence is attributable in part to the relative abundance of our sources of information about the Aztecs. [80]

The modern world owes much of its knowledge about Mexico at the time of the conquest to the indigenous peoples themselves. Natives who had survived the Conquest passed their knowledge on to the Spanish missionaries who wrote about local culture. There is also a very valuable collection of indigenous documents.

For example, in 1524, a few years after the fall of México-Tenochtitlán, an anonymous Indian from Tlatelolco began to write *Unos Anales históricos de la Nación Mexicana,* also known as the *Relación de Tlatelolco*, which he concluded in 1528. Many other primitive indigenous *relaciones* followed, occasionally accompanied by hieroglyphics: *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas*, *Historia de la Nación Mexicana* (Códice Aubin), *Histoyre du Mechique*, *Historia tolteca chichimeca*, *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, *Leyenda de los Soles*, the *Memoriales de los Informantes indígenas* by Bernardino de Sahagún, and the *Relaciones de Chimalpahin*.

The most important descriptions of Mayan culture include the *Popol Vuh*, the *Libros de Chilam Balam,* and the *Anales de los Cakchiqueles*. The following excerpt from the *Popol Vuh* is a good example of the richness of the information:

Cuando, en 1524, los españoles, bajo el mando de Pedro de Alvarado, invadieron por orden de Cortés el territorio situado inmediatamente al sur de México, encontraron en él una población numerosa, dueña de una civilización semejante a la de sus vecinos del norte. Ocupaban el centro del país los quichés cakchiqueles; al poniente vivían los indios mames que aún habitan los departamentos de Huehuetenango y San Marcos; en las márgenes del sur del Lago de Atitlán se encontraba la raza aguerrida de los zutujiles; y, hacia el norte y oriente, se extendían otros pueblos de raza y lengua distintas. Todos eran, sin embargo, descendientes de los mayas que en el centro del Continente desarrollaron, en los primeros siglos de la era cristiana, una maravillosa civilización. Las características físicas de los quichés y demás pueblos indígenas de Guatemala, y la semejanza entre las lenguas, demuestran suficientemente el parentesco que las une con la madre común. Robustecen el concepto de la unidad racial maya-quiché las ideas comunes que se encuentran en los documentos de Guatemala y Yucatán acerca del origen de sus habitantes. Además del elemento maya original se observan en el compuesto étnico y en las lenguas de los antiguos reinos indígenas las huellas de la raza tolteca que, procedente del norte de México, invadió la península de Yucatán bajo el mando de Quetzalcóatl hacia el siglo XI de nuestra era. [81]

In the second part of the *Popol Vuh*, there are curious similarities to Christian myths, such as the story of the tree of paradise with its forbidden fruit and the concept of original sin. However, in the *Popol Vuh,* there is a skull instead of a snake. A virgin becomes pregnant through saliva on a skull and gives birth to Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué. [82] In the thirteenth chapter (pages 94-99) the author describes acts of resuscitating people, very similar to those practiced by Jesus. The *Popol Vuh* also describes other myths:

En el Popol Vuh pueden distinguirse tres partes. La primera es una descripción de la creación y del origen del hombre, que después de varios ensayos infructuosos fue hecho de maíz, el grano que constituye la base de la alimentación de los naturales de México y

[80] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, pp. 3-4.
[81] *Popol Vuh: Las antiguas historias del Quiché* (transl. and ed. Adrían Recinos). Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 16-17.
[82] Ibid, pp. 58-62.

> *Centroamérica. En la segunda parte se refieren las aventuras de los jóvenes semidioses Hunahpú e Ixbalanqué y de sus padres sacrificados por los genios del mal en su reino sombrío de Xibalbay; y en el curso de varios episodios llenos de interés se obtiene una lección de moral, el castigo de los malvados y la humillación de los soberbios. Rasgos ingeniosos adornan el drama mitológico que en el campo de la invención y expresión artística no tiene rival en la América precolombina. La tercera parte no presenta el atractivo literario de la segunda, pero encierra un caudal de noticias relativas al origen de los pueblos indígenas de Guatemala, sus emigraciones, su distribución en el territorio, sus guerras y el predominio de la raza quiché hasta poco antes de La Conquista española. En esta parte se describe también la serie de los reyes que gobernaban el territorio, sus conquistas y la destrucción de los pueblos pequeños que no se sometieron voluntariamente al dominio de los quichés.* [83]

Similarities to Christian myths are also found in the so-called Books of Chilam Balam, in which "prophecies and holy texts refer to both Christ's coming and that of Quetzalcóatl."

> *Los llamados Libros de Chilam Balam, del pueblo maya de Yucatán, los cuales fueron redactados después de La Conquista española ya con una adaptación fonológica hecha por los frailes españoles. Sus textos, de carácter heterogéneo, son una mezcla de escritos de carácter religioso, histórico, médico, cronológico, astrológico, literario, etc., donde la influencia europea es muchas veces más que incuestionable. Así en las profecías y los textos divinatorios se habla tanto de la venida del Cristo como de Quetzalcóatl.* [84]

Besides the pre-Hispanic and post-Hispanic *Codices* and the primitive *relaciones,* mostly written in indigenous languages, there were many works written by missionary historians using indigenous documents and information. Thanks to the work of indigenous writers, *mestizos*, Creoles, and Spaniards, including Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, Friar Toribio de Benavente (or *Motolinía*), Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, Friar Diego Durán, Friar Diego de Landa, Friar Juan de Torquemada, the *mestizos* or Creoles such as Juan Bautista Pomar, Juan de Tovar, Hernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, Diego Muñoz Camargo, and Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, Mexico has an exceptional wealth of information about its origins. However, doubts exist about the credibility and authenticity of some of these sources. In addition, the interpretation of those original manuscripts has brought controversies and vehement discussions, particularly in respect to the character of Quetzálcoatl and to the arrival of Cortés in Mexico.The moderate sources include the works of such great students of Aztec civilization as Motolinía, Bernardino de Sahagún, and Diego Durán.

2) The Fundamental Works on the Conquest

When Hernán Cortés told his king what he and his soldiers had seen and experienced in what was then an unknown world, he could not provide any documentary support. Accordingly, he wrote the *Cartas de Relación*, which has become the main source of information about the conquest of Mexico and about the newly discovered country. Another important contemporary work was *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo,* written by Pedro Mártir de Anglería, which covers the period from 1521 until 1525. Other works consulted include *Las Páginas sobre México* (Libro XXXIII, c. 1534-1538), the *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo and the *Conquista de México* (1552) from the second part of the *Historia general de las Indias* or *España victrix* by Francisco López de Gómara.

The *Cartas de Relación* and the appearance of the work of López of Gómara prompted Bernal Díaz del Castillo to write the *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* (The True History of the Conquest of New Spain, concluded in 1568) with the explicit aim of correcting the errors in the other

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[83] Ibid, pp. 16-17.

[84] *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam (transl. and ed. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón),*Colección Popular, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, Introducción General, p. 9.

accounts. The book is written from the conqueror's point of view, champions the soldiers, and praises their achievements and merits.

In the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, other chroniclers and historians, such as Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, Alonso of Zorita, Francisco Hernández and Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, Juan de Torquemada, and Antonio de Herrera also based their accounts on the *Cartas de Relación* of Hernán Cortés.

Two important partial records of events by Andrés de Tapia and Friar Francisco de Aguilar, who had been soldiers with Cortés, paralleled the *Cartas de Relación,* along with a work called *El Conquistador Anónimo* (The Anonymous Conqueror). Also, several indigenous documents refer to the Conquest, including the *Códice Ramírez-Manuscrito Tovar* or *Relación del Origen de los Indios que habitan esta Nueva España según sus Historias.*

It is fortunate for Mexican historiography that, besides the *Cartas de Relación* of Hernán Cortés, there are four other major works: the *Conquista de México* by Francisco López de Gómara and the *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, representing the Spanish viewpoint; and the *Anales de Tlatelolco* and the *Libro de la Conquista de los Informantes Indígenas*, by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, which represent the indigenous perspective. These five fundamental works, with their diverse temperaments and viewpoints, offer a broad interpretative spectrum about the conquest of Mexico. The works complement and relativize one another.

Of the three Spanish works, after the sober outlines of the conqueror's contained passion, the history by Francisco López de Gómara, with its qualities of style and harmonious composition came to be, despite of its marked partiality towards Cortés, the work that introduced Europe to one of the main cultures of the New World and to the facts of the Conquest. [85]

Bernal Díaz del Castillo's chronicle enriched these images with the popular perspective, the human touch, and the endless anecdotes that the soldier-turned-chronicler conserved in his memory. However, this author's work must be treated cautiously because of his natural partiality and because he wrote these memoirs several decades after the events occurred.

The *Anales de Tlatelolco*, written in *náhuatl* in 1528, takes the side of the conquered peoples and gives a moving indigenous version of the Conquest.

Primary Sources

The survey of the main primary sources is important, especially because these sources serve as support for many authors, historians, critics of art and artists (in particular Rivera) in their interpretations of the historical past. They are often used in an attempt to gain more credibility and legitimacy. Rivera emphasized several times that he consulted some of these authors, above all those who reinforce the interpretations of history expressed in his murals. [86]

[85] For further information on these missionary ethnographers, see Ballesteros Gaibrois, Manuel, Vida y obra de Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, León 1973 and Baudot, Georges, *Utopía e historia: Los primeros cronistas de la civilización Mexicana*, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 1984, caps. III and IV.

[86] These sources will be evoked in chapters III, IV, V and VI. On one side these sources are for many the main references in the past, which help to create the own idea of *Mexicanidad*. They are also used by many artists, who refer to them, directly and indirectly. I will also mention them in relation to some of the works analyzed in the chapters referred to.

Friar Bernardino de Sahagún

Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, who can be called the greatest of all chroniclers and who has been referred to as the "Father of American Anthropology," collected the spoils of the pre-Hispanic past. He followed an impulse to rescue something destined to be lost; he considered his work collecting indigenous material as important as the work of evangelizing the natives. He gathered an extensive collection and was the foremost investigator of the *nahua* culture, dedicating his life to collecting information and later writing about the customs, ways of life, places, behaviors, gods, language, science, art, eating habits and social organization of the so-called *Mexicas*. [87] He published the works, corrected them, enlarged them, and edited them into a number of books. His interest was that of an evangelizer, a historian, and a linguist. Sahagún lived in a time of transition between two cultures, and he realized that the *Mexica* would be absorbed by the European. He approached the task with singular determination and nerve, and his work displays great insight into the complexities of the indigenous world. Sahagún was motivated by a zeal for evangelizing; he felt that knowledge of the culture would help him combat the autochthonous pagan religion, thus making it easier to convert the natives to Christianity.

According to Luis Villoro, "we find Sahagún's History torn between two tendencies. The first one is driven by a practical goal: to convince [the reader] of the necessity of destroying the indigenous religion and of resisting its traps. The second pursues a very different goal: at the same time to convince [the reader] of the necessity of a return to the wise natural laws of the Indian."

> *[...] encontramos la Historia de Sahagún desgajada en dos vertientes. La primera parece conducida hacia una meta práctica: convencer de la necesidad de destruir la religión aborigen y de guardarse contra sus insidias. La segunda persigue meta bien distinta: convencer igualmente de la necesidad de una vuelta a las sabias leyes naturales del indio. De ahí que, inconscientemente, aparezca el mundo indígena en valoraciones tan diversas según se le considere desde una u otra meta. En lo natural habrá que respetar sus leyes y el orden de su sociedad que se nos manifiesta con bellos colores; en lo sobrenatural habrá que destruir la mancha idolátrica que se nos revela perversa y demoníaca.* [88]

The *Libro XII* or *Libro de la conquista*, from the *Historia general de las Cosas de Nueva España* (The General History of the Affairs of New Spain), had a most laudable aim: to describe an event, which native culture and sensibility considered to be the return of Quetzalcóatl, yet which turned into an avalanche that destroyed the old indigenous world. As discussed later, this prophecy was fundamental to the "explanation" of what happened when the Spaniards confronted the *Aztecs*.

Bernardino de Ribera, also called Ribeira or even Riveira, of Galician or Portuguese origin, was born in Sahagún, in the Kingdom of León, Spain, in 1499 or 1500, and died in Mexico City (New Spain) in 1590. He changed his last name to Sahagún, the name of the town where he was born. In 1516 he broke off his studies at the University of Salamanca to become a Franciscan monk. He arrived in New Spain in 1529 with Friar Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo and 19 other Franciscan monks, and he spent the rest of his life in Mexico, dedicating his life in New Spain to the study of history and native customs. Without Sahagún's investigations, much of the Mexican cultural inheritance would have been lost.

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[87] The meaning of the word "Mexico" is controversial. Historians and etymologists have not been able to unify approaches. However, the idea of its náhuatl origin prevails: One explanation for the name is that "Mexi" and the termination "co" means "Mexicas place". Another theory says the word "Mexico" came from "Mexitli", "Place of Mexitl". There is also the theory that the word "Mexico" is a derivative of "maxtli" that refers to "moon" or "goddess of the moon", and xietli, "navel or center" meaning "The one that is in the center of the moon" or "In the center of the mextli moon".

[88] Villoro, Luis, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 103, Segunda serie, Mexico 1987, pp. 69-70.

For Viloro: "Sahagún envisages one sure road for the Indian: assimilation."

> *Vislumbra Sahagún para el indio seguro camino: la asimilación. Quizá sea ésta la única solución coherente a la problemática que América planteara a Sahagún; tal vez sea la única consecuencia natural y lógica de su personal punto de vista. El indio, destruido en su mundo propio, acorralado por un saber extraño, verá dibujarse por fin una postrer vía abierta: su asimilación. Y, como en la palabra evangélica, el indio se perderá a sí mismo con tal de alcanzar su único posible camino de salvación.* [89]

Sahagún's work is valuable because he used indigenous sources for his information, and his students confirmed the information with respect to their own culture. Naturally, Sahagún's own ideas conditioned his collection of material, which he filtered and adapted according to his needs. [90]

On the other hand, the authenticity of the collected information can also be questioned, for several reasons. Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that the Indians adopted European tales and myths.

> *Tous les mythes auxquels nous avons eu affaire proviennent de représentants récents ou actuels de ces cultures. Les emprunts au folklore européen ne constituent donc pas un phénomène d'un nouveau type. Ils prennent place dans une longue histoire d'échanges entre les tribus, au cours de laquelle les transformations qu'opère spontanément la pensée mythique avaient déjà produit beaucoup de leurs effets. Les Indiens ont adopté des contes d'origine européenne parce qu'ils complétaient ou renforçaient ces effets.* [91]

Bernardino de Sahagún's practical reason for studying native culture was to arm the missionaries with the knowledge they needed to detect and combat the presence of pagan rites in their religion. He and his fellow monks understood the delicate problem that ignorance of the old native customs posed for evangelization. The indigenous religion included certain cult forms, ceremonies, and beliefs analogous to those of the Christian.

According to Benjamin Keen:

> *For Sahagún, the Conquest, instrument of God and vehicle of conversion, was the punishment imposed on the Indian for his sins; he could achieve total purification only by the destruction of his civilization and the death of his gods. With the Conquest the reign of Satan ended in New Spain; the Kingdom of Christ began. Sahagún then sounded a recurring theme in the writings of the Mendicants: "It seems that in our time the Lord God has been pleased to return to the Church what the Devil stole from her in England, Germany, and France, in Asia and Palestine."* [92]

Sahagún wrote in *náhuatl*, the native language he had learned, and in Castilian with some Latin words and phrases. From 1547 onwards, he collected data about the culture, beliefs, arts, and customs of the old Mexicans, inventing a modern method of investigation that was scientifically advanced for the time.

Sahagún created an encyclopedia of Mexican culture which was similar in structure to medieval encyclopedias. Sahagún's methods were systematic. He developed a questionnaire in *náhuatl*, with the help of the students from the *Colegio de la Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco*, and presented it to the natives, and the

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[89] Ibid, p. 80.
[90] See the chapter on Bernardino de Sahagún in Villoro, Luis, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 103, Segunda serie, Mexico 1987.
[91] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Histoire de Lynx*, Plon, Paris 1991, p. 264.
[92] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 115.

answers from the Indian informants were very carefully selected and edited by those young Indian students, who knew Latin and Castilian. Then Sahagún read these questionnaires to the Indian leaders from the neighborhoods, who sent him old natives who gave him invaluable help. They are known as *Informantes de Sahagún*, Sahagún's Informants. They came from Tepepulco (1558-1560), where they produced the *Primeros memoriales*; from Tlatelolco (1564-1565), where they produced the *Memoriales* with *escolios* (both versions are known as *Codexes matritenses*); and from Mexico City (1566-1571), where Sahagún wrote a new version, much more complete than the previous ones, but still relying on the help of his team of students from Tlatelolco. This third definitive text is the *Historia general de las Cosas de Nueva España.*

Sahagún concluded his third text in 1569. This work existed in three languages: Latin, Castilian, and *náhuatl*. He had worked on it for more than ten years, first in Tepeapulco, then in Tlatelolco, and later in a Franciscan monastry in Mexico City. The twelve books were ready to be published, but the members of the *Capítulo of 1570* were opposed to publication, claiming that a work of this size was contrary to the Franciscan spirit of poverty. A summary of the manuscript arrived at the *Consejo de India*s, and Juan de Ovando, the council's president, became interested in the work.

In Mexico, the fact that the friar had released the manuscript was seen as an act of insubordination and, as punishment, the papers were confiscated and dispersed. Sahagún's work was gathered together again in 1573, when he was elected provincial head of the order of Miguel de Navarro. But the spirit of the time was against his work. On April 22, 1577, King Felipe II issued a *cédula* ordering the definitive confiscation of the papers. The order warned against future publication in the following terms: "and you are warned not to consent in any way that any person writes anything whatsoever in any language concerning the superstitions and the way of life of these Indians."

> *[...] y estaréis advertido de no consentir que por ninguna manera persona alguna escriba cosa que toquen a supersticiones y manera de vivir de estos indios en ninguna lengua.* [93]

Sahagún's manuscripts were sent to Spain and lost for two centuries. The manuscript was rediscovered in 1777, where its reappearance coincided with a new interest in indigenous America.

Sahagún observed that the Spaniards had destroyed not only the Aztec religion but also the whole Aztec way of life in the belief that it was idolatrous and barbarous. Besides extirpating idolatry, they destroyed the existing educational system, which was superior to that of the Spaniards. Moreover, according to Keen:

> *Sahagún asserted that the ancient Mexicans surpassed the Greeks and Romans in material achievements, in political and social organization, in the arts and sciences. The Aztecs had "perfect philosophers and astrologers, and were very skillful in all the mechanical arts."* [94]

Bernardino de Sahagún made comparisons between religions and compared the *Aztec* god Huitzilopochtli to Hercules: "Huitzilopochtli [the Sun god] was another Hercules, he was robust, immensely strong and very belligerent, a great destroyer of towns and killer of people."

> *Este dios llamado Huitzilopochtli fue otro Hércules, el cual fue robustísimo, de grandes fuerzas y muy belicoso, gran destruidor de pueblos y matador de gentes.* [95]

He drew parallels between episodes of ancient Mexican history and occurrences in Greek and Roman history. According to him, the city of Tula suffered the same fate as Troy, and the refugees from Tula, the

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[93] Moreno Toscano, Alejandra, "El siglo de la conquista", *Historia General de México*, vol. I, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1990, p. 357.
[94] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 116.
[95] Sahagún, Bernardino de, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (ed. Ángel María Garibay Kintana), Editorial Porrúa, Mexico 1989, Libro Primero, Capítulo I, p. 31.

Cholulans, played an analogous role to those Trojans who escaped from the destruction of Troy and founded Rome:

> *Esta célebre y gran ciudad de Tula, muy rica y decente, muy sabia y muy esforzada, tuvo la adversa fortuna de Troya. Los chololtecas, que son los que de ella se escaparon, han tenido la sucesión de los romanos, y como los romanos edificaron el Capitolio para su fortaleza, así los cholulanos edificaron a mano aquel promontorio que está junto a Cholula, que es como una sierra o un gran monte, y está todo lleno de minas o Cuevas por de dentro. Muchos años después los Mexicanos edificaron la ciudad de México, que es otra Venecia, y ellos en saber y en policía son otros venecianos. Los tlaxcaltecas parecen haber sucedido en la fortuna de los cartagineses.* [96]

Other chroniclers from the religious orders also wrote *relaciones*, chronicles, and histories, populated with gods and heroes of the Greek-Latin mythology and with saints, mysteries, and Christian miracles from medieval histories. They had learned much in the university, in the Jesuit schools, and through their readings, and they incorporated this knowledge into the rich pre-Hispanic world, in which they were determined to recognize their own.

The West and Europe, the *náhuatl* and the Greek-Latin mythology, were combined in the creole world of New Spain. These diverse elements came together in religion, the center of consciousness at the time.

Hernán Cortés

Another crucial source for information about Mexican history and mythology is the *Cartas de Relación,* sent by Hernán Cortés to Charles V (1519-1526). Besides being a source of important information, its depiction of Cortés and his role in the Conquest defined him as a character whose role in the history of Mexico provoked heated discussions. For some, like José Vasconcelos, Cortés is the creator of the new Mexican nationality. For others, particularly amongst the historians, Hernán Cortés was an ambitious person and a barbarian who brutally destroyed the indigenous civilization.

According to Jacques Soustelle:

> *Les Espagnols, si sincèrement remués par la cruauté des prêtres indigènes, ont eux-mêmes massacré, brûlé, mutilé et torturé avec une bonne conscience imperturbable.* [97]

Later in the study, we will see how Rivera represents Cortés in the murals, such as the one at the National Palace, and the controversy that these representations engendered.

The *Cartas de Relación* by Hernán Cortés consists of five volumes in a *codex*. It is now in the collection of the Imperial Library of Vienna. The first volume was dated 1519 and finished in 1526. These *relaciones* cover a wide range of subjects: history, politics, literature, and ways of life. More importantly, the document introduced Mexico to the European world and bore witness to the establishment of a rich, new, Spanish dominion.

According to Keen:

> *The Aztec civilization of Mexico has a secure hold on the mind and imagination of Western man. The conqueror of the Aztecs, Hernando Cortés, was the first European to describe their society fully and precisely. His famous letters to the Emperor Charles V introduced*

[96] Ibid, p. 19.
[97] Soustelle, Jacques, *La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*, Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955, p. 167.

Europe to the beauty and terror of Aztec life. Since Cortés' time scores of writers have attempted to capture the complex Aztec reality. [98]

Besides the testimonial value of these documents (in spite of their being, naturally, partial and conditioned by the cultural perspective of the *conquistadores* of the period), these works, which are the only known writings by Cortés, reveal his literary interest, which dated back to his years in Salamanca. The *Cartas de Relación* inaugurated a genre that was popular in the sixteenth century, a genre that met the requirements of its time: the chronicle. Partiality is probably the most characteristic note of this genre and also its greatest value in the search for an overview of the Conquest's varied aspects. The genre provides information about the most varied points of view.

The conquest of Mexico is defined by two dates: 1519 and 1521. Between them, fundamental historic events happened, forming the basis for the creation of a new world, a New Spain, and the outburst of a new literature in the Spanish language − human testimony of what the adventure of the Conquest really was.

Hernán Cortés was born in Medellín de Extremadura, Spain, in 1485, and died in Spain in 1547. He studied law for two years at the University of Salamanca. In 1504, having failed in his studies, he traveled to Española, a possession governed by a relative, who made him take part in military action and gave him an *encomienda* as a reward. In 1511 he accompanied Diego Velásquez on a mission to colonize Cuba. He seduced a Spanish lady named Catalina Juárez, Xuárez, or Suárez Marcaida, for which he was imprisoned, but he regained his freedom by means of a marriage that transformed him into a political relative of Diego Velázquez. Little is known about Cortés' marriage to Catalina Juárez, which took place in Cuba around 1514 or 1515. Cortés traveled with Velásquez to the island of Fernandina (Cuba). Here his military prowess was rewarded with another *encomienda.* He later became mayor of Santiago.

Attracted by reports of the continent's great wealth, Velásquez armed a new expedition and appointed Hernán Cortés to lead it. However, he soon came to fear Cortés' autonomy and tried to remove him from the leadership. To avoid removal, Hernán Cortés accelerated his preparations, and on February 18, 1518, he weighed anchor from the Cabo de San Antón with eleven ships, nineteen horses, fourteen cannons, five hundred soldiers, one hundred sailors and two hundred slaves. On February 21, he arrived at Cozumel, where he rescued Jerónimo de Aguilar from a shipwreck. This man spoke the Mayan language, and later he would become a valuable interpreter. On March 22, Cortés won the first skirmishes on the coastlands of present-day Tabasco.

According to Jacques Soustelle:

[...] toutes les règles traditionnelles de la guerre, auxquelles les Mexicains se conformaient d'instinct, étaient tout naturellement violées par les envahisseurs. Loin de négocier avant le conflit, ils s'introduisent à Mexico en tenant des discours pacifiques, puis soudainement, massacrent les nobles indiens massés sur la place de danse, dans la cour du temple de Uitzilopochtli. Au lieu de chercher à faire des prisonniers, ils tuent autant de guerriers qu'ils le peuvent, tandis que les Aztèques perdent leur temps à capturer des Espagnols ou des auxiliaires indigènes pour les offrir en sacrifice. [99]

[98] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 3.
[99] Soustelle, Jacques, *La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*, Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955, p. 326.

He was given twenty slaves as a trophy of war. One of these was Malinche, who would become his translator and lover. She was an Indian slave who was fluent in both Mayan and *náhuatl*. Her indigenous name was Malinalli or Malintzin, which was corrupted to Malinche in Spanish and Marina in Castilian. Initially, there was a double bridge of translators between the Spaniards and the *náhuatl*-speaking natives. **Figure 11** shows Cortés and Malinche, as they are represented in Codex Durán. [100]



Figure 11. Cortés and Malinche (Codex Durán).



Figure 12. Romantic interpretation of Cortés and Malinche. Engraving from the *Voyage autour du Monde et naufrages célèbres*, Purrat Frères, París. [101]

Malinche translated from *náhuatl* to Mayan and Jerónimo de Aguilar from Mayan to Spanish. However, as Malinche learned Spanish quickly, she was soon able to translate to Cortés directly. She became the agent who allowed him to communicate with the indigenous world. More than that, she was a very clever woman, and her cleverness, combined with her love for Cortés, was one of the factors that made the conquest of Mexico possible. Her character caused several controversies, and her representation in the murals provoked bitter polemics. In **Figure 12** we can see a Romantic interpretation of Hernán Cortés and Malinche, who communicate by means of the alphabet of the deaf-mutes.

Carlos Monsiváis [102] comments that Malinche is a fundamental character in Mexican mythology.

> *La Malinche es un personaje fundamental en la mitología Mexicana: la traductora de Hernán Cortés, la traidora emblemática, la que le da la espalda a su raza para hacerse amante del conquistador y ser la madre del primer mestizo notorio: Martín Cortés. Por eso el malinchismo durante un largo periodo describe la entrega al extranjero.* [103]

On April 21, Hernán Cortés and his men arrived at San Juan of Ulúa, and by July 9 he had founded Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz and appointed the city council, which named him *Capitán General y Justicia Mayor.* This position assured him a fifth part of the booty of war and formal freedom from Velázquez.

The conqueror of Mexico, who was an audacious negotiator, took advantage of the resentment that most of the Meso-American population felt towards the *Aztecs* because of the high taxes. His use of violence and brutality, his diplomatic ability to exploit the subjected Indians' hatred for the *Aztecs*, and the fact that his opponents mistook him for Quetzalcóatl were all factors that allowed Hernán Cortés to win allies and to impose his law and religion on them. The Conquest rewarded exploitation and made it possible to explore the subjugated country without restrictions, even thwarting the decisions of the Crown. Society at this time was subordinate to military might.

For Jacques Soustelle the Aztec society was "Defeated because of its material insufficiencies or its mental maladjustment, it perishes before having given what it still concealed":

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[100] Reproduced in Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 81.
[101] Reproduced in Martínez, José Luis, *Hernán Cortés*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 840.
[102] Carlos Monsiváis is the most important and widely read cultural critic in Mexico. The influence of his analyses of contemporary Mexico's sociopolitical realities is enormous, inside Mexico as well throughout Latin America and in the United States.
[103] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Adonde yo soy tu somos nosotros", *La Jornada Semanal*, April 26 1998.

Vaincue à cause de ses insuffisances matérielles ou de son inadaptation mentale, elle périt avant d'avoir donné ce qu'elle recelait encore. Elle a surtout succombé parce que sa conception religieuse et juridique de la guerre la paralysait en face d'envahisseurs qui agissaient selon une conception totalement différente. Si paradoxal que cela puisse paraître au premier abord, on est conduit à penser que les Aztèques, si guerriers qu'ils fussent face aux Européens chrétiens du XVIe siècle, né l'étaient pas assez; ou plutôt ils l'étaient d'une autre manière, et leur héroïsme fut aussi inadéquat, aussi inefficace, que pourrait l'être celui des soldats de la Marne face à la bombe atomique d'aujourd'hui. [104]

The information concerning the Conquest is often subject to dispute. One of the controversial episodes in the Conquest is the burning of the ships. I will discuss this episode in detail later. The representation of this episode in the murals poses some problems, and, according to many investigators, the episode never took place. Apparently, in order to make retreat impossible, Cortés gave the order to burn the ships, which meant that his expedition could only go forward and march on México-Tenochtitlán. Before going into the interior, Hernán Cortés decided to leave behind a strong garrison at Rica Villa de la Vera Cruz. Since many of his soldiers were friends of Diego Velázquez, and since they feared venturing into such a large, populated land, he decided to disable their ships. Hernán Cortés himself writes: "I managed, so that those ships could not navigate":

Y porque demás de los que por ser criados y amigos de Diego Velázquez tenían voluntad de se salir de la tierra, había otros que por verla tan grande y de tanta gente, y tal, y ver los pocos españoles que éramos, estaban del mismo propósito, creyendo que si allí los navíos dejase, se me alzarían con ellos, y yéndose todos los que de esta voluntad estaban, yo quedaría casi solo, por donde se estorbara el gran servicio que a Dios y a vuestra alteza en esa tierra se ha hecho, tuve manera como, so color que los dichos navíos no estaban para navegar, los eché a la costa por donde todos perdieron la esperanza de salir de la tierra. Y yo hice mi camino más seguro y sin sospecha que vueltas las espaldas no había de faltarme la gente que yo en la villa había de dejar. [105]

Francisco López de Gómara.

Another primary source is the *Historia general de las Indias* or *España victrix* by Francisco López de Gómara.

Francisco López de Gómara was born in 1511 in Spain and died between 1566 and 1572. He was a priest who traveled to Italy in 1541. There he met Hernán Cortés who made him his chaplain. Using the conqueror's narrative as his starting point, he wrote *La Historia general de las Indias* y *Conquista de México*. In 1552 King Filipe II prohibited this work because he thought it put too much emphasis on the necessity of violence.

In the *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*, Bernal Díaz del Castillo claims that it was the inaccuracies in Francisco López de Gómara's work which had impelled him to write his own account.

Keen, again:

Francisco López de Gómara excused himself from justifying the Conquest in his Historia de las Indias (1552) because Sepúlveda had written so well on the subject. [...] From first to last, the Conquista de México is a celebration of the man whose genius and heroism

[104] Soustelle, Jacques, *La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*, Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955, p. 328.
[105] *Hernán Cortés: Cartas de Relación*, Editores Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1990, p. 49.

made it possible for a small band of Spaniards to conquer a vast empire. Gómara's power lay chiefly in his style, a trenchant, chiseled style sometimes acid with irony, sometimes racy and sprinkled with homely Castilian proverbs, sometimes rising to a lofty eloquence. Unfortunately, Gómara followed classical models in the use of long, made-up speeches which he assigned to Cortés and other personages. In one such speech Cortés lectured a group of patient Indians on the advantages of the Christian faith. Naturally he reiterated Sepúlveda's thesis of the superiority of Spaniards over Indians. [...] Gómara declared that the Mexicans were liars, thieves, drunkards, and loafers; they were very lustful; the men had relations indifferently with women or other men, without any sense of shame. [...] Gómara stressed Spain's civilizing mission, the gifts she sent to relieve the poverty of Indian Mexico. [...] Gómara's book was highly readable and informative; moreover, it radiated a fervent Spanish nationalism and a proud conviction of the superiority of European Renaissance civilization over American barbarism that was satisfying to most Western minds. Las Casas denounced it as slanderous and mendacious. [...] But the Indianist movement headed by Las Casas had lost its momentum and was in retreat; Lascasian ideas were becoming suspect at the Spanish court. Under these conditions the anti-Indian current of thought brilliantly represented by Gómara soon gained the ascendancy in Spain. [106]

Bernal Díaz del Castillo

Bernal Díaz del Castillo accompanied Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Mexico. He began to write his memoirs many years after the events he describes. He wanted to refute diverse versions of the conquest, for example those of Illexas and Jovio. Bernal Díaz del Castillo worked for a long time on his book, probably beginning it in 1555 or 1557. By 1563 the book was finished and in 1568 he produced a clean copy of it. Del Castillo was in economic difficulties when he began to write the book, and he hoped to make money with his memoirs. Despite his presence during the conquest and his knowledge of the "truth," one must question his version of the facts. Like so many others of his time, del Castillo was a fervent Catholic, and his faith conditioned his version of events. However, del Castillo and Cortés provided much of what we know today about the *Aztecs* and Tenochtitlán. A copy of del Castillo's work was sent to Spain in 1575 and was used by the friar Alonso Remón, who in 1632 published the work in Madrid as *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva-España*, many years after the author's death. According to the most recent accounts, Bernal died in 1584, without seeing his book printed. The original work by del Castillo was sent to Spain in 1575, but it disappeared. There are, however, three copies, and it has proved possible to piece together a text which is almost complete.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo was born in Spain, between 1492 and 1496, and he died in Guatemala, probably in 1584 or 1585. He had a military career. He traveled to Cuba in 1514, and his first contacts with Mexico took place during 1517-1518 when he joined the expeditions of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba and Juan de Grijalba.

His work, which is one of the main sources about Mexican history, praises European soldiery and attempts to justify the cruelty and ruthlessness of the Spaniards. From a literary point of view, it was considered a superb example of universal epic poetry.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo enrolled in the force that Hernán Cortés brought to Mexico in 1519, and, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, he participated in the most important events of the conquest, including the massacres of the defenseless population of Cholula and the torture inflicted upon Cuauhtémoc. He resigned with his portion of the booty and went to Spain to request lands and Indians. He returned to New Spain in

[106] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, pp. 82-84.

1541. He then went to Guatemala, where he was given a *corregimiento* (a country property complete with its Indian population).

Friar Bartolomé de las Casas

Friar Bartolomé de las Casas was a Franciscan missionary who distinguished himself with his defense of the natives soon after the Conquest. As Bishop of Chiapas, he wrote *Brevísima relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* and other works. However, some people believed that Las Casas exaggerated the accusations of abuse which were levelled against the Spaniards.

Friar Bartolomé de las Casas was born in 1474, and he died in Spain in 1566. In 1502, he arrived in America and settled down on the island of La Española. He went to New Spain for the first time in 1531. In 1544, he was designated Bishop of Chiapas. He was invested in 1545, and the following year he was back in Spain. In 1550 he renounced the bishopric. He had influence in the court at Madrid and was influential in introducing the short-lived *Nuevas Leyes* of 1542. The laws offered a certain amount of protection for the indigenous peoples. Friar Bartolomé de las Casas defended them against the abuses of the *encomenderos,* and he even proposed bringing in black slaves to relieve the Indians of the hardest physical work. He was involved in the debates in Spain about the nature of the Indians, and he attacked those who claimed that the Indians had neither souls nor the use of reason. For his defense of the native peoples of America, he has been called *Padre de los Indios*, Father of the Indians. As we will see, Rivera used Las Casas's version of the facts to justify his frequent portrayal of the atrocities committed by the Spaniards against the *Aztecs*.

In his extensive work, Las Casas criticized the cruelty and the abuses of the conquerors and the *encomenderos*. Las Casas's *Brevísima Relación* was the origin of the so-called Black Legend of Spanish inhumanity towards the Indians. He wrote a number of *relaciones* dedicated to the Spanish crown that were known as *Tratados.* The first one was known as *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*. [107]

Friar Bartolomé de las Casas believed that the indigenous peoples were the most religious people the world has ever known; even when they sometimes practiced rites that could be frightening, they demonstrated the supreme appreciation that they had for the divinity.

Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

Sepúlveda was one of Spain's most distinguished classical scholars, historians, and theologians. When he was urged by highly-placed friends to write a paper against the ideas of Las Casas, Sepúlveda complied by writing a Latin treatise, which sought to prove the justice of the Spanish wars against the Indians. He based his argument on the premise that the Indians fitted Aristotle's definition of slaves by nature.

The influence of Las Casas, supported by liberal-minded professors at leading Spanish universities, was strong enough to prevent publication of Sepúlveda's treatise; however, in 1550, in an atmosphere of retreat from the reform laws of 1542, the Emperor Charles summoned a junta of theologians to consider the question of the justice of the Spanish war against the Indians. The disputants were Las Casas and Sepúlveda. They debated in Valladolid during 1550 and 1551.

Sepúlveda tried to demonstrate that the *Aztecs* did not have souls and to prove the rudeness, barbarism, and inherently slavish nature of these people. The *Aztecs* lacked all learning, had no written language, and preserved no other record of their history other than some vague and obscure recollections of past events,

[107] de las Casas, Fray Bartolomé, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552), *Tratados*. Prólogos de Lewis Hanke y Manuel Giménez Fernández, transcripción de Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso y traducciones de Agustín Millares Carlo y Rafael Moreno, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1965.

which they represented in pictures. They had no written laws, only barbaric customs and institutions. What was worse, they had no private property.

According to Sepúlveda, the *encomienda* system was just and worthy of support, because the *encomenderos* would instruct the Indians in civilized ways and in the Christian religion. The Sepúlveda School held that the Conquest was just; it was a divine punishment of the *Aztecs* for their sins of idolatry and human sacrifice. Yet the moderates agreed with Las Casas in condemning Spanish excesses toward the Indians.

For Jacques Soustelle there was a "big misunderstanding":

> *Telle fut la base du grand malentendu qui opposa les Mexicains aux Espagnols: les uns, adorateurs de dieux multiples, et prêts à recevoir parmi les leurs ceux que les nouveaux venus apportaient; les autres, sectateurs d'une religion exclusive qui ne pouvait élever ses églises que sur les ruines des temples anciens.* [108]

The Anonymous Conqueror

The Anonymous Conqueror, who was the only conqueror with a true aesthetic sense, knew how to express the beauty of the *Aztecs* at war. The warriors were organized according to religious and formal conceptions. Thus, the fighting unit comprised two hundred or four hundred men, which were symbolic and sacred numbers. Beauty, religion, and war formed an indivisible entity.

Alfonso Reyes states, "Four times the Anonymous Conqueror tried to travel to the palaces of Montezuma: four times he gave up, tired"

The famous *Relación*, "The Anonymous Conqueror," published for the first time in Italian in Venice in 1556, has been attributed to Gonzalo de Umbría. Gonzalo de Umbría was pilot of a ship in Cortés' fleet and later a soldier and conqueror. Accused of plotting against Cortés, Cortés ordered his toes to be cut off. Then to compensate him, Cortés ordered him to look for the goldmines of the Indians. He returned with a good quantity of the metal, and was reputed to have become rich. After the conquest, he returned to Spain, where he complained about Cortés to Carlos V.

In the so-called chronicle of the Anonymous Conqueror, the *Aztecs* are sometimes portrayed as the brightest and most productive people in the world. However, the general tendency in the narrative is to reduce the *Aztecs* to the level of bestial wild peoples.

According to Keen:

> *The writer distorts the significance of Aztec ritual cannibalism, explaining that it arose from a taste for human flesh, "which they value more than any other food, so much so that many times they go to war and risk their lives only in order to kill someone to eat." They were commonly sodomites and drank without moderation. The worst offenders were the men of Pánuco; here the men were great sodomites, idlers, and drunkards. The sensationalist tendency of the relation is illustrated by the absurd tale, clearly designed to amuse Italian readers, that Indian women urinated standing up and the men sitting, like women.* [109]

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[108] Soustelle, Jacques, *La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*, Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955, 190.

[109] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 63.

Friar Diego Durán

Friar Diego Durán was born in Spain in 1537 (?), and he died in Mexico City in 1588. He was brought to Mexico as a boy and became a Dominican in 1556. He was the author of the following works, all based on original *náhuatl* documents: *Ritos Fiestas y Ceremonias de los antiguos Mexicanos* (1570), *Calendario antiguo* (1579), and *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra firme* (1867 and 1880). One copy of hieroglyphics in a group of sheets narrating the history of the *Mexicas* from their departure from Aztlán until the fall of Tenochtitlán has also been attributed to Diego Durán. His work describes rites, customs, parties, and other items of interest about the *Aztecs*. The collection was part of the *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra firme* mentioned above. This document, which is in the National Library of Madrid, was also known as *Atlas Durán*.

Friar Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía)

He was born in Spain in 1491 (?), and he died in Mexico City in 1596. He adopted the name of Friar Toribio Paredes and was called Benavente after becoming a Franciscan. He arrived in New Spain in 1524 and was the author of *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España*, 1536, published by Joaquín García Icazbalceta in the collection of *Documentos para la Historia de México* (1858-66), beginning with the *Memoriales*; and *La Conquista de Jerusalén*, (1539), *Martirio de los niños de Tlaxcala*, *Guerra de los Indios y Carta al Emperador*. His works are an attempt to refute Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas's accusations.

Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora

Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora was a nobleman born in Mexico City. He entered the Jesuit order, but he was expelled from the Jesuit Colegio in Puebla in 1668. Sigüenza could speak *náhuatl*, and he made archaeological excavations in Teotihuacán in order to find similarities between the Mexican pyramids and those of Egypt. He was a collector of books and Indian *Codices*, maps and other documents relating to ancient Mexico.

Keen:

> *Sigüenza never lost an opportunity to compare Indian achievements with those of the Greco-Roman world, to the advantage of the former. There was no novelty in this approach, long used by Mendicant writers. What was novel was the motive, which was to show that the Mexican fatherland had an antiquity as dignified, as honorable, as that of Europe. In his Parayso occidental, a commissioned history of a Mexican nunnery, Sigüenza inserted much information about the vestal virgins of ancient Mexico, assigned like those of Rome to guard the sacred temple fire. Sprinkling his text with sonorous Aztec words, Sigüenza pointed with relish to the analogies between the Mexican and Roman vestals.* [110]

For Sigüenza, the ancient Mexicans were ideals in every way − as he proved in his *Theatro de Virtudes políticas*, written in 1680. The writings of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora combine exaltation of the Indians with a systematic study of Mexico's Indian roots.

[110] Ibid, pp. 190-191.

Friar Juan de Torquemada

Friar Juan de Torquemada was born in Spain in 1557 (?), and died in Mexico City in 1624. He arrived in New Spain around 1560. He entered the order of the *Franciscanos Menores* in 1579, and he may have studied with Bernardino de Sahagún.

In 1607, after huge floods devastated Mexico City, Friar Juan de Torquemada participated in the reconstruction of the roadways at Misterios, San Cristóbal, and Chapultepec, as well as of the dams at Zumpango and Citlaltépetl. Friar Juan de Torquemada was a chronicler of the Franciscans (1609), guardian of the monasteries of Zacatlán and Tlaxcala (1612), and governor of the Franciscan county of *Santo Evangelio* (1614-17).

In 1615, Friar Juan de Torquemada published *Los veintiún Libros Rituales i Monarchia Indiana*, in Seville. In this work he describes the origin and the wars of the western Indians, their populations, discoveries, conquests, trade, and other important events. His work was based on information from the Franciscan monks and on the reports of some indigenous survivors of the Conquest. Friar Juan de Torquemada's historical interpretations in *Monarquía Indiana* and the sources that he used clearly reflected his own beliefs, which were in good part medieval, and the inescapable circumstance of him being a Spanish Franciscan in the New World. His writings at the beginning of the seventeenth century were far removed from any ideological eclecticism, and more than anything else, represent his personal judgement of indigenous religion.

In this point, Friar Juan de Torquemada typified, in an extreme way, the position of many others of his time, who believed they saw the devil at work in pre-Hispanic man's doctrines and rites. Torquemada insists on the demoniac, not only when speaking of the indigenous religion, but also as regards non-religious aspects of the old culture.

For Friar Juan de Torquemada, the Aztec divinities and the Greco-Roman gods were exactly identical. Tezcatlipoca was Jupiter, Huitzilopochtli was Mars, Tláloc was Neptune, and so forth. The similarities were obvious:

> *[...] with the same names, although their names sounded different, since all men did not have the same language.* [111]

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo was born in Spain in 1478, and he died in Santo Domingo in 1557. He took twelve trips between America and Europe starting in 1514. In 1532 he was named C*ronista general de Indias*. He was the author of *Sumario de la Historia natural de las Indias* (1526) and of the *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, part of which was published in 1535. A complete version was not published until 1851-55. His main interest was in the accomplishments and feats of the conquerors.

The Spiritual Conquest of the New World

It was necessary to find a common language, so that the missionaries could settle down and in order to facilitate communication between the missionary and the people he was trying to convert. To this end, during the first years of the Spiritual Conquest of the New World, the indigenous languages were studied and preserved, and the texts of the European-Christian tradition were translated into *náhuatl*.

[111] Quoted in Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 182.

Since the natives used "paintings" to transmit their stories, the missionaries began to preach using pictures even before they could understand the indigenous languages. One can still see some of those pictures in the churches or the museums; they show scenes of Christ's life, of the Victory of Faith, of hell, purgatory, and paradise. Some are paintings "in series" made by indigenous authors copying European models from Flanders or Italy. The Spanish missionaries studied the indigenous languages, and they left their mark in all areas.

The fact that the missionaries studied and learnt *náhuatl* led to an extension of its use as a second language of dominance. The Spaniards used the *náhuatl* names for places, hills, valleys, and towns. These are the names that have survived, and *náhuatl* came to dominate in places where it had only been a *Lingua Franca* in pre-Hispanic times.

As for the similarities between native religion and Christianity, the missionaries saw the formal similarities as a kind of diabolical parody of Christian practices. Finding such practices among the natives was more of an obstacle to evangelization than a help. For example, the Indians viewed the confession as a type of temporary justice. They asked for a signed document to show to the court, proving they had made penance. In addition, the natives believed their entrance into paradise depended on the specific circumstances of their death, rather than on the way they had lived.

The missionaries felt it was necessary to make a radical break with the past. Christianity could not be presented as an improvement on the old religions. Instead it was taught as something fundamentally different. As the historian Benjamin Keen points out:

> *For four and a half centuries ancient Mexico has been a battle ground of ideas, and no end to the long quarrel over the nature of Aztec civilization is in sight.* [112]

The historical or mythological world previous to the Conquest was incorporated into the European tradition; it accepted the western mold, but it enriched it with some part of its own land, and in that enrichment the natives found their difference and their pride. A knowledge of *náhuatl* was as common among people of letters as Latin or Greek. The deliberate assumption of the pre-Hispanic past was a conscious cult phenomenon. Another matter of no less importance, although it corresponded to study rather than to cultural anthropology, was the survival of pre-Hispanic culture in uses, social customs, ways of collective behavior, or religious syncretism.

Historical Views of the Discovery and the Conquest

According to the *Indigenista* position, the Spaniards, in their desire for riches, destroyed a great indigenous culture. The Spanish contribution was illness and exploitation. The Spaniards explored, and the natives were exploited. Religion was merely an instrument to justify conquering the infidels or pagans, which was the same argument that the Moors had used when conquering Spain.

The *Hispanist* cross-current begins with Lucas Alamán, who offers an exalted version of the Spanish conquest and of Hernán Cortés as a hero and defender of Christian evangelism. In 1823, Alamán was forced to hide the remains of Cortés in order to avoid that they were desecrated. In accordance with the *Hispanist* vision, the Spaniards reached out to the natives, who were ignorant and sinful. Progress and the current culture in Spanish America are Spanish achievements. The indigenous culture was idolatrous; they practiced human sacrifices and even religious cannibalism. The Spaniards liberated many indigenous peoples from the sanguinary *Aztec* tyranny.

[112] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 563.

A third vision, a model that was popular during the 500 years' celebration of the discovery of the New World, and which is a historical compromise, presents the Conquest as an encounter between two worlds, whereby a new culture was born with its own characteristics in art, politics, law, music, and customs. This model promotes the coexistence of indigenous peoples and Spaniards. The fruits of the encounter were the *mestizaje* and a new civilization. Most of the current inhabitants of Ibero-America identify themselves with neither the indigenous culture nor the Spanish culture.

Spain was determined to conquer Mexico by joining forces with large numbers of Indians who allied themselves to the small number of Spaniards accompanying Hernán Cortés. Later, in the struggle against Spain, it was their descendants living in Mexico who were determined to gain independence. The participation of the indigenous peoples in the fight was zero or, at best, marginal; they were only soldiers or cannon fodder. The two main goals of colonization were Catholic evangelization and the search for wealth.

3) Important Periods in Mexican History after the Conquest

I will now present a chronological overview of the different phases of Mexican history after the Conquest. This overview is summarized in Appendix I, *A Historical Summary*.

The Colony

Mexico was a Spanish colony from 1521, when Spanish domination began, until 1821, when Independence was attained. The principal causes of the movement for Independence included the invasion of Spain by Napoleon's army in 1808 and the imposition of Napoleon's brother (José Bonaparte) as King of Spain; the influence of the encyclopaedists, such as Rousseau and Voltaire; the influence of the French Revolution and the Independence of the United States; the dissatisfaction at the high taxes imposed by Spain and her export and import monopolies; the dissatisfaction of the clergy in New Spain with the control exercised by the Spanish government; the introduction of the liberal constitution of Cadiz in 1820, and the discrimination against Creoles which made it almost impossible for them to occupy important positions in business or government.

Independence

Mexican independence developed in four phases. In 1808, during the reign of Fernando VII, the first attempts at achieving independence were made by the Licenciado, Primo Verdad y Ramos and members of the city council of Mexico City. These attempts were quashed by the French. Agitation continued in 1810-1811. In the second stage, that of the armed struggle, from 1811 to 1815, the principal character was José María Morelos, who also frequently appears in the murals. Finally, in the third stage, from 1820 to 1821, the consolidation of Independence occurred with Agustín de Iturbide, another typical character in many murals.

Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla

Strongly influenced by the encyclopaedists and the French Revolution, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (1753-1811) sought independence for Mexico. When he began the rebellion, his superiors excommunicated him. In official histories he is referred to as "The Father of the Homeland". He was the parish priest at Dolores and one of the major figures in the Conspiracy of Valladolid, which sought to liberate Mexico from Spain. The conspiracy was thwarted when the French occupied the country to preserve the Spanish king's rights. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla led the rebellion from September, 1810 until the middle of 1811, when he was captured. Tried and convicted by the *Tribunal de la Inquisición*, he was shot on July 30 of that year. His place was taken by José María Morelos y Pavón who continued fighting for the same ideals until his death in 1815.

The War of Independence (1820-21)

Agustín de Iturbide (1783-1824), a royalist official from a wealthy family, fought the rebels from 1810 to 1820. Hidalgo tried to convince him to join the rebel cause, but his offer was rejected. Yet in 1820 de Irtubide broke with the Spanish government because Fernando VII, the King of Spain, signed the liberal and anticlerical constitution of Cadiz. Using this pretext, Spanish residents in Mexico, the clergy, and rebels, such as Vicente Guerrero, who had still been fighting in some areas of the country, joined Iturbide to seek independence. In 1821, Iturbide joined up with Guerrero in the *Plan de Iguala* and led the *Ejército Trigarante* movement. The name came from the three objectives of the movement, which were symbolized by the three colors of the Mexican flag, the Trigarante Army, or the Three Guarantees. The Mexican flag has changed little since Iturbide first designed it in 1821. Only the direction of the colored stripes has changed; instead of being horizontal, they are now placed vertically, and in the center the national shield appears. The shield has been frequently altered. During the government of Iturbide, it was an imperial crown on the head of an eagle. The flag has, however, long maintained its green, white, and red colors. White symbolized the purity of the Catholic religion, green symbolized the ideal of the political independence of Mexico and red symbolized the union between Indians, *mestizos*, Creoles and Spanish. Several years after 1821, the colors green and red were adopted by the Conservatives and liberals, respectively, and used symbolically.

Agustín de Iturbide entered the capital in triumph on September 27, 1821. By the Treaty of Córdoba, the agreement between Iturbide and the viceroy O'Donojú, the viceroy recognized the independence of Mexico on August 25, 1821. (However, Spain did not recognize Mexico as an independent country until 1836.) Irtubide was crowned Emperor in 1822, but his reign lasted only ten months. He was condemned and exiled as a traitor: in 1824 he returned. He was apprehended and shot in Padilla, Tamaulipas.

Having achieved Independence in 1821, Mexico struggled to become a democratic modern nation. Despite its democratic tendencies, Mexico's first post Independence state was organized as an empire, with Iturbide as its emperor (1822-1823). Later, independent Mexico existed either as a federal or a centralized republic.

The attitude toward the Church was a major problem. It divided Mexicans between those who had been and those who wanted to continue being Catholic. Between 1821 and 1835, many refused to sequester Church property, despite the measures employed to enforce this. Later, even conservative governments took this step, in order to solve budgetary problems, the only difference being one of form. Toward the end of the 1820s, the politicians were split into two groups according to their opinions about the clergy. Those who defended "freedom and progress" considered it essential to break the temporal power of the Church; the opposing group defended "public order and religion".

Although societies always change slowly, and this whole period from 1821 to 1848 represented a gradual transition from a colonial to a republican society, the 1820s saw major changes that represented a clear break with the past. The form that Independence took assured the supremacy of the Creoles, and the pact between Guerrero and Iturbide opened the doors to many rebels. The restrictions on cross-breeds and Indians occupying important positions were definitively lifted.

The history of eighteenth century Mexico could be summarized as the fight between a philosophical-liberal sensibility and a traditional-religious one. The political meanings that invaded all forms of expressions always had an aesthetic aspect, which expressed itself clearly in the art of the period.

The Post-independence Economic Situation

Mexico's revenues decreased and the government's expenses increased. The new independent government covered the deficit with loans from England. Ninety per cent of the budget was used to pay the expenses of the militia. Robberies, lootings, and insecurity strangled investment, and the bureaucracy grew. Public positions became booty for the political parties. The expulsion of many Spaniards, on the basis of the ordinances of 1827 and 1829, led to extensive capital flight and reduced production. This situation continued

until 1830, when, under the first centralist government of Bustamante, his minister, Lucas Alamán, reorganized public finances and created the conditions for economic improvement and industrialization.

Free Masonry was the most active political grouping. The lodges originating from Spain were in favor of centralism and sought a conservative government similar to that of the Colony. On the other side, radical federalists founded the lodge of York in 1825 with the support of the North American ambassador Joël R. Poinsett. Poinsett favored the Colony borderline, believing that United States should annex the northern states. The political struggle was between liberal (federalists) and Conservatives (centralist) parties. Between 1821 and 1850, a period of twenty-nine years, Mexico had fifty governments, a measure sign of great political uncertainty.

Under Iturbide, the land area of Mexico was approximately 5 million square kilometres. Mexico included almost all the territory from Central America to the current states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Today; the land area is around 1.9 million, which represents thirty-nine per cent of Mexico's size when it became independent.

The Struggles between Liberals and Conservatives (1829-1835)

In 1829, in the face of chaos and bankruptcy, the government deprived Vicente Guerrero of the presidency under the *Plano de Jalapa*. The vice-president, conservative General Anastasio Bustamante, became president. In 1833, Santa Anna rebelled and defeated Bustamante, who handed the presidency over to Gómez Pedraza. Three months later, Pedraza made Santa Anna president with Valentine Gómez Farías as vice-president. Santa Anna retired, pleading illness, and left control to Gómez Farías, a radical liberal. He began an anticlerical reform of the education system, and he was opposed to military jurisdictions. These changes caused dissatisfaction and conservative uprisings. In 1835, capitalizing on the growing dissatisfaction with the excesses of the reformists, Santa Anna ousted Gómez Farías, suspended the constitution, and served as president for five months. He then retired to his country property and handed over power to a group of Conservatives. At the end of 1835, the new congress adopted a new conservative constitution, known as *The Seven Laws,* which revoked the federal régime and established a centralist republic.

The conflict between church and liberal government in a Catholic country was common in the Hispanic world. Initiatives from the time of Carlos III, combined with the work of the liberal courts, resulted in the promulgation of ordinances suppressing the Inquisition and the monastic orders. Spanish liberalism reached its climax in the federal and reformist measures of 1833. Liberalism had promoted uncertainty everywhere; this was not only a Mexican phenomenon − not even Spanish American. Throughout history, it was common to view Latin American liberalism as the synonym of progress in opposition to the Church.

The goals of liberalism were to renew culture, to open new horizons of thought imbued with a liberal sense of being, and to accept modern critical ideas. The eclectic-assimilative attitude tried to reconcile the Christian religion and "experimental philosophy" or modern science. Mexico was born under the liberal sign of the eighteenth century. Mexico rushed to fulfill the new yearnings, and the shout of independence attested to its desire to be free and liberal.

Mexican Liberalism

The liberal era lasted forty-three years, i.e. less than the other regimes of the nineteenth century. However, liberalism left its mark: big government, usufruct for the aristocrats and the middle class, and the promotion of half a dozen freedoms. These freedoms included political freedom (somewhat restricted in the Restored Republic and almost unlimited in the *Porfiriato)*; religious freedom (initially with certain obstacles for the Catholic faith); a press absolutely free from restrictions in the *Restored Republic* and later with its freedom circumscribed; little restriction on education; labor conditions dictated by the employer without consultation with the employee; and economic freedom abused by money sharks. In sum, the formal freedoms,

consecrated in numerous very respectable but unfulfilled laws, masked the régime in a beautiful, up-to-date disguise. The real freedoms never ceased to exist; they were valuable, and some could acquire them.

The public order in this era was liberal; but the domestic order was puritan, or anti-liberal. Overwhelming evidence indicates that 75 percent of the inhabitants, including women, were, in effect, slaves. The liberal era could not escape foreign influence. Both the rich and the middle class wanted powerful countries to approve of Mexico. They wanted the blondes from Europe and the north to enjoy and envy the opera, the art nouveau, the Parisian tailors, and the dances from the European courts. The Mexican aristocrats began to frequent their "aunt France" more than their parents and brothers from Hispanic America, and even more than their northern neighbors. They had lived for centuries without showing their noses in the street and had ended up feeling disgusted at their own home country. It was natural that they missed few opportunities to practice excesses in street life and to imitate exotic ways and fashions.

For Luis González: "Alongside the vice of foreignism, a consciousness of and feeling for a Mexican America developed and grew."

> *Junto al vicio del extranjerismo crecen y se vigorizan la conciencia y el sentimiento de una América Mexicana. Nadie puede poner en duda el arraigado amor a México de Benito Juárez, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada y Porfirio Díaz. Casi sin excepción, la élite política de la era liberal fue profundamente patriota. La obra del gobierno, pese a ciertas apariencias, buscó la consolidación de una patria. La propaganda nacionalista del régimen fue particularmente notoria en el sector urbano popular. La gran mayoría del pueblo que ni siquiera se sabía ni sentía Mexicano en épocas anteriores, en ésta contrajo el sentimiento y la conciencia de una nacionalidad integrada por un territorio, un pueblo mestizo, producto de la fusión de dos razas y dos culturas, una historia común y una religión con santos patronos (Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo, Morelos, los Niños Héroes y los mártires de la Reforma), con símbolos venerables (la bandera, el escudo y el himno), con calendario de fiestas y conmemoraciones cívicas (5 de mayo, 16 de septiembre y otras) y con una complicada liturgia de discursos, campanadas, alaridos, cohetes, desfiles, ofrendas florales y balazos.* [113]

Mexico took a new direction in the second half of the nineteenth century. It achieved political freedom, but other freedoms were not achieved. Freedom arose in history under the liberal sign, which took a coded form in 1824, inspired by the North American model with its English roots. It was the will to renovate tradition and to seek progress that gave liberalism a definitive victory in 1857. Strictly speaking, first eclecticism opened the door to the liberal spirit; then liberalism made possible the spiritually eclectic expressions of art, which are characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Luis González states that: "all agreed with the idea of incorporating Mexico into the scientific or positive world."

[113] González, Luis, "El liberalismo triunfante", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1014.

Quién más, quién menos, todos concordaban con la idea de incorporar a México al mundo Científico o positivo sin desarraigarlo del mundo teológico en que nos habían inscrito los españoles ni del mundo metafísico al que nos llevaron los criollos iluministas de los finales de la colonia. Así pues, en el momento de fijar objetivos concretos se redujo muchísimo el anhelo de "lanzarse por una vía del todo nueva", se redujo a tres ideales precisos; catolicismo aprotestantado, desclerizado, apolítico, para uso doméstico; liberalismo sin libertinaje para la vida pública, y ciencia, cimiento del progreso material, para el trabajo. Esto es: religión liberalizada, libertad para la controversia política y educación científica universal, y por lo mismo, obligatoria y gratuita. [114]

The goals and the means to continue the reconstruction of the Republic, that is to say the blueprint for the new country, were in the hands of the intellectuals. The Conservatives were limited to journalistic squabbles between two big newspapers: *La Voz de México*, and *El Pájaro Verde*. They pronounced their opinions on public issues, but they offered no practical proposals on how to achieve the desired results. Responsibility for the policy was assumed by the learned liberals. In the ten years between 1867 and 1877, two of them were presidents of the Republic: Juárez until his death in 1872 and Lerdo from 1872 to 1876.

The Loss of Texas (1836)

The United States, pursuing expansionary politics, incited the colonists from Texas to seek independence on the grounds that the new centralism was contrary to their own interests. Under the pretext of supporting federalism, which had been abolished by the new constitution, the Texan colonists rebelled. Ever since the time of the Colony, the United States had expected to annex Texas through gradual colonization. By 1836 more than 85 percent of the inhabitants were colonists from the United States. In that year, after being defeated at San Hyacinth, Santa Anna, as a prisoner, recognized the Independence of Texas. In 1845, the United States Congress accepted the incorporation of Texas into the American Union.

Rebellions and Coup d'etat (1841-1845)

In 1841, Bustamante's government was overthrown. Santa Anna, who had supported him, allied with his opponents, the federalists, and designed a provisional presidency that functioned as a dictatorship. Under the so-called *Plano de Tacubaya,* a new Constituent Congress was summoned. In 1843, the so-called *Bases Orgánicas*, a new juridical system of the second centralist Republic, was established. In 1844, Santa Anna was deposed and forced into exile. His successor was General Joaquín Herrera. In 1845, one year later, General Herrera was in turn overthrown – by General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga. At the end of 1845, General Paredes was deprived of his office. In 1847, with the restoration of the Federal Constitution, the centralist régime was finished. Santa Anna was designated president with Gómez Farías as vice-president. These were the same two men who had governed Mexico in 1836.

War with the United States (1846-1848)

In May 1846, on the pretext of having been attacked, the United States declared war on Mexico. The United States seized California and declared it independent. US forces disembarked in Veracruz, advancing on Mexico City with 14,000 men. On September 16, 1847, after the Mexican armies had suffered several defeats, the United States flag was hoisted over the National Palace. In February 1848, the Mexican government, defeated largely due to internal divisions between liberals and Conservatives, was forced to sign a peace treaty that gave New Mexico, California, and Texas to the United States, which meant a loss of 2.4 million km^2.

[114] Ibid, pp. 912-913.

The *Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Coexistence*, or *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, ended the war. In 1848, Santa Anna renounced the presidency and went into voluntary exile in Colombia. After more power struggles, the government passed to General Joaquín Herrera until 1851, when he handed power over peacefully to General Mariano Arista (1851-1853).

Santa Anna's dictatorship (1853-1855)

The president, General Mariano Arista, resigned in January 1853 following an uprising by a number of generals. The triumphant rebels and the political parties wrote the *Plan del Hospicio*, the objective of which was to invite Santa Anna, who was in Colombia, to govern. They also intended to reform the Federal Constitution through a constituent congress. Lucas Alamán was the leading conservative figure and a man who had the moral power to contain Santa Anna. A few days before he was to be named a minister by the new government in June, 1853, he died. His death opened the door to Santa Anna's excesses. Santa Anna suspended the Constitution and gave himself the title of *Alteza Serenísima* and of *Dictador Perpetuo y Vitalicio*. He surrounded himself with luxury in imitation of the European courts. He enlarged the army and collected taxes − even for such things as windows and dog ownership. The high taxes and the sale, in 1853, of The Mesilla, the territory separating New Mexico and Arizona from Sonora, to United States, created general unrest. In 1854, a military group released the *Plan de Ayutla,* a plan to ignore Santa Anna and to write a new constitution. General Juan Álvarez headed the movement. The liberal revolt overthrew the dictator and initiated a new movement, called *The Reformation*. In 1855, Santa Anna gave up power and abandoned Mexico for Veracruz. Juan Álvarez became the new president. The Constitution of 1857, written by the liberal court, advanced some aspects of individual freedoms, but produced confrontations and dissatisfaction because of its anticlerical content.

From 1823 onwards, Santa Anna was part of all the political changes in the nascent Mexican Republic. He was a villainous, magnanimous, cruel traitor, irresponsible and brave. He allied with liberals and Conservatives. He supported federalism and supported centralism, depending on which way the winds were blowing. He occupied the presidency eleven times. Although he defeated the Texan troops several times, he was remembered for his military failure in San Jacinto, which sealed the loss of Texas. Santa Anna's life reflected the chaos, contradictions, and lack of true leaders that prevailed in the first decades of post-independence Mexico.

The Liberal Reformation (1855-1857)

The government was composed of moderate liberals and radicals. The presidency passed from Juan Álvarez to Comonfort. Some anticlerical laws were approved. The *Ley Juarez* written by Don Benito Juárez, ended religious jurisdictions (1855). The *Ley Lerdo*, written by Lerdo de Tejada, also known as the Law of Disentitlement of Dead Hands Goods or of Civil and Ecclesiastical Corporations, ordered the sale or award of the goods of the Church to the tenants (1856). On February 5, 1857, the Constituent Congress, dominated by the liberals, promulgated a new constitution that established a republican, representative, and federal régime. It guaranteed individual freedoms. The Church opposed the new constitution because of its attack on ecclesiastical votes and jurisdictions and because it ratified the prohibition on the church possessing property, except for buildings used for worship. In the elections held under the new constitution, Ignacio Comonfort was elected President of the Republic and Benito Juárez President of the Supreme Court. But soon the liberals became divided over the Constitution, and on December 10, 1857, ten months after his democratic election, Comonfort overrode the Constitution.

For the liberals and supporters of anticlericalism, Benito Juárez was the great historical personality. He created modern Mexico through the Laws of Reformation. To the Conservatives and the clergy, he was a traitor who sacrificed the country's sovereignty in the *McLane-Ocampo Treaty* with the United States, and who unjustly attacked the religious feelings of most of the Mexican people. The future minister José

Vasconcelos, one of the main objects of our study, never forgave Juárez, whom he accused of having begun the North-Americanization of Mexico:

> *Juárez [...] inició la norteamericanización, dejó libre el paso al protestantismo. Desde entonces una nueva corriente arrastraba de Norte a Sur, torbellino de novedades manuales, sin mensaje de Espíritu.* [115]

Benito Juárez established his government on January 19, 1858, in Guanajuato. He proceeded to organize his cabinet and to publish a manifesto which began a process of extensive reforms. As a consequence of the manifesto, the Laws of Reformation, based on the separation of church and state, were published in Veracruz. The first of them was enacted on July 12; it ordered the nationalization of ecclesiastical goods and the suppression of the monastic orders. There followed the law on the institution of the civil registration, the law on marriage, the law with respect to the secularization of cemeteries, and, later on, the law of tolerance of cults.

As with the previous liberal wave in the 1830s, the reforms were aimed at destroying feudalism and implanting capitalism in Mexico. The Reformation was accompanied by the growth of a fervent nationalism. A vast inventory of the natural and spiritual resources of Mexico and an intensive study of its past were among the methods used to express nationalist feelings. The liberal historians, in their search for traditions and precedents, naturally focused on the glories of ancient Mexico, and they documented the creative capacity of the ancient Mexicans with a view to restoring the self-confidence of a nation very much shaken by the results of the Mexican War and other disasters.

The Church was too powerful, and emancipation from its influence was only possible after the Reformation. The Reformation confirmed the victory of liberalism over conservative trends in education. This victory assured the dominance of secularism in public education. Under the Benito Juárez government, political ideas and new orientations in the economy restructured education within the limits of liberalism. Education was seen as an ideological tool to be used to bring about national cohesion.

La *Guerra de los Tres Años* (1858-1860)

The liberals, who supported the Constitution of 1857 and the anticlerical reforms, fought the Conservatives, who sought the repeal of the Constitution and the maintenance of Church prerogatives, in a bloody war which lasted from 1858 until 1860. Both factions claimed to be the legitimate government.The Conservatives, led by General Félix Zuloaga and later by General Miguel Miramón, seized Mexico City. The liberals, headed by Don Benito Juárez, established their government in the port of Veracruz, from where they promulgated the so-called *Leyes de Reforma* (The Laws of Reformation). Both factions behaved unscrupulously in their determination to win. They shot prisoners, and they requested help from foreign powers. The liberals asked for help from the United States and the Conservatives from Europe. In December 1859, Juárez's government signed the McLane-Ocampo Treaty, which granted three rights of passage in perpetuity to the United States. One was for the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. It also permitted the United States to use its army to maintain the security of the routes. The Conservatives signed the *MonAlmonte Treaty* with Spain, committing to repay Mexico's debts to the Europeans. In January 1861, after the defeat of the conservative armies, Juárez triumphantly entered Mexico City. The conservative armies were reduced to small guerrilla forces in isolated parts of the Republic.

Miguel Lerdo de Tejada had extreme Jacobin and anticlerical ideas. According to some historians, he forced Benito Juárez to sign the Laws of Reformation. Armando Ayala Anguiano writes: "He proclaimed in public his ideas that the easiest way to liquidate the clergy would be for the North Americans to take possession of Mexico and to impose their laws on the country."

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[115] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 158.

Proclamaba en público sus ideas de que para liquidar al clero lo más fácil sería que los norteamericanos se apoderaran de México e impusieran sus leyes en el país. [116]

The Laws of Reformation (1859-1860)

In July 1859, in session in Veracruz, the government of Benito Juárez published a series of laws. The main instigator of this legislation was Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. The *Ley de Nacionalizaciones de Bienes Eclesiásticos* (Law of Nationalization of Ecclesiastical Goods), and the *Ley de Ocupación de Bienes Eclesiásticos* (Law of Occupation of Ecclesiastical Goods) nationalized the goods of the Church and suppressed the religious orders. Books and works of art which belonged to the churches were handed over to libraries and public museums. The sale of ecclesiastical goods led to the creation of large secular estates in town and country and favored the rich liberals. The *Law of Civil Marriage* declared marriage a civil contract which did not require a priest. The Law of Civil Registration made the recording of births, deaths, and marriages a matter for the state, not the church. The *Ley de Secularización de los Cementerios* (Law of Secularization of the Cemeteries) handed over the administration of the cemeteries to civil authorities. Burials were prohibited inside church buildings. In 1860 the president, Benito Juárez, decreed the *Law of Freedom of Cults*, which guaranteed freedom of choice in religious matters to all citizens. Article 1 proclaims: "The laws protect the exercise of the Catholic cult and of the other cults which have established themselves in the country, as the expression and result of religious freedom, which being man's natural right, has no further limits than the rights of third parties and the requirements of public order".

Although many of these changes were necessary and accepted both by moderate liberals and Conservatives, their violent implementation by radical liberals and Jacobins caused bloodshed and unnecessary confrontations, which impoverished the country and produced a climate of hatred.

The European Intervention (1861-1863)

At the end of the Three Years' War, the *juarista* government was penniless and determined to suspend the payment of foreign debt. France, England, and Spain, the main creditors, met and intervened (Convention of London, 1861). To ensure the payment of the debt, they sent troops to Veracruz. England and Spain reached an agreement with Juárez and withdrew. France, in collusion with certain conservative groups, hoped to establish a monarchy, and six thousand French troops marched on Mexico City. On May 5, 1862, the French were defeated in Puebla by a Mexican army commanded by General Ignacio Zaragoza. Among the victors was Porfirio Díaz, about whom much more later. In Europe, the fact that the Mexicans had defeated the French, who were considered to have the best army in the world, caused a sensation. Napoleon III sent reinforcements numbering 31,000 men, and Puebla was taken in 1863. Juárez abandoned the capital, and on July 7, 1863, the French entered Mexico City in triumph. General Forey, the commander of the French army, summoned a *junta de gobierno* of notables, which included Conservatives and moderate liberals, to organize a political party and a monarchist government. They invited Maximilian of Hapsburg, an archduke from Austria, to govern Mexico as emperor.

Maximilian's Empire (1864-1867)

Maximilian accepted the throne. In the *Treaty of Miramar*, Napoleon III committed 25,000 soldiers to support the Empire. Maximilian disembarked in Veracruz in May, 1864. Two governments existed: the Republic, without real power and reduced to *guerrillas* with Juárez as their leader, constantly moving from place to place; and the Empire, which controlled the country. Maximilian, although he drew his support from

[116] Ayala Anguiano, Armando, *México de carne y hueso*, Editorial Contenido, Mexico, vol. 3, p. 178. Quoted in Pazos, Luis, *Historia sinóptica de México, de los Olmecas a Salinas*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1993, p. 62.

the Conservatives, ratified the laws on freedom from cults, jurisdictions, and civil control on marriages, births, and cemeteries. His politics coincided with those of the liberal Constitution of 1857. Maximilian's court was luxurious in the manner of the rich European courts. Soon he was in bankruptcy. Differences arose between Maximilian and the leader of the French army regarding strategies to end the resistance. When the American Civil War ended in 1865, Juárez received more support from the United States, as the U.S. considered it dangerous to have a French presence in Mexico. The Empress Carlota, Maximilian's wife, returned to Europe to ask for help. She received no support in France, nor from the Vatican. On the contrary; in March 1866, Napoleon III ordered the French army to leave Mexico. The republicans gained ground. Maximilian planned to surrender, but the Conservatives would not permit him to do it. He transferred his government to Querétaro. The conservative army was defeated and Maximilian was captured. In June 1867, the republicans shot Maximilian, together with the conservative generals Miramón and Mejía, in the Cerro de las Campanas. The archdukes of Hapsburg had been led to believe that most of the population was with them. Maximilian's liberal ideas disappointed the Conservatives who had given him the throne. France abandoned him to his fate. Maximilian's sad end made Carlota, the empress, known by the masses as "mamá Carlota" or "mom Carlota," go insane.

The Restored Republic (1867-1876)

The nine-year period encompassing the civil governments of Benito Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, from Maximilian's fall until Porfirio Díaz came to power, was known as the Restored Republic. Benito Juárez summoned elections to legitimize his presidency and was elected for the period 1867-1871. The objective of Juárez's program was to apply the Constitution of 1857. He increased the executive's power, reduced the army, and, in 1867, called upon Dr. Gabino Barreda to restructure the education system.

José Vasconcelos:

> *Y en verdad, nos arrastraban a tales desmanes, pues las generaciones preparatorianas ya no compartíamos la saña anticlerical de las gentes de la Reforma. Desde que Lerdo y demás directores mentales de Juárez, reconociéndose incompetentes, confiaron a Gabino Barreda, el comtista, la dirección de la enseñanza secundaria, una escisión profunda quedó planteada en la conciencia nueva. Los viejos liberales la advirtieron demasiado tarde y cuando ya los asuntos políticos estaban fuera de sus manos. Los políticos positivistas, escépticos en la cuestión religiosa, desentendidos de la cuestión anticlerical, acogían lo mismo a católicos que ateos con tal de que reforzaran el partido llamado «Científico», cuyo credo definiera Justo Sierra y cuyas ventajas usufructuaba una docena de cortesanos hábiles. A los viejos jacobinos les quedaba tal o cual puesto en la judicatura; ninguno casi, en la enseñanza. Se sentían, pues, despojados y traicionados en la doctrina, y más que al cura, ya reducido a impotencia, odiaba a los agnósticos y evolucionistas posesionados de la situación. El Dios abstracto de los jacobinos, Supremo Arquitecto Masónico, estaba suplantado por el Becerro de Oro de negociantes, partidarios de la sumisión a la realidad. Además, las dos influencias reconocidas de nuestra época, Justo Sierra, tolerante y culto y al final de sus días converso, y Pallares, irónico y escéptico, pero de confesión católica, no eran para mantener vivo el «fuego sagrado» del juarismo.* [117]

Part of Barreda's plan was the creation of a National High School. The liberal doctrine that made the Reformation possible was replaced by another doctrine derived from the same root, a doctrine which sought to organize and order freedom: positivism. Positivism was a doctrine which espoused order and looked to end anarchy and civil war. Dr. Gabino Barreda had become familiar with positivism in France, the cradle of

[117] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 209.

freedom and human rights. Barreda, inspired by Auguste Comte, sought to re-educate the Mexicans and to prepare them for a better and more realistic use of their freedom.

Keen:

> *Juárez, symbol of resistance to the foreign usurper, resumed the office of president in August, 1867. In the cultural field the new regime concentrated on educational reform; under the positivist Gabino Barreda, this reform aimed at the creation of an élite trained in the spirit of science rather than in metaphysics, an élite capable of laying the foundations of a bourgeois order.* [118]

The National High School was to be the nursery from which a new Mexico would rise. The education was lay and positivist. There was freedom of religion and of the press; however, to prevent rebellions, personal freedoms were curtailed during the nine years of the Restored Republic. In 1871, elections were held, and Juárez was re-elected to Congress. He became president for the fourth time. The opposition denounced the elections as fraudulent. Porfirio Díaz fought for the same principle of "effective voting, not re-election", which later Madero would use against him. Juárez died of a heart attack in July 1872. His death appeased the insurrectionists briefly. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, the vice president, called new elections and was elected president. He continued with *juarist* politics. Before his term was finished, Lerdo organized his reelection by fraud. Porfirio Díaz started an armed rebellion (*Plan of Tuxtepec*). He ignored the government of Lerdo and proclaimed the principle of no re-election. He defeated the *Lerdists*. At the end of 1876, Díaz declared himself provisional president of Mexico.

The *Porfiriato* (1877-1911)

To Luis González:" The liberal era that was governed by Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz is the time axis of the history of Mexico. Then Mexico was identified as daughter of Cortés and the Malinche, with home in one of the rough parts of America and the world, and with a conflicting childhood and youth":

> *La era liberal que presidieron Benito Juárez y Porfirio Díaz es el tiempo eje de la historia de México. Entonces México se identificó como hija de Cortés y la Malinche, con domicilio en una de las partes rugosas de América y el mundo, y con una niñez y juventud conflictivas. Entonces maduró, en lo político, como república liberal, en lo económico como multiproductora que no afortunada, en lo social como multiforme y en lo síquico como insegura y oscilante entre el optimismo y el pesimismo. Entonces se diseñó el paraíso que todavía sigue buscando el México oficial. La Revolución no ha mudado los propósitos, únicamente algunos de los métodos del liberalismo de Juárez y Díaz. La Revolución no ha sido ruptura, sólo torcedura. El ayer, el hoy y el mañana que vivimos son obra de los soñadores y dinámicos liberales de los tiempos de don Benito y don Porfirio.* [119]

The *Porfiriato* is the period from 1877, when Porfirio Díaz overthrew Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, until 1911, when Porfirio resigned and the *Revolution* began. Porfirio Díaz introduced the principle of delayed re-election into the Constitution of 1857. When he finished his first term (1877-1880), he handed over power to his godfather, Manuel González (1880-1884). When González'term was over, Díaz was re-elected for the period 1888-1892. He then overrode the constitutional limitation on re-election, that he himself had introduced and which had been his position in the fight against Juárez and Lerdo de Tejada. Diaz was re-elected successively until his resignation in 1911. The so-called "Porfirian peace," the first lingering period

[118] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, 416.
[119] González, Luis, "El liberalismo triunfante", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1014.

of political stability since Independence, allowed economic progress. The cost of the Porfirian objective of "*orden y progreso*," (order and progress) and "little politics and a lot of administration," was the limitations on participation imposed on several democratic institutions. Elections were a mere formality; Porfirio named governors, deputies, and magistrates. He began the complete subordination of legislative and judicial power to the president. Although he maintained the Laws of Reformation, he actually tolerated the Church and effected a reconciliation. Criticism in the newspapers was controlled rather than repressed, and corruption in the press began.

Porfirio Díaz had to deal with a country in a state of collapse. In his second term foreign investments and new legislation led to a certain measure of stability. New laws were passed, regulating colonization (1883), mining (1884 and 1887), and trade (1884-1886). The different regions of the country, which until then had been isolated, largely independent economies, were connected with a system of railroads. Track increased from 660 km to 19,205 km, or by a factor of twenty-nine. The financial sector developed. Whereas there was only one bank institution in 1876, by 1910 there were thirty-two. Mining and its exports grew. An industrial sector developed, something that had been practically non-existent before Porfirio. In 1901, concessions were granted to a number of foreign companies to search for oil. Foreign investors modernized several ports. In 1896, under the Minister of Treasury, Ives Limantour, public finances showed a surplus for the first time since Independence, and foreign debt was renegotiated. In 1910 there was a surplus of 136 million pesos in the government's accounts.

The *hacienda* was the agrarian unit of the *Porfiriato*. Although the government provided seven million hectares of land to the peasants, there were abuses and profiteering when the *Ley de Terrenos Baldíos* was applied and the land parceled out. Food was both imported and exported, although in general the agricultural situation was better than in the pre-Porfirian period. Although Porfirio was accused of neglecting education, both the school population and attendance increased during his rule. The *Escuela Normal de Profesores* was established in 1885, and the *Escuela de Profesoras* in 1890. The construction of *Bellas Artes* was begun under his regime.

Among the various attitudes that *Porfirista* historians showed toward Aztec civilization, admiration and even adoration predominated. In Mexico, the War of Independence had furthered the growth of the nationalist cult of ancient Mexico.

Keen:

> *By mid-nineteenth century Romanticism had almost exhausted its creative possibilities in Western politics, art, and thought. A time of relative political stability and burgeoning science and industry succeeded the age of romantic revolt. Over the new day presided a bourgeoisie for which Auguste Comte, high priest of the secular religion of positivism, had coined a fitting slogan: "Order and Progress."* [120]

In April 1878, the government of the United States recognized Porfirio Díaz's government. Between 1877 and 1888 Mexico once again found a place in the international order. Díaz and González put an end to the isolation that Mexico had suffered after the collapse of the second Empire. They ended the monogamous relationship between Mexico and its untrustworthy northern neighbor. The opponents of Rutherford Hayes, elected president in the United States in 1876, spread the rumor that he, together with the speculators in mines and Mexican lands, the anxious military clique, and contractors and adventurous of all kinds, favored the conquest of Mexico. The Texans wanted to give Mexico another "kick as strong as that of San Jacinth," according to some newspapers. According to other versions, the project of annexing Mexican territory was popular with all classes of North American society. It was also claimed that the *gringo* government was seeking a pretext to declare war on Mexico because President Hayes did not recognize the regime derived from the revolt of Tuxtepec. There were two important rebellions: the Yaqui in Sonora and the Mayan in

[120] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 380.

Yucatan. There were two famous strikes: the strike of the textile workers in Río Blanco, Veracruz and the mining strike in Cananea, Sonora.

Science, Culture and Education under the *Porfirian* regime

Under the "Porfirian peace" Mexico managed to achieve something which it had strived for during a whole century on the road to progress: to be like Europe. Octavio Paz: "In Mexico the feelings of guilt of the European bourgeoisie were colored a particular shade, for a double historical reason: the neofeudales were at the same time the heirs of liberalism and the successors to the colonial aristocracy."

> *En México el sentimiento de culpabilidad de la burguesía europea se teñía de un matiz particular, por una doble razón histórica: los neofeudales eran al mismo tiempo los herederos del liberalismo y los sucesores de la aristocracia colonial. La herencia intelectual y moral de los principios de la Reforma y el usufructo de los bienes de la Iglesia tenían que producir en el grupo dominante un sentimiento de culpa muy profundo. Su gestión social era el fruto de una usurpación y un equívoco. Pero el positivismo no remediaba ni atenuaba esta vergonzosa condición. Al contrario, la enconaba, puesto que no hundía sus raíces en la conciencia de los que lo adoptaban. Mentira e inautenticidad son así el fondo psicológico del positivismo Mexicano. A su manera, la Dictadura completa la obra de la Reforma. Gracias a la introducción de la filosofía positivista la nación rompe sus últimos vínculos con el pasado. Si La Conquista destruye templos, la Colonia erige otros. La Reforma niega la tradición, mas nos ofrece una imagen universal del hombre.* [121]

Academic art was in decline, and artists painted religious and historical themes in a weak and sentimental manner.

Keen:

> *The Age of Romanticism brightened the Indian image in Western eyes. The Indian was linked to other groups of the disinherited and the vanquished – peasants, artisans, small nations struggling for their freedom − whose sorrows and virtues commanded the sympathy of the romantic heart. Among the Indians, the Aztecs formed a singularly proper object of romantic interest. They belonged to a remote past, a past which the romantic saw blazing with color or shadowed with attractive mystery. The exoticism of Aztec civilization, its ambiguous blend of refinement and barbarism, satisfied the romantic taste for the fantastic and bizarre. If some romantic poets and novelists sought escape from a humdrum present in Xanadu, ancient Rome, or medieval England, others took the road to Tenochtitlán.* [122]

To abandon the Hispanic inheritance was out of question. The new elite did not want to lose the Spanish language, nor the Catholic religion. The positivists tried to make the Catholic religion inclusive and compatible with other religious *credos*, as well as with the aims of positivist science. According to Octavio Paz, the image that Mexico presented at the end of the nineteenth century was that of discord.

> *La imagen que nos ofrece México al finalizar el siglo XIX es la de la discordia. Una discordia más profunda que la querella política o la guerra civil, pues consistía en la superposición de formas jurídicas y culturales que no solamente no expresaban a nuestra realidad, sino que la asfixiaban e inmovilizaban. Al amparo de esta discordia medraba*

[121] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 119-121.
[122] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 310.

una casta que se mostraba incapaz de transformarse en clase, en el sentido estricto de la palabra. Vivíamos una vida envenenada por la mentira y la esterilidad. Cortados los lazos con el pasado, imposible el diálogo con los Estados Unidos − que sólo hablaban con nosotros el lenguaje de la fuerza o el de los negocios − , inútil la relación con los pueblos de lengua española, encerrados en formas muertas, estábamos reducidos a una imitación unilateral de Francia − que siempre nos ignoró − . ¿Qué nos quedaba? Asfixia y soledad. Si la historia de México es la de un pueblo que busca una forma que lo exprese, la del Mexicano es la de un hombre que aspira a la comunión. La fecundidad del catolicismo colonial residía en que era, ante todo y sobre todo, participación. Los liberales nos ofrecieron ideas. Pero no se comulga con las ideas, al menos mientras no encarnan y se hacen sangre, alimento. La comunión es festín y ceremonia. Al finalizar el siglo XIX el Mexicano, como la nación entera, se asfixia en un catolicismo yerto o en el universo sin salida y sin esperanza de la filosofía oficiosa del régimen. [123]

The *Scientists*

Around Díaz, a clique called "the Scientists" formed, whose aim was to improve administration and culture. During Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship, their views were a kind of sociopolitical Darwinism, and they believed that only the strongest were worthy of governing and of having access to economic power − to the obvious detriment of the weakest. Positivism was the regulating force that convinced individuals of the necessity of adjusting their acts to the demands of the scientific principles determined by the state. The word "science" was idolized, but little serious scientific activity actually took place. The Scientists in charge of the application of the doctrines of Comte and Spencer had their eyes on the bank and on the companies which could make them rich by trafficking in concessions.

Paz' judgement is succinct: "positivism did not give us anything."

El positivismo no nos dio nada. En cambio, mostró en toda su desnudez a los principios liberales: hermosas palabras inaplicables. El esquema de la Reforma, el gran proyecto histórico mediante el cual México se fundaba a sí mismo como una nación destinada a realizarse en ciertas verdades universales, queda reducido a sueño y utopía. Y sus principios y leyes se convierten en un armazón rígido, que ahoga nuestra espontaneidad y mutila nuestro ser. Al cabo de cien años de luchas el pueblo se encontraba más solo que nunca, empobrecida su vida religiosa, humillada su cultura popular. Habíamos perdido nuestra filiación histórica. [124]

Leopoldo Zea notes in his impressive study of Mexican positivism how, when reproducing the *comtian* theory of the Three States, Gabino Barreda offered a plan for educational reform that was in essence a restructuring of the national ideology to suit the interests of a specific class. Positivism did not restrict itself to introducing the non-confessional education which the bourgeoisie demanded; in a speech in 1867, Barreda proclaimed a general plan for government: "Freedom, order and progress".

Paz, again: "Porfirismo, indeed, is a period of historical inauthenticity."

El Porfirismo, en efecto, es un período de inautenticidad histórica. Santa-Ana cambia alegremente de disfraces: es el actor que no cree en lo que dice. El Porfirismo se esfuerza por creer, se esfuerza por hacer suyas las ideas adoptadas. Simula, en todos los sentidos de la palabra. La simulación Porfirista era particularmente grave, pues al abrazar el positivismo se apropiaba de un sistema que históricamente no le correspondía. La clase latifundista no constituía el equivalente Mexicano de la burguesía europea, ni su urea

[123] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 120-121.
[124] Ibid, p. 120.

tenía relación alguna con la de su modelo. Las ideas de Spencer y Stuart Mill reclamaban como clima histórico el desarrollo de la gran industria, la democracia burguesa y el libre ejercicio de la actividad intelectual. Basada en la gran propiedad agrícola, el caciquismo y la ausencia de libertades democráticas, la dictadura de Díaz no podía hacer suyas esas ideas sin negarse a sí misma o sin desfigurarlas. El positivismo se convierte así en una superposición histórica bastante más peligrosa que todas las anteriores, porque estaba fundada en un equívoco. Entre los terratenientes y sus ideas políticas y filosóficas se levantaba un invisible muro de mala fe. El desarraigo del Porfirismo procede de este equívoco. El disfraz positivista no estaba destinado a engañar al pueblo, sino a ocultar la desnudez moral del régimen a sus mismos usufructuarios. Pues esas ideas no justificaban las jerarquías sociales ante los desheredados (a quienes la religión católica reservaba un sitio de elección en el más allá y el liberalismo otorgaba la dignidad de hombres). La nueva filosofía no tenía nada que ofrecer a los pobres; su función consistía en justificar la conciencia − la mauvaise conscience − de la burguesía europea. [125]

Justo Sierra

Justo Sierra (1848-1912) was Secretary of Public Instruction and Fine Arts from 1905 to 1911. He later became plenipotentiary Secretary in Spain. He was known as the "Teacher of America". Justo Sierra assumed the complex mission of rescuing what still survived of the Constitution and the liberal spirit. As Secretary of Public Instruction, he followed a liberal nationalist line.

Keen:

The great cycle of liberal historiography closed with the writings of Justo Sierra, who was loyal to the traditions of Juárez and the Reforma, yet served Díaz, persuading himself that the dictator was preparing Mexico to be free. Sierra, with no special interest in ancient Mexico, relied chiefly on Orozco y Berra and Chavero in the introductory chapter on Indian civilizations in his Evolución política del pueblo Mexicano (1900-1902). There was no indigenista passion in Sierra's account; he viewed the Aztecs with a supreme detachment, from the civilized heights of the first years of the twentieth century. [126]

Octavio Paz: "At the end of the nineteenth century, the Mexican, as individual and as a nation, suffocated in a stark Catholicism or in the universe of the unofficial philosophy of the régime, without exit and without hope."

Al finalizar el siglo XIX el Mexicano, como la nación entera, se asfixia en un catolicismo yerto o en el universo sin salida y sin esperanza de la filosofía oficiosa del régimen. Justo Sierra es el primero que comprende el significado de esta situación. A pesar de sus antecedentes liberales y positivistas, es el único Mexicano de su época que tiene la preocupación y la angustia de la Historia. La porción más duradera y valiosa de su obra es una meditación sobre la Historia universal y sobre la de México. Su actitud difiere radicalmente de las anteriores. Para liberales, conservadores y positivistas la realidad Mexicana carece de significación en sí misma; es algo inerte que sólo adquiere sentido cuando refleja un esquema universal. Sierra concibe a México como una realidad autónoma, viva en el tiempo: la nación es un pasado que avanza, tortuoso, hacia un futuro; y el presente está lleno de signos. En suma, ni la Religión, ni la Ciencia, ni la Utopía nos justifican. Nuestra historia, como la de cualquier otro pueblo, posee un sentido

[125] Ibid, pp. 119-121.
[126] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 431.

y una dirección. Acaso sin plena conciencia de lo que hacía, Sierra introduce la Filosofía de la Historia como una posible respuesta a nuestra soledad y malestar. [127]

Porfirio Díaz's fall and the *Revolution* (1910-1911)

Social inequalities, coupled with the influence of the new socialist ideas of intellectuals such as Ricardo Flores Magón, led to increasing dissatisfaction with the regime. Ricardo Flores Magón, a mixture of socialist, anarchist, and liberal, perpetrated various violent acts between 1906 and 1908. There was a lack of mobility in the circle of power, which was already monopolized by the Porfiristas. From the turn of the century, liberal clubs, the future nucleus of the Mexican Liberal Party, began to be formed. They criticized Díaz's régime in publications such as *Regeneración* and *El Hijo del Ahuizote*. General Díaz's own statements in an interview granted to the North American journalist Creelman in 1908 encouraged political activity. Porfirio stated that the Mexican people were capable of democracy and indicated his desire to retire at the end of his term in 1910. Porfirio's supporters founded several political parties: the *National Porfirista Party*, the *Reeleccionista*, and the *Reyista*.

The *Antireeleccionista* Party put forward Francisco I. Madero as candidate for the presidency. Faced with the probability that Madero would win, Díaz imprisoned him before the elections took place in June 1910. The government declared Porfirio Díaz the winner. His term would run from 1910 to 1916. In the meantime, Madero escaped from prison and fled to the United States. In San Antonio, he proclaimed the San Luis Plan. He declared the elections illegal, declared himself president, and announced the beginning of the *Revolution* on November 20. In May 1911, Pascual Orozco took Ciudad Juárez. In order to avoid bloodshed, Díaz signed the *Treaties of Ciudad Juárez* with the rebels on May 21. He gave up the presidency four days later and left the country at Veracruz. He died in Paris in 1915.

Paz: "In spite of what commonly is thought, Porfirio Díaz dictatorship is the return of the past":

A pesar de lo que comúnmente se piensa, la dictadura de Porfirio Díaz es el regreso del pasado. En apariencia, Díaz gobierna inspirado por las ideas en boga: cree en el progreso, en la ciencia, en los milagros de la industria y del libre comercio. Sus ideales son los de la burguesía europea. Es el más ilustrado de los dictadores hispanoamericanos y su régimen recuerda a veces los años de la "belle époque" en Francia. Los intelectuales descubren a Comte y Renan, Spencer y Darwin; los poetas imitan a los parnasianos y simbolistas franceses; la aristocracia Mexicana es una clase urbana y civilizada. La otra cara de la medalla es muy distinta. Esos grandes señores amantes del progreso y la ciencia no son industriales ni hombres de empresa: son terratenientes enriquecidos por la compra de los bienes de la Iglesia o en los negocios públicos del régimen. En sus haciendas los campesinos viven una vida de siervos, no muy distinta a la del período colonial. Así, desde el punto de vista "ideológico", el Porfirismo se ostenta como el sucesor legítimo del liberalismo. La Constitución de 1857 sigue vigente en teoría y nada ni nadie pretende oponer a las ideas de la Reforma principios distintos. Muchos, sin excluir a los antiguos liberales, piensan de buena fe que el régimen de Díaz prepara el transito entre el pasado feudal y la sociedad moderna. En realidad, el Porfirismo es el heredero del feudalismo colonial: la propiedad de la tierra se concentra en unas cuantas manos y la clase terrateniente se fortalece. Enmascarado, ataviado con los ropajes del progreso, la ciencia y la legalidad republicana, el pasado vuelve, pero ya desprovisto de fecundidad. Nada puede producir, excepto la rebelión. [128]

[127] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 121.
[128] Ibid, pp. 117-118.

4) Historical and mythical themes frequently found in Mexican Muralism

I will now present the historical and mythical themes and references that are most frequently found in Mexican mural painting. This survey covers some of the main characters of Mexican mythology and history, as well as of some of the main events with larger symbolic value. A number of artists (in particular Rivera) refer back to the sources in order to give greater credibility and legitimacy to their interpretations of the historical past. The representations in some of the murals that Rivera painted, both in Mexico and abroad, are based on descriptions, iconical representations and testimonies in historical documents.

Aztlán

Aztlán has not been linked to any particular site or to archeological remains in Mexico and can be considered a mythic homeland. According to stories told by the natives after the Conquest, Aztlán was an island with abundant vegetation in the middle of a lake filled with aquatic animals. Here the *Mexicas* lived: farming, hunting, and fishing until the god Tetzauhtéotl Huitzilopochtli ordered them to migrate to the Mexican highlands. Tetzauhtéotl Huitzilopochtli guided them on their journey, determining their resting places and the ceremonies they should perform in his honor.

One version of the migration states that the *Mexicas* were fleeing from the oppression of other peoples. Another version lists seven groups or Nahua tribes which left Aztlán. They were also known as the *Seven Caves*, *Aztlán Chicomóztoc*, *Quinehuayan*, *Culhuacan*, *Teoculhuacan*, or *Huey Culhuacan*. However, sources such as Fray Juan de Torquemada, Chimalpahin, and *La Historia de los Mexicanos*, state that Aztlán and Chicomóztoc were two different places. [129] These sources state that, immediately after leaving Aztlán, the *Mexicas* headed for Chicomóztoc.

In the year of "1. Flint," which is traditionally seen as the year of Huitzilopochtli's birth, the people left Aztlán, crossing a strait of water, and eventually arrived at another island in a lake, where they abandoned their Chichimeca past and learned to lead civilized lives. The last group to leave Aztlán took the name *Mexitin*, or "people from Mexi". This group was identified with the character of the Sun god who led the migration. Later, the name *Mexicas* would identify them as inhabitants of Mexico.

Although there is no historical evidence of a migration, scenes of Aztlán and the departure of the *Aztecs*, guided by the god Huitzilopochtli, are often found in Mexican mural painting. The use of the mythical Aztlán was a source of controversy.

Silvia Limón Olvera states that it is hard to localize Aztlan:

> *Por nuestra parte consideramos que Aztlan es difícilmente localizable, ya que, incluso las fuentes del siglo XVI, la ubican en términos muy vagos. Esto se debe a que por tratarse de una ciudad arquetipo, como ya se vio más arriba, y por ser de origen remoto, es posible que existieran varias ciudades con este mismo nombre.* [130]

[129] According to some sources, such as Chimalpahin (Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, Domingo Francisco de San Anton, *Relaciónes Originales de Chalco Amaquemecan*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1965), eight *Aztec* tribes would have migrated from Aztlán in the year 1064 to the nearby Colhuacan and, farther away, to Chicomóztoc (Seven Caves or Seven Canyons).

[130] Limón Olvera, Silvia, *Las Cuevas y el mito de origen, los casos inca y Mexica*, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1990, p. 105.

Huitzilopochtli

Huitzilopochtli is presented alternately as a deity or as a historical human leader who led the migration from Aztlán. His mother was a Coatlicue virgin. As the Sun God, Huitzilopochtli appeared as an eagle and renamed the *Aztecs Mexicas* or *mexitin.* However, some sources believe that the myth of Huitzilopochtli as an all-powerful god who designated the *Aztecs* as his chosen people, as well as the cosmogonic myth that made the survival of the universe dependent on human sacrifice, were deliberately fabricated by the *Aztecs* after they came to power.

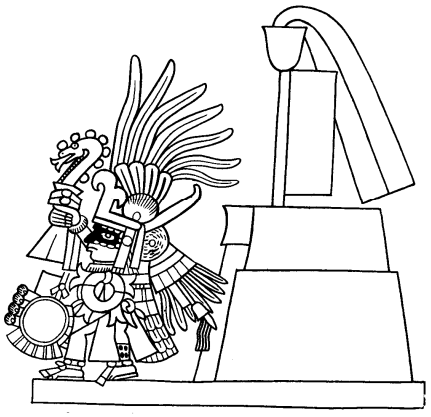


Figure 13. Huitzilopochtli (Codex Borbonicus). [131]

Paz: "The fervor of the cult of the Sun God could be explained, at first sight, as an inheritance from the preHispanic religions."

> *El fervor del culto al Dios Hijo podría explicarse, a primera vista, como herencia de las religiones prehispánicas. En efecto, a la llegada de los españoles casi todas las grandes divinidades masculinas − con la excepción de Tláloc, niño y viejo simultáneamente, deidad de mayor antigüedad − eran dioses hijos, como Xipe, dios del maíz joven, y Huitzilopochtli, el "guerrero del sur". Quizá no sea ocioso recordar que el nacimiento de Huitzilopochtli ofrece más de una analogía con el de Cristo: también él es concebido sin contacto carnal; el mensajero divino también es un pájaro (que deja caer una pluma en el regazo de Coatlicue); y, en fin, también el niño Huitzilopochtli debe escapar de la persecución de un Herodes mítico. Sin embargo, es abusivo utilizar estas analogías para explicar la devoción a Cristo, como lo sería atribuirla a una mera supervivencia del culto a los dioses hijos. El Mexicano venera al Cristo sangrante y humillado, golpeado por los soldados, condenado por los jueces, porque ve en él la imagen transformada de su propio destino. Y esto mismo lo lleva a reconocerse en Cuauhtémoc, el joven emperador Azteca destronado, torturado y asesinado por Cortés.* [132]

During the Conquest, the priests studied the indigenous celebrations and incorporated some of their features into Catholic rites, in order to make the new religion more attractive for the converts. For example, the story of Huitzilopochtli's conception by the Virgin Mother Coatlicue (whose dress was made of snakes) coincided with the Catholic teaching about the Virgin Mary, despite the belief that Coatlicue was already the mother of numerous children called the Centzon-Huitznahuas, or the Four Hundred Southern Stars. In fact, many of the mythological characters and rites were similar to Christian practices, for example the communion. Some writers, including Bernardino de Sahagún, also saw connections between these characters and the characters in Greek and Roman mythology.

Coatlicue, Mother to her own grandmother

There are many representations of the goddess Coatlicue. One of the most famous is the sculpture in the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, showed in **Figure 14**. This scuplture of Coatlicue has been an inspiration source for many Mexican artists.

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[131] Reproduced in Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 51.
[132] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 75.

Rivera for instance evoques the deity in his *Unidad panamericana*, in San Francisco City College, 1940 (**Figure 15**) as well as in his mural in Detroit (see **Figure 77**, p. 412).



Figure 14. Sculpture of Coatlicue in the Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. [133]



Figure 15. Diego Rivera: *Unidad panamericana* (detail), San Francisco City College, 1940.

Like many *Mexica* deities, Coatlicue was simultaneously priestess and goddess. Tradition has it that Coatlicue, priestess in the temple of Coatepec, was sweeping the floor when she picked up a pellet of feathers. She placed the pellet in her lap and immediately became pregnant. In another version, while she was praying one day in the temple of the Sun, she received a crown of hummingbird feathers and became pregnant by the god of war. Her daughter, thinking her mother had been dishonored, waged war with the *Four Hundred Southern Stars* who were enemies of the Sun. The Sun god was born full grown and armed, like the Greek Athena. He wore blue armor and hummingbird feathers, and he carried a blue javelin as the sign of his ability. He killed his sister, and then he exterminated the Centzon-Huitznahuas and those who plotted against his mother. He was served by Xiuhcoaltl, the fire snake. In indigenous pictures, he was represented as a warrior with black face paint, covered with a suit of armor made out of feathers and holding a shield in his left hand and Xiuhcoaltl in his right.

Adela Fernández: “We must not be confused that it is spoken of the Coatlicue as descending of the creative couple and also as mother of the same one, when considering her “mother of the gods” or as “the deity grandmother”:

[133] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 53.

La multiplicación de los dioses, en su sentido mítico oculto, obedece a una evolución ideológica mediante la cual se interpreta el "misterio" y se define la naturaleza en cada una de sus partes: los elementos, sus manifestaciones distintas, la acción del tiempo y sus efectos, la conciencia de lo material y la percepción de lo espiritual, los conceptos de vida-muerte, efímero-eterno, divino-humano, conllevan a forjar una simbolización cada vez más compleja en la que se desencadenan cientos de divinidades que no sólo explican los fenómenos de la vida, sino que además los animan y sustentan. Y en esta abundancia de dioses, aun surgen dicotomías y polifacetismo para la proyección de los varios egos de cada dios. Los númenes se transforman, multiplican su personalidad para poder cumplir con todas sus acciones divinas. De esta manera, una determinada deidad puede ser benévola y malévola, ser la madre de su propia abuela, destruir lo que ha procreado, ser dinámica y estática, omnipresente, ubicua, ambivalente, polifacética, y por lo tanto tener tantos nombres como acciones realice, y tantas características como su naturaleza lo requiera. No nos extrañe entonces ni nos confunda que se hable de la Coatlicue como descendiente de la pareja creadora y además como madre de la misma, al considerarla "madre de los dioses" o bien como "la deidad abuela". [134]

Quetzalcóatl

Quetzalcóatl is the most controversial character in Mexico's mythological history. He was a Toltec and Aztec god, and a celebrated priest-ruler of Mexico. His name is often translated as "Feathered Snake". In other cultural regions and personifications, he was also known as *Ce Acatl Topiltzin*, *Nacxitl*, *Tepeuhqui*, *Ehécatl*, *Kukulcán*, and *Tlahuizcalpantecutli*, which increases the confusion about his origin and his role in Mexican history. Since most texts that mention Quetzalcóatl were written after the Conquest, little can be known with certainty about the character.

Jacques Soustelle:

De toutes les personnalités divines connues dès la haute Antiquité classique, c'est celle de Quetzalcoatl qui avait subi les plus profondes transformations. Le Serpent à Plumes ne symbolisait plus les forces telluriques et l'abondance de la végétation. Dieu de la planète Vénus qui est à la fois Etoile du Matin et Etoile du Soir, il correspondait avec son jumeau Xolotl (dieu-chien) à la notion de mort et de résurrection. «Seigneur de la Maison de l'Aurore», dieu du vent, héros culturel et inventeur de l'écriture, du calendrier, des arts, confondu par les mythes avec le roi-prêtre de Tula, Quetzalcoatl demeurait lié dans la pensée religieuse des Mexicains à l'âge d'or toltèque. Il était par excellence le dieu des prêtres. [135]



Figure 16. Quetzalcóatl as he is represented in Codex Borbonicus. [136]

The Quetzalcóatl legend may have originated in the story of a priest-ruler called Quetzalcóatl, who lived in Tula during the tenth century. He was associated with Venus, the goddess of the morning and evening star, and his opposing deity was Tezcatlipoca, the god of the night sky. He killed Tepotztécatl, his father's murderer, and then became the ruler of Tula as a priest of the

[134] Fernández, Adela, *Dioses Prehispánicos de México: mitos y deidades del panteón náhuatl*, Panorama Editorial, Mexico 1993, pp. 10-11.
[135] Soustelle, Jacques, *Les Aztèques,* Collection Que sais-je?, Paris 1983, pp. 81-83.
[136] Reproduced in Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 30.

Quetzalcóatl cult. His rule emphasized a beneficent religion that outlawed human sacrifices and encouraged knowledge and cultivation of the arts.

Salvador Toscano: "The year of 1519 came to be the decisive year in the annals of the indigenous culture. The year Ce Ácatl, the year of Quetzalcóatl, was something more than the return of the white and bearded god of the East; it was the beginning of the agony of the indigenous world":

> *Vino a ser 1519 el año decisivo en los anales de la cultura indígena. El año Ce Ácatl, el año de Quetzalcóatl, fue algo más que el retorno del dios blanco y barbado del Oriente, fue el inicio de la agonía del mundo indígena.* [137]

The evil followers of Tezcatlipoca forced Quetzalcóatl to break his vow of chastity. Disgraced, he abandoned Tula and immigrated with a strong Toltec contingent to Yucatan. Somewhere south of Veracruz, he commited suicide by throwing himself into a blazing fire, according to some sources; others say that he left to go to the Mayan area of Tlillan Tlapallan, the country of the black and red writing,. The Mayan sources speak of the presence of Kukulkán (Quetzalcóatl) in their territory around the year 1000.

Salvador Toscano: "A great part of the history of Tula is full of the presence of a semilegendary sovereign who later ascended to the vault of the indigenous gods: Quetzalcóhuatl":

> *Buena parte de la historia de Tula la llena la presencia de un soberano semilegendario elevado más tarde al panteón de los dioses indígenas: Quetzalcóhuatl (también llamado Topiltzin, Nuestro Príncipe, o Ce-Acatl: Uno-Caña por la fecha de su nacimiento). Quetzalcóatl parece haber representado el papel de un importante reformador religioso; contra él combatió el tradicional y sanguinario sacerdocio de otra deidad, Tezcatlipoca, que logró su expulsión de Tula en 947 de C. (895 en el texto.) Numerosas fuentes coinciden en señalar el Valle de México como la más próxima meta de la fuga de Quetzalcóatl, por entre cuyos volcanes desciende a Cholula, santuario entonces de los olmeca, de donde prosigue a lo largo de la ruta comercial que llevaba a Nonohualco, pasando por Coatzacualco y llegando a Huei Tlapalan, que literalmente significa "el lugar de la vieja tierra roja", es decir, el lugar de la escritura oscura, la escritura maya. La leyenda quiere que en aquel sitio se incinerara el héroe tolteca y que de sus cenizas resurgiera su corazón convertido en estrella matutina (Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli). En el fondo de este precioso mito yace, naturalmente, un cúmulo de datos históricos que comprueban otras fuentes y los propios datos arqueológicos: Quetzalcóatl es el primero de los emigrantes toltecas y el primero en arrastrar tras de sí elementos arcaicos nahuas con rumbo a Yucatán y a la América Central. Más aún, no es imposible aventurar que este elemento Mexicano sea el que, hacia los siglos IX O X, cortó violentamente el florecimiento maya del Antiguo Imperio.* [138]

Historians have also found descriptions of Quetzalcóatl as a white man with a beard, distinctly European, who taught the people the principles of Christianity long before the Conquest. Hearing these legends, the priests who came to Mexico with Hernán Cortés identified Quetzalcóatl as Saint Thomas. The texts of Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas and of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora confirm this association.

Keen:

> *The duality of Aztec religion found expression in the great temple of Tenochtitlán, at whose summit the two sanctuaries of Huitzilopochtli and Tláloc, side by side on the same platform, "dominated the holy city, symbolizing the juxtaposition of the two fundamental*

[137] Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, introducción, p. 16.
[138] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984, p. 34.

> *religions: that of the stars, the religion of sun-worshipping warriors, and that of the earth and water, the religion of peasants and stationary, civilized people." That duality was revealed again in the veneration accorded, on the one hand, to the dreaded sky god Tezcatlipoca, a protean figure taken over from the Toltecs, and, on the other, to the peaceful and benevolent Quetzalcóatl, who had been driven from Tula by Tezcatlipoca. From the host of deities, however, there emerged with ever growing stature the Aztec tribal god Huitzilopochtli. Gradually Huitzilopochtli absorbed the functions and attributes of other major gods, in a process that might have brought the Aztecs to monotheism.* [139]

According to prophecy, Quetzalcóatl would return to Tula in the year Ce Acatl (One Reed). The arrival of Cortés in 1519 coincided with the Aztec year Ce Acatl, so many historians have concluded that Montezuma II believed Cortés to be the returning god Quetzalcóatl.

Claude Lévi-Strauss:

> *Il est bien connu que l'effondrement des Aztèques et des Inca, incapables d'opposer aux conquérants une résistance efficace, s'explique en majeure partie par le fait qu'ils crurent reconnaître en ceux-ci les divinités disparues dont des traditions sacrées leur laissaient prévoir et même espérer le retour. [...] Aussi, disent les chroniques, quand les Indiens virent les chrétiens, ils les prirent pour des dieux frères et fils de Quetzalcóatl. [...] Ces prophéties ne sont connues que par des textes postérieurs à la découverte. Il se peut donc que les chroniqueurs ou leurs informateurs aient arrangé les choses pour donner plus de cohérence aux événements inouïs dont ils avaient été directement ou indirectement témoins.* [140]

A large number of origins and functions have been attributed to Quetzalcóatl, and the figure of Quetzalcóatl, as deity and as mythical character, has been the object of numerous studies and controversies. This "man-god" has fascinated historians for centuries. The historians themselves, confronted with contradictory sources and documents, have created a large number of misunderstandings. [141]

Keen:

> *According to the ancient myth, the Fifth Sun, in which the Aztecs lived, had been created at Teotihuacán by the sacrifice of the creator-gods. In order to create the sun and moon and set them in motion, these gods cast themselves into a Divine Fire. A complementary myth told of the restoration of man on earth through the blood sacrifice of Quetzalcóatl, who quickened the ground bones of human beings from past ages by causing blood drawn from his penis to drip over them.* [142]

I do not discuss Quetzalcóatl with the intention of bringing some kind of order into these contradictory representations and explanations, nor do I wish to contribute further information about the character's origin. Rather, I examine this character in order to analyze the diverse representations that Mexican plastic artists have made of Quetzalcóatl in the twentieth century.

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[139] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 33.
[140] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Histoire de Lynx*, Plon, Paris 1991, pp. 293-294.
[141] There are numerous texts about Quetzalcóatl from the time of the Colony; Alfredo López Austin undertakes a critical revision of the texts, referring back to the historical sources and showing the main interpretive currents. In addition, this historian coined the term "hombre-dios", the "man-god." See: López Austin, Alfredo, *Hombre-dios: Religión y política en el mundo náhuatl*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Mexico 1973.
[142] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 31.

It is clear that the pre-Hispanic iconography is varied. The first enigma it presents is the duality whereby the name Quetzalcóatl refers at the same time to a deity and to a priest-ruler. It is necessary, therefore, to summarize the main theories on this topic in order to understand how Mexican Muralism used this myth.

George Kubler:

> *In Aztec sources, One Reed was the legendary founder and hero of Tula, the inventor of writing and many crafts, the priest-king, the builder of the serpent-columns, the lord Quetzalcoatl. Driven from Tula by the intrigues of rival magicians, he fled to the east, where his body changed after cremation into the Morning Star. These particulars reflect a long mythopoetic elaboration and fusion of many distinct themes. The myths became so intricate in Aztec sources that their historical reduction seems impossible. But wherever one turns, the figure of Quetzalcoatl (Kukulcan in Maya language) re-appears to suggest yet becloud the fundamental unity of Middle American religious beliefs throughout pre-Conquest antiquity.* [143]

The importance of Quetzalcóatl in pre-Hispanic cosmography is undeniable. The representation of the feathered snake and the great number of symbols associated with it begins in the Meso-American pre-classical period and assumes greater importance in the *nahua* classic period, in places like Teotihuacan or Xochicalco. The best known representations of Quetzalcóatl are the sculptures and bas-reliefs of the pyramid of Tláloc-Quetzalcóatl, in Teotihuacán (**Figure 17**).



Figure 17. Quetzalcóatl. Bas-relief of the pyramid of Tláloc-Quetzalcóatl, in Teotihuacán.

The deity Quetzalcóatl had other representations besides that of the feathered snake. They reflect the identification of the god with Ehécatl and Tlahuizcalpantecutli and are also influenced by the images of the priests responsible for the cults of those deities.

The second aspect of the Quetzalcóatl myth is that of a human: the priest-ruler who takes the same name as the deity. This aspect has exercised more fascination than the first and has given rise to its own particular symbols, to numerous interpretations, and to the emergence of a major myth. The man was probably called Ce-Acatl Topiltzin, because he was born on the day 1 cane, (Ce = one, Acatl = cane). Some sources claim that he was born out of the stomach of a virgin, Chimalma. Other sources, however, specify a father, Mixcóatl. After some heroic deeds, such as defeating Tepotztécatl, his father's murderer, he arrived in Tula and became the ruling priest. He introduced his own cult, which was based on a code of moral behavior that outlawed human sacrifices. The aim was not only to give the Toltecs an uplifting and beneficient religion but also to seek knowledge and to cultivate the arts. The evil forces of the followers of Tezcatlipoca made Quetzalcóatl break his vow of chastity. He escaped from Tula and headed toward the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. There are two versions of how he met his end. The first claims that he died by fire in an act of self-sacrifice. According to this version, he emerged from the ashes transformed into Tlahuizcalpantecutli-Xólotl. The second version claims that he reached the sea, and then sailed on a raft of snakes to Tlillan-Tlalpallan, the land of knowledge. He reappeared in Yucatan, where he was known as Kukulcán (**Figure 18**).

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[143] Kubler, George, *The Art and Architecture of ancient America: The Mexican 'Maya' and Andean peoples*. Pevsner, Nikolaus (ed.), *The Pelican History of Art*, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondworth, Middlesex, Great Britain, 1962, p. 48.

Figure 18. Quetzalcóatl (also known as Kukulcán). [144]



The iconography of Quetzalcóatl has been divided into two categories: as a god (his representation as a feathered snake and the Mayan representation of Kukulcán in Yucatan in the form of a face emerging from the mouth of a snake); and the representation in the *Codices* where the life of Ce Acatl Topiltzin is narrated as that of a heroic human being. The *Códice Florentino* provides the best example, although the theme also appears in the *Codex Matritense del Real Palacio.* Later, Diego de Durán's *Atlas* shows this hero as a bearded wise priest on a stage adorned with snakes. We will see that this representation underlies Orozco's treatment of the myth.

Keen:

> *Toward the end of Quetzalcóatl's reign, however, Tula became the scene of an obscure struggle between two religious traditions. One was associated with the worship of Tezcatlipoca, the Toltec tribal sky god who was pictured as an all-powerful and capricious deity who demanded human sacrifice; the other was identified with the cult of the ancient god Quetzalcóatl, a benevolent deity who had brought men maize and all learning and arts and who demanded of them only the peaceful sacrifice of jade, snakes, and butterflies. Very likely this religious conflict reflected a cleavage between "sacred rulers who continued the traditions of Theocratic society and the secular, militarily oriented groups which pushed and pulled in opposite directions." This struggle found fanciful expression in the Náhuatl legend which tells how the enchanter Tezcatlipoca used black magic to make the saintly priest-king Quetzalcóatl fall from grace and go into exile from Tula. Evidence for the view that the defeat and exile of the historical Quetzalcóatl signaled the triumph of Militarist over Theocratic elements in Tula appears in Toltec art. Nearly all the art forms abound in representations of warriors, eagles eating hearts or drinking blood, and files of jaguars and pumas. Whatever its factual basis or background, the legend of Quetzalcóatl made a profound impression on the folk culture of ancient Mexico and played its part in the destruction of the Aztec Empire. The legend concluded with the promise that the Indian redeemer would someday return to his realm and resume his mild sway; and, by a singular coincidence, the year in which Quetzalcóatl was to return, Ce Acatl, One Reed, was the year in which Cortés landed at Veracruz. Aztec fears that the god-king had returned to reclaim his kingdom help to explain the vacillating and contradictory moves of Moctezuma.* [145]

And the second version relates how when arriving at the sea, he traveled on a raft of snakes to Tlillan-Tlalpallan, the land of knowledge. Later, he reappeared in Yucatan, where he was known as Kukulcán. There are numerous variants, both in the sources and in the later interpretations, of the myth according to which Quetzalcóatl is a god, that of Ce-Acatl Topiltzin.

Keen:

> *The creole historian's desire to assign a venerable antiquity to Christianity in Mexico was reflected in the enormous amount of space he assigned to the theme of Saint Thomas-Quetzalcóatl. Veytia believed that the Apostle had arrived in New Spain shortly after a great eclipse and earthquake announced the death of Jesus Christ to its inhabitants. The*

[144] Kukulcán. Retrieved 2003-08-11 from http://www.americas-fr.com/civilisations/musee/kukulcan.jpg
[145] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, pp. 8-9.

Indians saw the saint in the appearance of a bearded white man dressed in a white robe with red crosses, barefoot, and carrying a staff in one hand. It was Saint Thomas who, under the name of Quetzalcóatl, taught the Indians all the virtues and all the doctrines of the Church. Veytia hotly rejected Torquemada's hostile account of Quetzalcóatl. He was no sorcerer or magician, "but a venerable, just, and holy man who with works and words showed the Indians the road of virtue by the Conquest of one's passions, by mortification, fasting, and penance." Among other wondrous deeds, before his departure Quetzalcóatl prophesied the coming of the Spaniards and the destruction of the great tower of Cholula (built in imitation of Babel!) on account of the stiff-necked idolatry of its people. Toltec history proceeded in an atmosphere of omens and miracles. By advice of the astrologer Huemantzin, the Toltecs left their first place of arrival and finally reached the land of Anáhuac, where they founded the city of Tula. [146]

Perhaps the physical description of Tláloc as a bearded white man contributed to Moctezuma confusing Hernán Cortés with a holy figure. For their part, the Spaniards of the viceroyalty believed that he could have been an evangelist.

Keen:

Moctezuma's envoys had assured Cortés that they would serve him in every way during his stay on the coast, but pleaded with him not to seek a meeting with their king. This fitted into Moctezuma's pathetic strategy of plying Cortés-Quetzalcóatl with gifts in the hope that he could be dissuaded from advancing into the interior and reclaiming his throne. Suavely, Cortés informed the ambassadors that he had crossed many seas and journeyed from very distant lands to see and speak with Moctezuma, and could not return without doing so. [147]

Salvador Toscano, in his *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, says that the feather or *apanecáyotl* that Moctezuma gave Cortés in 1519, believing that Cortés was the returning Quetzalcóatl, is the most magnificent and refined piece of feather work in existence, rivaled only by the delicate shield of the *ahuízotl* in the Museum of Natural History in Vienna:

Junto al delicado escudo del ahuízotl del Museo de Historia Natural de Viena, figura el más suntuoso y refinado objeto de plumas: el penacho o apanecáyotl, que Moctezuma remitiera a Cortés en 1519, creyéndolo Quetzalcóatl que retornaba. [148]

Alfonso Caso makes a description of the representation of Quetzalcóatl in the *Codex Borbonicus*:

Como un ejemplo de la complicada indumentaria de los dioses haremos la descripción de Quetzalcóatl, en la representación del Códice Borbónico. El cuerpo y el rostro del dios están pintados de negro, porque es el sacerdote por excelencia, y el inventor del autosacrificio que consiste en sacarse sangre de las orejas y otras partes del cuerpo, punzándolas con las espinas de maguey y con punzones de hueso de águila o de jaguar. Por eso vemos en su tocado un hueso, del que sale una faja verde rematada por un disco azul, que indica el chalchíuatl, "el líquido precioso", la sangre humana. También, como atributos sacerdotales, lleva en una mano el incensario o sahumador con mango en forma de serpiente, y en la otra, la bolsa para el copal. Enfrente de la boca tiene una máscara roja, como de pico de ave, que en algunas representaciones está también adornada con colmillos de serpiente. Esta máscara lo caracteriza como dios del viento, forma en la que

[146] Ibid, pp. 238-239.
[147] Ibid, p. 52.
[148] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984, p. 184.

era adorado con el nombre de Ehécatl, que significa viento. En la cabeza lleva un gorro cónico de piel de tigre, llamado ocelocopilli, rematado también por un adorno de turquesa y sostenido con un moño de puntas redondas. De piel de tigre son, asimismo, el peto orlado de caracoles, las pulseras y las ajorcas. Su pectoral está formado por el corte transversal de un gran caracol marino, el ehecailacacózcatl o pectoral del viento, y su orejera es un disco de turquesa del que cuelga una borla roja y un objeto torcido de concha, que se llama epcololli, "concha torcida". En la nuca lleva un penacho en el que se distinguen las plumas negras del cuervo y las largas plumas rojas de la guacamaya, adorno que, como se ve en una representación del Códice Borgia, significa el Sol en la noche, es decir, el Sol muerto. [149]



Figure 19. Bearded Quetzalcóatl. Represented in *Codex Magliabechi.* [150]

According to Caso: "In other representations, Quetzalcóatl generally appears with a beard, but not because he is a European, as was previously believed, but because as a creative god he is represented as old and therefore bearded, as were represented the gods of ancient times and especially the first gods."

En otras representaciones, Quetzalcóatl aparece generalmente con barbas, pero no porque sea un europeo, como se creía antes, sino porque, como dios creador que es, se le representa como viejo y, en consecuencia, barbado, como se representan del mismo modo los dioses de los tiempos antiguos y especialmente los primeros dioses. [151]



Figure 20. Foundation of Tenochtitlán according to Durán. [152]

Tenochtitlán

The foundation of Tenochtitlán and Tenochtitlán at the height of its glory before the arrival of the Spaniards are favorite themes in the murals. The most famous image of Tenochtitlán, painted by Diego Rivera, can be seen in the National Palace of Mexico City.

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[149] Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 34-36. Caso presents here a detailed description of the representation of Quetzalcóatl in the *Codex Borbonicus*.

[150] In Codex Magliabechi. Reproduced in Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 35.

[151] Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 34-36.

[152] Reproduced in Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 119.

The migration of the *Mexicas* ended when they arrived at an island similar to the one they had left behind at Aztlán. According to the legend, the appearance of an eagle standing on a cactus and devouring a snake was a sign revealed to the leading priests by the god Hiutzilopochtli. This sign would show them where to settle permanently. The sign appeared to them on an island in the marshy part of the Lake of Texcoco in the valley of Mexico in 1325 B.C. Some argue that the *Mexicas* chose the place deliberately because of its strategic location and the economic potential of the lake. The *Aztecs* called their new capital Mexico-Tenochtitlán, and the city grew quickly as the *Aztecs* gained control of the center of Mexico. Tenochtitlán was divided into four main districts with the main ceremonial enclosure in the center.

After the long pilgrimage, a new era of sedentary life began. To expand the useable surface area of the island, the *Aztecs* built *chinampas* for cultivation; later they built adobe houses on them.

Keen:

> *Among the last of the Chichimec tribes to arrive in the valley were the Aztecs or Mexica. The date of their departure from the north is given in their annals as 1168. They were led by four chiefs and a woman who carried a medicine bundle housing the spirit of their tribal god Huitzilopochtli. The god guided their steps, speaking in the strange twittering voice of a hummingbird, and after long wanderings they arrived in the Valley of Mexico about 1218. The south, region of the color blue, was identified with the Blue Tezcatlipoca, known in Tenochtitlán as Huitzilopochtli; it was associated with the years whose sign was the rabbit. As the Blue Tezcatlipoca, he was identified with Huitzilopochtli, the Sun.* [153]

Alfonso Caso: "The Aztec are the people of the Sun; their city, Tenochtitlán, was founded in the place where the eagle, representative of Huitzilopochtli, settled on the stone nopal, in the center of the island that was in the lake of the Moon, the Meztliapan, as it was called esoterically, the lake of Texcoco."

> *El Azteca es el pueblo del Sol; su ciudad, Tenochtitlán, se ha fundado en el sitio en que el águila, representante de Huitzilopochtli, se posa sobre el nopal de piedra, en el centro de la isla que estaba en el lago de la Luna, el Meztliapan, como se llamaba esotéricamente al lago de Texcoco. Allí, donde fue arrojado el corazón del primer sacrificado, allí debía brotar el árbol espinoso, el árbol del sacrificio, que representa el lugar de las espinas, Huitztlampa, la tierra del Sol, hacia donde saliera en peregrinación la tribu, partiendo de la tierra blanca, Aztlán.* [154]

Anáhuac

Anáhuac was a name for the Valley of Mexico, the whole central region between the Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean. In prose and poetry, Mexican writers wanted to evoke the spirit of the missing Aztec civilization. The first important instance of this was the *Visión de Anáhuac* by Alfonso Reyes, published in 1915.

Keen:

> *Toltec history proceeded in an atmosphere of omens and miracles. By advice of the astrologer Huemantzin, the Toltecs left their first place of arrival and finally reached the land of Anáhuac, where they founded the city of Tula. Revolutionary spokesmen attempted in every way possible to establish the continuity of Mexican history and nationality from*

[153] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 10.
[154] Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 118.

Aztec times to the present. They revived a Náhuatl geographical term of uncertain meaning, Anáhuac, and applied it to the immense territory of New Spain. [155]

Montezuma (or Moctezuma)

Moctezuma Xocoyotzín or Moctezuma II was born in Mexico-Tenochtitlán in 1466.
He governed the city from 1502 to 1520, subjected the people to tributes, and extended commercial routes to Panama. He required all noblemen to work in public administration, and he emphasized the importance of education for the youth.

When Cortés requested an audience with Montezuma, the king tried to dissuade him from visiting Tenochtitlán, but the tactic failed, and Montezuma freely admitted Cortés and his army into the capital. Many consider Montezuma a coward for making no effort to destroy the small Spanish force. Cortés imprisoned Montezuma, and the people made no attempt to try to free him. Montezuma's lack of action was frequently contrasted with the heroic attitude of Cuauhtémoc, a scene that has been represented in many murals. Yet there is some doubt whether the king really confused Hernán Cortés with Quetzalcóatl.

Keen:

Moctezuma never supposed Cortés to be Quetzalcóatl or his representative; he admitted the white strangers believing them to be emissaries of a distant king. [156]

Jacques Soustelle, the French researcher on Native American culture in Central America, states:

Formée par une tradition puissante et multi-séculaire, la sensibilité des Indiens n'était pas semblable à celle des Européens de leur époque: impassibles devant les scènes sanglantes dont leurs temples étaient le théâtre, ils furent frappés d'horreur par les supplices que les Espagnols apportèrent avec eux du pays de l'Inquisition. [157]

When Cortés came to Tenochtitlán, Montezuma showed him the sacred Teocalli dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the god of the war. Some years later, the Spanish conquerors replaced the temple with a building to honor the head of the military guard, Señor Santiago.

According to Paz: "When Moctezuma opened the doors of Tenochtitlan to the Spaniards and received Cortés with gifts the Aztecs lost the struggle."

Cuando Moctezuma abre las puertas de Tenochtitlan a los españoles y recibe a Cortés con presentes, los Aztecas pierden la partida. Su lucha final es un suicidio y así lo dan a entender todos los textos que tenemos sobre este acontecimiento grandioso y sombrío. ¿Por qué cede Moctezuma? ¿Por qué se siente extrañamente fascinado por los españoles y experimenta ante ellos un vértigo que no es exagerado llamar sagrado − el vértigo lúcido del suicida ante el abismo? Los dioses lo han abandonado. La gran traición con que comienza la historia de México no es la de los tlaxcaltecas, ni la de Moctezuma y su grupo, sino la de los dioses. Ningún otro pueblo se ha sentido tan totalmente desamparado como se sintió la nación Azteca ante los avisos, profecías y signos que anunciaron su caída. Se corre el riesgo de no comprender el sentido que tenían esos signos y profecías para los indios si se olvida su concepción cíclica del tiempo. Según ocurre con muchos

[155] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 239.
[156] Ibid, p. 483.
[157] Soustelle, Jacques, *La Vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole,* Librarie Hachette, Paris, 1955, p. 169.

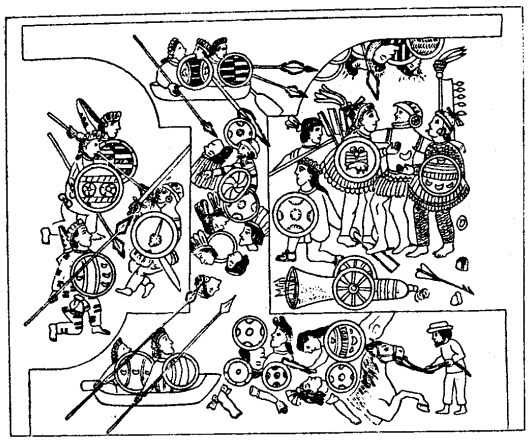
otros pueblos y civilizaciones, para los Aztecas el tiempo no era una medida abstracta y vacía de contenido, sino algo concreto, una fuerza, sustancia o fluido que se gasta y consume. De ahí la necesidad de los ritos y sacrificios destinados a revigorizar el año o el siglo. Pero el tiempo − o más exactamente: los tiempos − además de constituir algo vivo que nace, crece, decae, renace, era una sucesión que regresa. Un tiempo se acaba; otro vuelve. La llegada de los españoles fue interpretada por Moctezuma − al menos al principio − no tanto como un peligro "exterior" sino como el acabamiento interno de una era cósmica y el principio de otra. Los dioses se van porque su tiempo se ha acabado; pero regresa otro tiempo y con él otros dioses, otra era. [158]

While Cortés was absent from the city, his substitute, Pedro de Alvarado, ordered an unprovoked slaughter of the Aztec warriors, who were celebrating a religious festival in honor of Huitzilopochtli.

Cuitláhuac

Montezuma II died on June 27, 1520. His brother (?) Cuitláhuac succeeded him as king on September 7, 1520, and he was succeeded in turn by Cuauhtémoc. Cuitláhuac fought bravely against the invaders. Although he won a famous battle against the Spaniards, he was ultimately defeated by the smallpox epidemic that devastated his people.

Figure 21. The battle of Tenochtitlán, after the Mexican manuscript "Lienzo de Tlaxcala.



***La Noche Triste* (The Sad Night)**

On June 30, Cortés and his army suffered heavy casualties and abandoned Tenochtitlán. In spite of the fact that Cuitláhuac was the only Aztec who ever defeated the Spaniards in a major battle, the battle of the Sad Night, the figure of Cuauhtémoc is referred to and represented in the murals much more frequently. In particular, his heroic endurance when being tortured by Cortés is a favorite theme. Despite their victory, the *Aztecs* did not pursue the surviving Spaniards, who sought refuge in friendly Tlaxcala. The *Aztecs* remained in the city to care for the sick and dying. Thus, the event came to be called *La Noche Triste* (The Sad Night). In **Figure 21** is shown *The battle of Tenochtitlán*, after the Mexican manuscript "Lienzo de Tlaxcala", a document produced in the mid-15th century. [159]

Cuauhtémoc

Quetzalcóatl, Cuauhtémoc, and Cortés were the figures most frequently represented in Mexican mural painting, and all three evoked strong emotions. The name Cuauhtémoc means "eagle that falls or descends," or "eagle of the twilight". In **Figure 22** we can see Cuauhtémoc, as he is represented in Codex Florentino.

[158] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 84-85.
[159] Reproduced in Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 206.

Figure 22. Cuauhtémoc (Codex Florentino). [160]



Justino Fernández: "When the Sun is 'the eagle that ascends', in the morning, it is called Coauhtlehuánitl, and when it is 'the eagle that falls', in the afternoon, it is called Cuauhtémoc."

> *Cuando el Sol es "el águila que asciende", en la mañana, se llama Coauhtlehuánitl, y cuando es "el águila que cae", por la tarde, se llama Cuauhtémoc.* [161]

During the last months of 1520 and the first months of 1521, the first plague epidemic devastated the indigenous population. Many thousands of Indians perished of the disease, which had been unknown until then in the new world. The council chose Cuitláhuac as *huey tlatoani*, making him the tenth lord of the Mexicas. His reign lasted little more than two months, because, debilitated by the plague, the man who had prepared the defence of the city of Mexico died on November 25, 1520. Cuauhtémoc, a noble from Tlatelolco and son of Ahuízotl was elected to take Cuitláhuac's place. Bernal Diaz describes Guatemuz (Cuauhtémoc) as young, relatively fair-skinned for an Indian, with a cheerful face and a good disposition.

> *Guatemuz era mancebo y muy gentil hombre para ser indio, y de buena disposición y rostro alegre, y aun la color tenía algo más que tiraba a blanco que a matiz de indios, que era de obra de veinticinco o veintiséis años, y era casado con una muy hermosa mujer, hija del gran Montezuma, su tío* [162]

A youth of around eighteen years, he became the eleventh and last lord of Mexico-Tenochtitlán. Although his rule began with the death of Cuitláhuac, the formal investiture only took place at the end of January of 1521. Warned that Cortés planned to surround Tenochtitlán, he organized the army to defend the city and offered to remove the tributes from his vassals. He fortified the square, destroyed the bridges, and armed his people in a fleet of boats. The *Aztecs* defended their positions for 75 days until they were pushed back to the island of Tlatelolco, decimated and hungry. On August 13, 1521, Cuauhtémoc surrendered to the Spaniards to relieve the suffering of his people, and Cortés took possession of the ruins of Tenochtitlán.

Soustelle describes the magical significance of this particular date for the *Aztecs*. August 13, 1521 was "one-snake" day, generally held to be a favourable day, except in the year of "3-house", as was the case in 1521, when it was seen as a dangerous day. Thus superstitious motives played a role in Cuauhtémoc's surrender to Cortés, and the Aztec empire came to an end.

> *Le 13 août 1521, jour a «un-Serpent» généralement tenu pour favorable, mais dans une année «3-Maison», signe néfaste, Cuauhtemotzin dut se rendre à Cortés. Ainsi prenait fin l'Empire.* [163]

In the words of Paz: "The victory of the death instinct reveals that the Aztec people lost forthwith consciousness of its destiny. Cuauhtémoc fights in the knowledge that he will be defeated."

> *La victoria del instinto de la muerte revela que el pueblo Azteca pierde de pronto la conciencia de su destino. Cuauhtémoc lucha a sabiendas de la derrota. En esta íntima y denodada aceptación de su pérdida radica el carácter trágico de su combate. Y el drama*

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[160] Reproduced in Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 4.
[161] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 124.
[162] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Mexico 1986, cap. CLIV, p. 360.
[163] Soustelle, Jacques, *Les Aztèques*, Collection Que sais-je?, Paris 1983, p. 122.

de esta conciencia que ve derrumbarse todo en torno suyo, y en primer término sus dioses, creadores de la grandeza de su pueblo, parece presidir nuestra historia entera. Cuauhtémoc y su pueblo mueren solos, abandonados de sus amigos, aliados, vasallos y dioses. En la orfandad. [164]

Hernán Cortés expresses no special emotions concerning this dramatic event, recording it as nothing more than a passing incident. He writes: "That day we took the city and arrested Guatimucín, and, after having picked up what spoils we could, we left to give thanks to our Lord for His great grace and for the longed-for victory that He had given us."

Aquel día de la prisión de Guatimucín y toma de la ciudad, después de haber recogido el despojo que se pudo haber, nos fuimos al real dando gracias a nuestro Señor por tan señalada merced y tan deseada victoria como nos había dado. [165]

The city of Tenochtitlán was razed in the summer months of 1521. The two surviving indigenous accounts of The Conquest, Sahagún's XII Book and the Annals of Tlatelolco, are testimonies of the decline of a race. When he surrendered to Cortés, Cuauhtémoc, the "Eagle of the twilight", as his name is translated, uttered, according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, these immortal and often repeated words: "Sr. Malinche: I have already been forced to defend my city and vassals, and I am not able to do more, and because I have been brought by force and as a prisoner in front of your person and power, take that dagger that you have in your belt and kill me with it here and now."

For Salvador Toscano, the heroic and resolute defense of Tenochtitlán by the last emperor of the clan of the eagles, Cuauhtémoc, represented the final heroic pages in the history of a culture which had started going into decline several centuries before.

Cuando las carabelas castellanas surgieron en el horizonte del golfo Mexicano, los pueblos sojuzgados prepararon su rompimiento con el poder Azteca aliándose con aquellos dioses, los teules, que sus legendarias profecías les habían anunciado. El final del Imperio no lo consumó la superioridad técnica de armas del español, sino el alzamiento popular indígena, totonacas, tlaxcaltecas, tarascos, chalcas, mixtecas y otomíes, contra el despotismo militar Azteca. Sólo la heroica y decidida defensa de Tenochtitlán, por el último emperador del clan de las águilas, Cuauhtémoc, escribió con honor las páginas finales de una cultura cuya extinción interior, como se ha hecho notar, había empezado algunos siglos antes. [166]

And he continues: "The Aztec civilization did not expire as a result of old age; it was tragically murdered."

La civilización Azteca no concluyó a consecuencia de su edad senil, sino asesinada trágicamente. [167]

The torture of Cuauhtémoc is a frequent theme in the murals, serving to illustrate the cruelties of the Spaniards and the heroism of the Aztecs. The exact extent of Cortés's involvement in the torture is no longer possible to ascertain. It seems highly unlikely that he was not aware that his most important prisoner was being tortured. The most likely version is that Cortés acquiesced in the torture of Cuauhtémoc, hoping to discover where the king had hidden the Aztec treasure that had been lost on the Sad Night. Some said the king had thrown the gold into the lagoon, others said that the Tlaxcaltecs and the other peoples who had sided with Cortés had stolen it, and still others believed that the soldiers had stolen their share. Accusing

[164] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 87.
[165] *Hernán Cortés: Cartas de Relación*, Editores Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1990, p. 201.
[166] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984, p. 38.
[167] Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, introducción, p. 16.

Cuauhtémoc was expedient; the Spaniards burned his feet in oil to make him confess. Bernal Díaz del Castillo records the hero's last words, spoken with bitter energy to Cortés: "you kill me without justice! May God have mercy on you, because I was not merciful to myself when I surrendered myself to you in my city of Mexico":

> *Y el cacique de Tacuba dijo que entre él y Guatemuz habían dicho que valía más morir de una vez que morir cada día en el camino, viendo la gran hambre que pasaban sus maceguales y parientes. Y sin haber más probanzas, Cortés mandó ahorcar a Guatemuz y al señor de Tacuba, que era su primo. Y antes que los ahorcasen, los frailes franciscos les fueron esforzando y encomendando a Dios con la lengua doña Marina. Y cuando le ahorcaban, dijo Guatemuz: "¡Oh, Malinche: días había que yo tenía entendido que esta muerte me habías de dar y había conocido tus falsas palabras, porque me matas sin justicia! Dios to la demande, pues yo no me la di cuando to me entregaba en mi ciudad de México." El señor de Tacuba dijo que daba por bien empleada su muerte por morir junto con su señor Guatemuz. Y antes que los ahorcasen los fueron confesando los frailes franciscos con la lengua doña Marina; y verdaderamente yo tuve gran lástima de Guatemuz y de su primo, por haberles conocido tan grandes señores, y aun epos me hacían honra en el camino en cosas que se me ofrecían, especial en darme algunos indios para traer yerba para mi caballo. Y fue esta muerte que les dieron muy injustamente, y pareció mal a todos los que íbamos.* [168]

According to Francisco López de Gómara and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it was the officials of the Royal Treasury, that is to say Julián de Alderete, the treasurer, and his assistants who decided to torture Cuauhtémoc and Señor de Tacuba. The prisoners' feet were burnt with oil, in order to learn where they had hidden or disposed of the treasure:

> *[...] acordaron los oficiales de la Real Hacienda de dar tormento a Guatemuz y al señor de Tacuba, que era su primo y gran privado, y ciertamente mucho le pesó a Cortés y aun [a] algunos de nosotros que a un señor como Guatemuz le atormentasen' por codicia del oro, porque ya habían hecho muchas pesquisas sobre ello y todos los mayordomos de Guatemuz decían que no había más de to que los oficiales del rey tenían en su poder, que eran hasta trescientos ochenta mil pesos de oro, que ya to habían fundido y hecho barras; y de allí se sacó el real quinto y otro quinto para Cortés* [169]

Díaz del Castillo attempts to defend Cortés, claiming that "Cortés didn't want Guatemuz to be arrested, nor his captains, nor that torture be applied, and … [Cortés' subordinates] tortured him and Señor de Tacuba by burning their feet with oil. The pair admitted that, four days before being taken, they had thrown the gold and the weapons and munitions that they had taken from us into the lake":

> *[...] Cortés no quería que prendiesen a Guatemuz, ni le prendiesen sus capitanes, ni diesen tormentos, y porque no le achacasen algo a Cortés sobre ello, y no lo pudo excusar, le atormentaron, en que le quemaron los pies con aceite, y al señor de Tacuba, y lo que confesaron que cuatro días antes que les prendiesen lo echaron en la laguna, así el oro como los tiros y escopetas que nos habían tomado* [170]

The fact is, that Hernán Cortés consented to the torture although he had enough authority to have prevented it, if he had wanted to.

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[168] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España.* Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Mexico 1986, cap. CLXXVII, p. 470.
[169] Ibid, cap. CLVII, p. 374.
[170] Ibid, cap. CLVII, pp. 374-375.

Another sentence attributed to Cuauhtémoc during the torture was addressed to Señor de Tacuba. It is found only in Francisco López de Gómara's account. Gómara, whose account is based on information that he received from the conquerors themselves, tells us that the king's private gentleman, Señor de Tacuba, who was being tortured in the same way, asked Cuauhtémoc with his eyes to say something or allow him to say something to him, but that Cuauhtémoc "looked at him with anger and treated him despicably, asking him if he was in some delight or bath [sic]":

> *[...] lo miró con ira y lo trató vilísimamente como muelle de poco esfuerzo, preguntándole si estaba el en algún deleite o baño* [171]

Later, Francisco López de Gómara's account was picked up by other writers and served to further enhance the myth of Cuauhtémoc's heroic attitude whilst being tortured.

Salvador Toscano gives us an even more dramatic interpretation, exalting the qualities of Cuauhtémoc: "Am I perhaps in a temascal bath? [172] – exclaimed Cuauhtémoc, dauntlessly."

> *Sentados en aquel trono de ignominia, Cuauhtémoc y el señor de Tacuba se miraron, iluminándoseles los rostros por el lúgubre resplandor que los atormentaba.*
> *– Por ventura ¿estoy yo en un baño de temascal? – exclamó Cuauhtémoc, impávidamente.*
> *El señor de Tacuba se desmayó frente a la indiferencia de los sicarios.* [173]

Díaz del Castillo comments that this action was motivated "by greed for gold". And that: "it was a great weight [on the mind] for Cortés and for some of us."

> *[...] mucho le pesó a Cortés y aun a algunos de nosotros.* [174]

According to Francisco López de Gómara, Tetlepanquétzal died under torture, but "Cortés removed Cuauhtémoc from the torture, since it seemed an insult or cruelty to him":

> *"Cortés quitó del tormento a Cuauhtémoc, pareciéndole afrenta o crueldad, o porque dijo cómo echara en la laguna, diez días antes de su prisión, las piezas de artillería, el oro y la plata, las piedras, perlas y ricas joyas que tenía".* [175]

Bernal Díaz del Castillo's version confirms this with the exception of a few small details.

The Spaniards slaughtered thousands of natives to instill fear. They killed men who were defending their homeland and stole their treasures, reducing the natives to servitude. In their accounts, Hernán Cortés and Francisco López de Gómara contend that these acts were necessary in order to conquer the country and to wipe out idolatry. Though these acts are occasionally mentioned as unnecessary cruelties, they were in fact crimes against a nation. Bartolomé de las Casas condemned the violence, looting, and other excesses of the Spaniards, and he blamed Hernán Cortés for everything. Certainly, Hernán Cortés acted within the rules of war for his time, but even so, he transgressed humanity's basic moral commandments.

Even after Independence had been achieved, Mexican enthusiasm for its indigenous past persisted, invoking the ashes of Cuauhtémoc and Montezuma as part of its fight against neocolonial society and ways of

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[171] López de Gómara, Francisco, *Historia de La Conquista de México*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Editorial Robredo, Mexico 1943, t. I, cap. XXXIII.
[172] The *temascal* or *temazcal* bath was a vapour-bath used in Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards.
[173] Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 223.
[174] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Mexico 1986, cap.CLVII, p. 374.
[175] López de Gómara, Francisco, *Historia de La Conquista de México*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Editorial Robredo, Mexico 1943, cap. CXLVI.

thinking. For Justo Sierra, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Cuauhtémoc was "la más hermosa figura épica en la historia Americana" (the most beautiful epic figure in American history.) [176]

The figure of the last Aztec king has retained a lasting hold over Mexican thinking; according to Hector Pérez Martínez: "The conflict between Cuauhtémoc and Hernán Cortés lives in our blood without one of the two ever being able to win."

> *El conflicto entre Cuauhtémoc y Hernán Cortés vive en nuestra sangre sin que alguno de los dos haya podido vencer.* [177]

La quema de las naves

Another important episode in the history of Mexico, though many doubt that it ever happened, was the burning of the boats to prevent soldiers from returning to Cuba.



Figure 23. Detail of the mural *Conquest of Tlaxcala* by Desiderio Hernandez Xochitiotzin. Government Palace in Tlaxcala, Mexico.

The subject of the burning of the boats by Cortés is fraught with controversy. Did he burn the boats, or not? An incident that I experienced shows how complex and delicate this matter is. When I visited Mexico for the first time in 1991, I visited the *Tlaxcaltec* painter Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin. **Figure 23** shows a detail of the mural of the *Conquest of Tlaxcala* by Desiderio Hernandez Xochitiotzin, in the Government Palace in Tlaxcala, Mexico (sketches in the Museum of Public Art in Lund). In his studio I noticed a picture which included a representation of the burning of the boats by Cortés. The painter was quite annoyed by my recognition of the topic, and he immediately claimed that the burning had never happened. In my eyes, this was a strange contradiction: why did an artist, who paints detailed "archaeological" reconstructions of the monuments and ceremonies of Tlaxcaltec, paint an event which he claims never happened? [178]

Legend has it that, because many of the soldiers were friends or relatives of Diego Velázquez, Cortés decided to disable his boats before moving inland to conquer Mexico. [179]

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[176] See Sierra, Justo, *Evolución política del pueblo Mexicano*, Obras Completas del Maestro Justo Sierra, Edmundo O'Gorman (ed.), UNAM, Mexico 1957, Vol. XII, pp. 54-55.
[177] Pérez Martínez, Héctor, *Cuauhtémoc: vida y muerte de una cultura*, Espasa-Calpe, Buenos Aires, 1948, p. 219. Quoted in Villoro, Luis, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, Seceretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 103, Segunda serie, Mexico 1987, p. 198.
[178] The interview with Desiderio took place on March 2, 1991, in his atelier in Tlaxcala.
[179] Concerning this incident see pp. 88-90

Francisco López de Gómara specifies details which suggest that the ships were disabled or dismantled rather than being burned, and that, at first, the plan was to keep one ship in reserve, but this was also "broken". [180]

Bernal Díaz del Castillo suggests that it was friends of Hernán Cortés who proposed the plan, although "Cortés had already arranged it":

> *Y según entendí, esta plática de dar con los navíos al través, que allí le propusimos, el mismo Cortés lo tenia ya concertado, sino que quiso que saliese de nosotros.* [181]

For the soldier chronicler, it was a question of honor: "what sort [of men] are we Spaniards if we do not go ahead and win profit and wars?"

> […] *"¿de qué condición somos los españoles para no ir adelante y estarnos en partes que no tengamos provecho y guerras?"* [182]

Later on, Bernal Díaz del Castillo says that the soldiers agreed to the plan, and he introduces another classical reference, quoting Julius Caesar and the Rubicon:

> *Que no teníamos otro socorro ni ayuda sino el de Dios, porque ya no teníamos navíos para ir a Cuba […] echada estaba la suerte de la buena ventura, como dijo Julio César sobre el Rubicón".* [183]

The possibility that Hernán Cortés burned his ships, instead of only disabling them, first emerged in the mid-sixteenth century. It probably originated in one of the paintings that adorned the Imperial Sepulchre in Mexico in 1559, a painting that Francisco Cervantes de Salazar described as representing:

> *[...] los navíos en que [Cortés] pasó, quemados y echados al través* [184]

After the departure of Montejo and of Marina's former master, Hernán Cortés beached all the other ships. With that measure and with the execution of two rebels, who wanted to return to Cuba, he quashed the revolt of the *velazquists*. There was no longer any way back; they had to take the road in front of them, and the road led west.

This has entered into popular mythology as "the burning of the ships". It is not known for certain whether Cortés actually burned the boats, or whether he just made sure they could not sail. The Spaniards then removed anything which could be useful for the army (metal, candles, string, etc.) from the ships.

The contradictions in the reports on the conquest of Mexico reach a high point here. To have burnt or not to have burnt the ships, that is the question. For many people, it never happened (because that would have

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[180] Lópes de Gómara, cap. XLII. Quoted by Martínez, José Luis, *Hernán Cortés*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 206.
[181] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, Mexico 1986, cap. LVIII, p. 98.
[182] Ibid, cap. LVIII, p. 99.
[183] Ibid, cap. LIX, p. 99.
[184] The first edition of the *Túmulo Imperial* by Cervantes de Salazar was published by Antonio de Espinosa in Mexico, 1560. Federico Gómez de Orozco is the first one to conjecture that the idea of the "burning of the boats" came from Francisco Cervantes de Salazar's description of a picture, which, according to Salazar, represented the "boats burned by Cortés". The theory appears in Orozco's *Prólogo a la edición del Túmulo*, de Alcancía, Mexico, 1939, pp. XI-XII and also in Juan Suárez de Peralta's *Noticias históricas de Nueva España*, written around 1589, which refers to the incident and even gives details of the burning of the ships, cap. IX. Quoted in Martínez, José Luis, *Hernán Cortés*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 206.

damaged Cortés' image); for others it was the main event in the process of the conquest. This incident and the fact that Cortés was assisted by the people of Tlaxcala (who detested the *Aztecs*) ensured the success of the conquest. According to this interpretation, if Cortés had not burnt the boats, the march toward Tenochtitlán would perhaps not have taken place and history would have taken a different direction. The issue is hotly disputed.

Vasconcelos gives us another example of how volatile an issue the burning of the ships is. Vasconcelos asserts that "Mexico will never be a great nation until it has a patriotic celebration of the anniversary of the burning of the ships in Veracruz":

> *México no será grande nación mientras no tenga de fiesta patria el aniversario de la quema de las naves en Veracruz. Episodio de la Humanidad y no gesta oscura de patriotas que no querían patria independiente, sino buen Gobierno, y tenían razón. Lo malo es que desaparecieron ellos, se hicieron mártires Hidalgo y Morelos.* [185]

He also defends Cortés, stating: "Cortés surpassed himself and elevated himself into the ranks of the great Captains of History":

> *Sólo más tarde, cuando Cortés se ve rechazado tras de asomarse al país Azteca, cuando se ve en peligro de ser abandonado hasta por los suyos y para salvar la obra colosal que había entrevisto, destruye sus propias naves, sólo entonces comienza la verdadera epopeya. Entonces Cortés, olvidando pequeñas ventajas y planes reducidos, se sobrepasa a sí mismo y se eleva a la categoría de los grandes Capitanes de la Historia.* [186]

Theories about the pre-Hispanic origins of the American People

Five basic theories have arisen to explain the origins of the people of the North American continent. Most have no basis in scientific fact, and all of them generated controversy among artists and writers who were trying to establish a Mexican nationality. The theories, as represented in the murals, often assumed mythical proportions. The five theories are as follows: autochthonism, migration from Atlantis, Polynesian migration, Bering Strait migration, and the "lost tribe of Israel" migration.

Autochthonism

The autochthonist theory states that America has always been inhabited by man. Many people find this theory attractive because it presupposes an original, uncontaminated existence prior to the Spanish invasion. However, no scientific evidence supports autochthonism.

Polynesian Migration

Another theory suggests that the first Americans came from the Polynesian Islands, located in Oceania near Australia. Again, no scientific evidence supports the theory.

[185] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 876.
[186] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 49.

Bering Strait Migration

The most widely accepted theory suggests that humans migrated from Asia to North America by crossing a land bridge between the two continents. Though water covers the Bering Straits today, the sea level was much lower during the ice ages, and there is some evidence of tracks.

Atlantis

Most cultures record the legend of an island continent that once existed in the Atlantic Ocean and sank because of volcanic activity. The Greek philosopher Plato described Atlantis as a utopian society. When the Spaniards arrived in America, they thought the natives might be descendants of survivors from the lost continent. Indeed, Enrique Robles y Gutiérrez believed that knowledge possessed by natives suggested that these people originated in Atlantis:

> *[Los arqueólogos] Encontraron que los pueblos americanos prehistóricos, por la gran cantidad de productos agrícolas y sus respectivas variedades que existían a la llegada de los españoles, conocían ampliamente la ciencia agropecuaria y la metalurgia, especialmente oro, plata y cobre. Destacan la gran semejanza que los historiadores consignan en sus crónicas cuando describen el templo de Quetzalcóatl, y el templo consagrado a Neptuno. En ambos palacios, los recubrimientos son de metales preciosos.* [187]

In the *náhuatl* language, "Atl" means "water," and the name of Atlantis may have come from that word. In 1947, Dr. Atl wrote *Un grito en la Atlántida* in which he tried to prove by means of anthropological and etymological arguments that, the *náhuatl* people originated in Atlantis:

> *Atl significa agua (la estructura de la palabra y las reglas gramaticales de la lengua exigen la sola conservación de la raíz a). Tlan significa abundancia o inmensidad. Tico denota posesión, o más bien, adueñarnse de una cosa, y al mismo tiempo es demostrativo del lugar donde se efectúa la posesión. Así es que Atlántico, en lengua nahuatl, quiere decir: DONDE NOS POSESIONAMOS DEL AGUA GRANDE, O SEA, DEL MAR.* [188]

José Vasconcelos comments that "as the investigations progress, the Atlantis hypotheis is confirmed, as the cradle of a civilization that flourished thousands of years ago in the missing continent and in part of what today is America":

> *A medida que las investigaciones progresan, se afirma la hipótesis de la Atlántida, como cuna de una civilización que hace millares de años floreció en el continente desaparecido y en parte de lo que es hoy América.* [189]

He continues: "The race that we refer to as Atlantean prospered and declined in America."

> *La raza que hemos convenido en llamar atlántida prosperó y decayó en América. Después de un extraordinario florecimiento, tras de cumplir su ciclo, terminada su misión particular, entró en silencio y fue decayendo hasta quedar reducida a los menguados Imperios Azteca e inca, indignos totalmente de la antigua y superior cultura. Al decaer los*

[187] Robles y Gutiérrez, Enrique, *La Atlántida esta en México*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1979, pp. 14-15.
[188] Dr. Atl, *Un grito en la Atlántida*, Editorial Stylo, Mexico 1947, p. 131.
[189] Vasconcelos, José, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana, Argentina y Brasil*, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Colección Austral, Nº 802, Mexico 1986, p. 13.

atlantes, la civilización intensa se trasladó a otros sitios y cambió de estirpes; deslumbró en Egipto; se ensanchó en la India y en Grecia injertando en razas nuevas. [190]

The Lost Tribes of Israel

The discovery by the Spaniards of a peopled continent forced Europeans to consider the question of the origin of these "new" people. The Europeans turned to the Old Testament, and they concluded that somehow one of the lost tribes of Israel must have migrated to the Americas. José de Acosta, the author of the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias,* was certain that the natives must have come from Europe, Asia, or Africa, arguing that "we cannot deny what the Holy Scriptures clearly teach."

Y pues por una parte sabemos de cierto, que ha muchos siglos que hay hombres en estas partes, y por otra no podemos negar lo que la Divina Escritura claramente enseña, de haber procedido todos los hombres de un primer hombre, quedamos sin duda obligados a confesar, que pasaron acá los hombres de allá de Europa o de Asia o de África, pero el cómo y por qué camino vinieron todavía lo inquirimos y deseamos saber [...] Porque no se trata de qué es lo que pudo hacer Dios, sino qué es conforme a la razón y al orden y estilo de las cosas humanas. [191]

José de Acosta did not believe that the natives could have had the desire or ability to choose migration across the sea. He also rejects the idea that they had arrived with animals following a flood, for that would suggest more than one occurrence of Noah's ark and would directly contradict the Bible:

[...] de estos indicios y de otros semejantes se puede colegir que hayan pasado los indios a poblar aquella tierra, más por camino de tierra que de mar, o si hubo navegación, que fue no grande ni dificultosa, porque en efecto debe de continuarse el un orbe con el otro: o a lo menosestar en alguna parte muy cercanos entre sí. [192]

José de Acosta rejects the Atlantis thesis and says that the first men who came to the West Indies were wild men and hunters rather than republic and refined people:

Sea como quisieren, haya escrito Platón por historia o haya escrito por alegoría, lo que para mí es llano, es que todo cuanto trata de aquella isla, comenzando en el diálogo Timeo y prosiguiendo en el diálogo Cricia, no se puede contar en veras, si no es a muchachos y viejasy tengo para mí que el nuevo orbe e Indias Occidentales, no ha muchos millares que las habitan hombres, y que los primeros que entraran en ellas, más eran hombres salvajes y cazadores que no gente de república y pulida. [193]

The Golden Age

The origin of the initial inhabitants of America has not been (and perhaps cannot be) determined definitively. However, a culture did exist in Mexico before the Spaniards arrived, and certain writers have associated this with a mythical *Golden Age*. The *Golden Age* is a concept found in many different cultures. In classical mythology, it was the earliest period of human life, when human beings lived in happiness.

Mircea Eliade:

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[190] Ibid, pp. 15-16.
191 Quoted in Luis Lorenzo, José, "Los orígenes Mexicanos", *Historia General de México*, vol. I, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1990, p. 86.
[192] Ibid, p. 86.
[193] Ibid, p. 87.

> *Presque partout ces théories du «Grand Temps» se rencontrent en compagnie du mythe des âges successifs, l'«âge d'or» se trouvant toujours au commencement du cycle, près de l'illud tempus paradigmatique. Dans les deux doctrines − celle du temps-cyclique infini et celle du temps-cyclique limité − cet âge d'or est recouvrable; en d'autres termes, il est répetable, une infinité de fois dans la première doctrine, une seule fois dans l'autre.* [194]

This utopian state, where happiness reigned, is described in different ways in different cultures and epochs. It takes different forms, depending on the culture in which it appears.

Eliade:

> *Nous retrouvons la même théorie aux Indes: toutes les villes royales indiennes, même modernes, sont construites sur le modèle mythique de la cité céleste où habitait à l'Age d'Or (in illo tempore) le Souverain Universel. Et, tout comme celui-ci, le roi s'efforce de faire revivre l'Age d'Or, de rendre actuel un règne parfait, idée que nous retrouverons au cours de la présente étude.* [195]

Claude Lévi-Strauss:

> *[...] reconnaître l'Eden de la Bible, l'âge d'or des Anciens, le jardin des Hespérides, I'Atlantide, la fontaine de Jouvence et les îles Fortunées [...]* [196]

The term *Golden Age* has also been applied to great periods of literature in various national cultures.

Keen:

> *Some conquistadors may have been acquainted with the concept of a primeval Golden Age of innocence and simplicity, a notion descended from classical antiquity and blended in medieval and Renaissance times with the Christian tradition of an Earthly Paradise.* [197]

The concept also plays an important role in Mexican cultural life. For Mexico, the *Golden Age* referred to the time before the Spaniards arrived.

Minister José Vasconcelos, the patron of Mexican mural painting, wanted a return to this utopian period. Especially in the early phases of the muralism program, the *Golden Age* and ideas of Mexico's classic-Christian origins were important influences on Vasconcelos.

In Mexican Muralism, this mythical *Golden Age* is evoked in Rivera's representation of Tenochtitlán and the mythical arrival of Quetzalcóatl. In this immense poem painted on the walls of the National Palace in Mexico City, Rivera re-created the *Golden Age* with Quetzalcóatl as its prophet. The pre-Hispanic world of Quetzalcóatl, before evil led to his exile, is reputed to have possessed the key to knowledge and genuine grace. It was an age of peace and creativity expressed in agriculture, art, and science. It was characterized by great prosperity, achievements, idyllic happiness, and innocence.

According to Rivera (and others), this *Golden Age* was brutally destroyed by the conquest. Rivera traced the panorama of pre-Hispanic Mexico sympathetically and without reservations, glorifying the resistance of the

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[194] Eliade, Mircea, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour, archétypes et répétition,* Les essais XXXIV, Gallimard, Paris 1949, pp. 167-168.
[195] Ibid, p. 25.
[196] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Histoire de Lynx*, Paris 1991, p. 291.
[197] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 55.

natives and vehemently attacking the conquest and its consequences. His work was more than a history painting; it was a celebration of a *Golden Age* lost forever.

Keen:

> *He was renamed Quetzalcóatl in his capacity of high priest of the ancient god worshiped by the Teotihuacanos, and during the nineteen years of his rule he made his capital a center of such splendor that he and his city became legendary. The Song of Quetzalcóatl tells of the wonders of Tula, a true paradise on earth where cotton grew in colors, where the soil yielded fruit of such giant size that inferior grain was used only to heat steam baths. The legends of ancient Mexico invest the Toltecs with superhuman powers and talents. They are described as master artisans and Scientists, as creators of culture. Over this Golden Age presided the great priest-king Quetzalcóatl, whose rule revived the glories of the Theocratic state of Teotihuacán.* [198]

The official culture and the program of mural painting attempted, in a sort of retrospective nationalism, to find Mexico's deepest roots, and to exhume linguistic and anecdotal mythological references in a poetic interpretation of the history of Mexico.

Mircea Eliade:

> *To give only one example − that of the "cargo cults" of Oceania − it would be difficult to interpret this whole series of isolated activities without reference to their justification by myths. These prophetic and millennialist cults announce the imminence of a fabulous age of plenty and happiness. The natives will again be the masters in their islands, and they will no longer work, for the dead will return in magnificent ships laden with goods like the giant cargoes that the whites receive in their ports. It is for this reason that most of the "cargo cults" demand that, while all domestic animals and tools are to be destroyed, huge warehouses are to be built in which to store the goods brought by the dead. One movement prophesies Christ's arrival on a loaded freighter; another looks for the coming of "America." A new paradisal era will begin and the members of the cult will become immortal. Some cults also involve orgiastic acts, for the taboos and customs sanctioned by tradition will lose their reason for existence and give place to absolute freedom. Now, all these actions and beliefs are explained by the myth of the destruction of the World, followed by a new Creation and the establishment of the Golden Age.* [199]

5) The Revolution

Alongside the rediscovery of Mexico's historical and mythological past, the *Revolution* of 1910 was the second great theme in the murals painted from 1921 to 1974. Like the myths of the pre-Hispanic times, the revolutionary events painted on the walls corresponded very little to Mexican social, economic, and political realities.

By 1910, Mexico had been under the rule of Porfirio Díaz for more than thirty years. The period was called the "Porfirian peace," but it was characterized by the deep inequalities inherited from colonial times. Several factors contributed to the *Revolution* of 1910, including the devaluation of silver, the international recession in 1907-08, the abuses by farmers and businessmen close to Díaz, the incredibly high illiteracy rate, and Díaz' determination to cling on to the presidency. The *Revolution* radically transformed Mexican society, creating fundamental changes and awakening the spirit of the deprived classes. It improved social mobility and promoted a rediscovery and appreciation of local culture.

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[198] Ibid, p. 8.
[199] Eliade, Mircea, *Myth and Reality*, Harper & Row, New York 1963, pp. 2-3.

Carlos Monsiváis describes the *Revolution* as a "way to take financial advantage of international and national interest in the violence of an exotic country (which is how national tourism gives itself glamor)":

> *De modo contradictorio pero inexorable tiene lugar el despojo: en el robo de realidades se evapora el sentido político (radical o no) de la Revolución. No importa demasiado. Se ha encontrado el camino para aprovechar financieramente el interés mundial y nacional por la violencia de un país exótico (con lo que se glamoriza el turismo interno). No hay objeción: la Revolución Mexicana es el producto más autentico, más aventurero de América Latina. ¿Por qué no industrializarla? Al fin y al cabo es una entidad abstracta.* [200]

Paz is more interested in the beneficial cultural effects of the *Revolution* and writes: "Thanks to the Revolution, the Mexican wants to reconcile himself with his history and his origins."

> *Si se contempla la Revolución Mexicana desde las ideas esbozadas en este ensayo, se advierte que consiste en un movimiento tendiente a reconquistar nuestro pasado, asimilarlo y hacerlo vivo en el presente. Y esta voluntad de regreso, fruto de la soledad y de la desesperación, es una de las fases de esa dialéctica de soledad y comunión, de reunión y separación que parece presidir toda nuestra vida histórica. Gracias a la Revolución el Mexicano quiere reconciliarse con su Historia y con su origen. De ahí que nuestro movimiento tenga un carácter al mismo tiempo desesperado y redentor. Si estas palabras, gastadas por tantos labios, guardan aún algún significado para nosotros, quieren decir que el pueblo se rehusa a toda ayuda exterior, a todo esquema propuesto desde afuera y sin relación profunda con su ser, y se vuelve sobre sí mismo.* [201]

The Beginning

The seeds of *Revolution* were sown by Porfirio Díaz himself in 1908 when he stated that the Mexican people were ready for democracy and indicated that he would retire when his term ended in 1910. Several political parties protested and declared their support for Díaz, so he decided to run again. However, the *Partido Antireeleccionista* chose Francisco I. Madero as the opposition candidate. Fearing that Madero might win the election, Díaz imprisoned him before the elections, which were held in June. The government declared Díaz the winner, extending his term through 1916. Madero escaped to San Antonio; from there, he issued the San Luis' Plan, which declared the elections to be illegal and named Madero as president. Thus, the so-called *Revolution* began on November 20, 1910.

1911-1913: Francisco Indalécio Madero

Francisco I. Madero (1873-1913) was a wealthy businessman from Parras, Coahuila. In his book *La sucesión presidencial en 1910*, he criticized Porfirio Díaz, summarized the contemporary political situation, and proposed a democratic government as a solution. Although some historians consider him a dreamer who lacked character, others, particularly Vasconcelos, saw him as the apostle for democracy.

Enrique Krauze sees Madero as a mystic devoted to freedom.

> *Las razones del derrumbe del gobierno de Madero no hay que buscarlas en el desempeño político de Madero, sino en el trágico encuentro de una actitud personal − su misticismo*

[200] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1512.
[201] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 132.

por la libertad − con la actitud colectiva de la élite política Mexicana en ese momento: su reverencia al poder personal absoluto, su miedo a la libertad. [202]

Hoping to avoid violence, Madero accepted the role of interim president when Díaz left office. He was formally elected on November 11, 1911, when the people demonstrated its eagerness for democracy. However, the politicians and the press were not in favor of the change, and former Porfirists conspired with the North American ambassador Henry Lane Wilson to discredit Madero. Félix Díaz, nephew of Porfirio, and Bernardo Reyes seized a military enclosure called the Ciudadela in Mexico City, and more than five hundred people were killed in the ensuing violence. Madero entrusted Victoriano Huerta with the task of stopping the rebellion, but Huerta turned against him and betrayed him. On February 19, 1913, Huerta executed Madero and his Vice President, José María Pino Suárez, and had himself appointed to the presidency on the same day.

The first democratic government in the history of Mexico lasted only fifteen months. Later, José Vasconcelos described Madero as the only ethical politician he had ever known.

Victoriano Huerta wanted to give the appearance of legality to his seizure of power. He imprisoned or murdered those who opposed him, and his actions led to further revolts in 1913 and 1914. Three figures emerged as leaders in the struggle against Huerta: Venustiano Carranza, governor of Coahuila, who formed the constitutionalist army under the *Plan of Guadalupe* on March 26, 1913; General Francisco Villa, from the north; and Emiliano Zapata, from the south. After several defeats, Huerta and his federalist army surrendered on August 14, 1914.

Although Carranza, Villa, and Zapata all opposed Huerta, they were divided on national and international issues. Carranza and Villa focused primarily on establishing a constitutional government, whilst Zapata was less interested in ideals of democracy and freedom; his main objective was the restitution of land to local farmers. The three leaders agreed to meet in an effort to solve their differences, and in the second meeting of the Convention in Aguascalientes on October 10, 1914, they designated General Eulalio Gutiérrez as interim president and agreed to give up control over their armies.

However, Carranza ignored the agreement and established his government in Veracruz in November 1914. He lost Villa's support, and in the ensuing battles his armies, led by General Álvaro Obregón and General Pablo González, defeated the armies of Villa and Zapata, reducing them to guerilla units. In October 1915, the United States and several Latin American countries recognized Carranza as the head of the de facto government in Mexico.

Carranza enacted the *Law of Restitution and Endowment of Public Land* and the *Law of Free Municipality*. He also ordered a new constitution based on the Constitution of 1857, but with the addition of articles 3, 27, and 123, which promoted socialist ideas. The Constitution of 1917 is still in effect in Mexico today.

Legitimized by an election in 1917, Carranza faced serious economic problems in the form of strikes, confrontation with oil and mining companies over taxes, lack of credit, and severe inflation. Corruption within the government grew, and the verb "*carrancear*" became a synonym for stealing.

General Álvaro Obregón made use of the growing dissatisfaction to launch a campaign for the presidency in 1920. Although Carranza owed his success to the general's military victories, he refused to nominate Obregón when his own term ended, and Obregón turned to his army for support. Carranza fled but was murdered on a road near Tlaxcalaltongo, Puebla. Three days later, Congress appointed Adolfo de la Huerta, the governor of Sonora and a follower of Obregón, to the presidency. Both Villa and Zapata accepted the appointment, and a brief period of peace ensued. Obregón himself was elected president in 1920, but the United States did not recognize his regime until 1923. Hampered by his longstanding quarrel with the

[202] Krauze, Enrique, "Madero Vivo", *Vuelta*, nr. 166, March 1993, p. 14. Quoted in Pazos, Luis, *Historia sinóptica de México, de los Olmecas a Salinas*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1993, p. 110.

church, Obregón survived a revolt in 1923-24, and he was re-elected in 1928, but a Roman Catholic fanatic assassinated him before he could take office.

Relations between Mexico and the United States

To characterize the tragedy of Mexico and its inability to succeed, Porfirio Díaz once exclaimed:

> *¡Pobre de México! ¡Tan alejado de Dios y tan cerca de Estados Unidos!* [203]

From the *Mexican Revolution* until the end of General Cárdenas's government in the 1930s, Mexico experienced constant pressure from other countries, especially from the United States. The United States had mining and other business interests in Mexico, and US leaders demanded protection for their investments. Carranza assured them they would have it, but he failed to keep his promise. This led to President Wilson sending American troops to Veracruz, and many Mexicans and Americans were wounded or killed. Mexican public opinion turned against the United States. When President Wilson recognized Carranza's government, Villa, who was by then opposed to Carranza, raided towns in New Mexico and Texas, killing people and burning property. His actions nearly led to full-scale war.

According to Vasconcelos, the divisions among the different factions went very deep:

> *Tan profunda llegó a ser la división de los distintos bandos, que pronto cada uno tuvo en Washington un representante independiente. Los de Villa querían que se convocase a elecciones para eliminar a Carranza; los de Carranza querían aplazar las elecciones durante un largo período de dictadura preconstitucional, y los de Zapata abogaban por una república indígena y un reparto de tierras, según el Plan de Ayala, no según comunismos o colectivismos que todavía ni apuntaban en el doctrinarismo nacional. En el fondo, cada uno de los tres bandos cortejaba el favor de Washington, o sea el reconocimiento de beligerancia que daba acceso al mercado de armas; cada uno aspiraba a hacerse de elementos de guerra para destruir a sus rivales.* [204]

Paz, discussing the agrarian reforms, comments: "Almost all the programs and manifestos of the revolutionary groups contain allusions to the agrarian question. But only the Revolution of the South and its leader, Emiliano Zapata, outline with clarity, decision and simplicity the problem."

> *Casi todos los programas y manifiestos de los grupos revolucionarios contienen alusiones a la cuestión agraria. Pero solamente la Revolución del Sur y su jefe, Emiliano Zapata, plantean con claridad, decisión y simplicidad el problema. No es un azar que Zapata, figura que posee la hermosa y plástica poesía de las imágenes populares, haya servido de modelo una y otra vez, a los pintores Mexicanos. Con Morelos y Cuauhtémoc es uno de nuestros héroes legendarios. Realismo y mito se alían en esta melancólica, ardiente y esperanzada figura, que murió como había vivido: abrazado a la tierra. Como ella, está hecho de paciencia y fecundidad, de silencio y esperanza, de muerte y resurrección. Su programa contenía pocas ideas, estrictamente las necesarias para hacer saltar las formas económicas y políticas que nos oprimían. Los artículos sexto y séptimo del Plan de Ayala, que prevén la restitución y el reparto de las tierras, implican una transformación de nuestro régimen de propiedad agraria y abren la puerta al México contemporáneo. En suma, el programa de Zapata consistía en la liquidación del feudalismo y en la institución de una legislación que se ajustara a la realidad Mexicana.* [205]

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[203] *Poor Mexico, so far from God and so near to the United States!* The authorship of those words is uncertain. However, they are usually attributed to Porfirio Diaz.
[204] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, pp. 558-559.
[205] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 128-130.

One of the consequences of the *Revolution* was the loss of cultural ties to European countries. The search for the true cultural nature of Mexico, which had begun with Romanticism but had been repressed during the Díaz dictatorship, reemerged. Losses suffered during the war with the United States, the loss of territory and national honor, inspired men of politics and culture to resurrect the country's lost identity, based on the uncontaminated happiness of the distant *Golden Age*.



Figure 24. Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa together in Mexico City. [206]

Zapata and Villa

Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919) and Francisco Villa (1877-1923) were legendary figures of the revolutionary period. In **Figure 24** we can see Villa and Zapata together, a rare occurrence. They were honest in their objectives but naïve in politics; they were guided more by instinct and regional interests than by intellect or national purpose

Zapata, "the Attila of the South," achieved the highest mythological stature of all the heroes of the *Revolution*. His image is found in several murals, especially in the work of Rivera. However, both Siqueiros and Orozco painted Zapata in several occasions. In **Figure 25** [207] we can see Emiliano Zapata painted by Siqueiros in 1931 and in **Figure 26** Zapata as Orozco represented him in 1930 (Oil on canvas). [208]

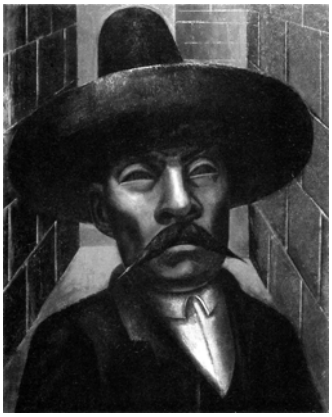


Figure 25. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *Emiliano Zapata*, 1931.

[206] Retrieved 2003-09-09 from http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~border/resource_pages/Revolution/images/pancho/villa_and_Zapata.gif
[207] At the Hirshhorn Musem in Washington, DC, USA. Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.tigtail.org/TVM/B/NAmerican/a.%20pre%20WW%20II/Siqueiros/M/Siqueiros_Zapata.1931.jpg
[208] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.tigtail.org/TVM/B/NAmerican/a.%20pre%20WW%20II/Orozco/M/Orozco_Zapata.1921.jpg

Zapata supported Madero in the revolt against Díaz. On November 25, 1911, Zapata wrote the *Plan de Ayala* and popularized its motto, "*Reforma, Libertad, Justicia y Ley*" (Reforms, Freedom, Justice and Law).

The plan called for restitution, endowment, and nationalization of land, including the mountains and water, and it provided compensation for widows and orphans of the *Revolution*. The first agrarian allotment was made on April 30, 1912, in Ixcampilpa, Puebla. The zapatist movement demanded "tierra y libertad" (land and freedom), and these principles were the basis of the agrarian reforms of 1915.



Figure 26. José Clemente Orozco: *Emiliano Zapata*, 1930.

Paz: "The Zapatist movement was a true revolt, an overturning of everything, a return to the beginning. Its foundation was historical because the peasants wanted to return to the communal property of the land; at the same time, they were inspired by a myth: the original Golden Age."

> *El movimiento zapatista fue una verdadera revuelta, un volver al revés las cosas, un regreso al principio. Su fundamento era histórico porque los campesinos querían volver a la propiedad comunal de la tierra; al mismo tiempo, estaban inspirados por un mito: la Edad de Oro del comienzo.* [209]

In December 1914, when the rural armies of Villa and Zapata occupied the capital, the popular *Revolution* reached its high point. The old oligarchy was in retreat, and the new bourgeoisie had not yet asserted itself.

According to Paz, the Zapatist movement saw the future of Mexico in a return to its origins.

> *El movimiento zapatista tiende a rectificar la Historia de México y el sentido mismo de la Nación, que ya no será el proyecto histórico del liberalismo. México no se concibe como un futuro que realizar, sino como un regreso a los orígenes. El radicalismo de la Revolución Mexicana consiste en su originalidad, esto es, en volver a nuestra raíz, único fundamento de nuestras instituciones. Al hacer del calpulli el elemento básico de nuestra organización económica y social, el zapatismo no sólo rescataba la parte válida de la tradición colonial, sino que afirmaba que toda construcción política de veras fecunda debería partir de la porción más antigua, estable y duradera de nuestra nación: el pasado indígena.* [210]

When Madero was overthrown, Zapata ignored Huerta and opposed Carranza. He died in an ambush laid by Carranza's army in 1919.

General Francisco Villa, also known as Pancho Villa, "The Centaur of the North," was born in Durango; his real name was Doroteo Arango. He supported Madero and then Carranza, but broke with both. He was the only Mexican leader who ever invaded United States territory, and Mexicans took pride in his actions. The Americans, on the other hand, saw him as a thief and a murderer. He was murdered in 1923. Rivera included him in several mural paintings in the National Palace, although his status as a hero of the *Revolution* was not as great as that of Zapata.

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[209] Paz, Octavio, "Vuelta a El laberinto de la soledad" (Conversación con Claude Fell), *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. I: *El peregrino en su patria, Historia y política de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz y Luis Mario Schneider, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 237.
[210] Paz, Octavio, *El laberinto de la soledad*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 128-130.

The *Ateneo de la Juventud*, the *Youth's Athenaeum*.

In 1906, a group of Mexican intellectuals, including Alfonso Reyes, Antonio Caso, José Vasconcelos, and Pedro Henríquez Ureña, started having regular meetings to study the classics. In 1907, they began activities as a group under the name *Sociedad de Conferencias* (Society of Conferences), founded by Jesús T. Acevedo, the architect. A new philosophical orientation with humanist aspirations flourished, characterized by mysticism, search for beauty, and a tendency to look for the eternal significance of events. These intellectuals rejected the moral approaches of *Porfirismo*. By 1909, the association had become the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, and by 1911, it had evolved into the *Ateneo de México* with Vasconcelos as its president.

Keen:

> *The Porfiristas were a strangely assorted coalition that included old-time Juárez liberals, who wistfully clung to their libertarian ideals, ardent Catholic Conservatives, and hard-boiled Científicos contemptuous of democracy and convinced that the Indians were an inferior race.* [211]

Influenced by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Benedetto Croce, and Bergson, the members of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* created an aesthetic of creative literature and art. It was Vasconcelos who put these ideas into practice when he became Secretary of Public Education. To highlight the importance of the colonial history of Mexico, Vasconcelos commissioned the first murals to be painted in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* (The Old College of San Ildelfonso). These early works included *The Arrival of the Santa Cruz in New Spain* (1922-1923), Ramón Alva de la Canal; *Evangelism* (1922, destroyed), Emilio García Cahero; *The Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1922), Fermín Revueltas; and *The Creation*, Diego Rivera (1922). In these first murals, as well as in the *La Fiesta de la Cruz* by Roberto Montenegro, the Creole, the *mestizo*, the native, and popular or allegorical figures mix in an enchanting vision of a people without violence.

The *Ateneo de la Juventud* developed a modern theory of Mexican culture that eventually shook the positivist regime. The members of the *Athenaeum* recognized the need for a national, cultural project which went beyond the materialism that had characterized the *Porfiriato* group, The *Scientists*. The anti-positivist debate was at the heart of the *Youth's Athenaeum*.

Vasconcelos felt that the idea of youth embodied in the association's title was not quite appropriate:

> *Nuestra agrupación la inició Caso con las conferencias y discusiones de temas filosóficos, en el salón del Generalito, de la Preparatoria, y tomó cuerpo de Ateneo con la llegada de Henríquez Ureña, Espíritu formalista y académico. Lo de Ateneo pasaba; pero llamarle de la Juventud cuando ya andábamos en los veintitrés, no complacía a quien, como yo, se sintió siempre más allá de sus años.* [212]

Within the group, José Vasconcelos and Martín Luis Guzmán were the only members who had participated in the armed fight for freedom. Other members included the philosopher Antonio Caso; the writers Alfonso Reyes, Joaquín Méndez Rivas, Enrique González Martínez, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Julio Torri, Manuel de la Parra; the architects Jesús Acevedo and Federico Mariscal; and the painters Diego Rivera, Roberto Montenegro and Ramos Martínez, as well as several musicians.

These intellectuals and artists provided cultural leadership for the first post-revolutionary decade. They knew that Mexico had unique problems and therefore needed unique solutions. As an elite, they decided on the direction for an entire people, which was at that time involved in an armed conflict and had no knowledge of

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[211] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 419.
[212] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, pp. 232-233.

the choices that were being made on its behalf. The *Athenaeum* created the basis for the work of Justo Sierra. In 1910, the Centennial of the Independence of Mexico, Sierra founded the *Escuela de Altos Estudios* (School of High Studies) and the *Universidad Nacional* (National University).

Vasconcelos: "Friends in the *Athenaeum* named me their president for the first year[of the Madera regime]."

> *Los amigos del Ateneo me nombraron su presidente para el primer año maderista. No por homenaje, sino en provecho de la instituición, cuya vida económica precaria yo podría aliviar. Además, podría asegurarle cierta atención del nuevo Gobierno. Y no volví a llevar tabajos a las sesiones, sino que incorporé a casi todos los miembros del Ateneo al nuevo régimen político nacional. Con este objecto se amplió el radio de nuestros trabajos, creándose la primera Universidad Popular.* [213]

In 1910, Vasconcelos held a conference entitled "Don Gabino Barreda and Contemporary Ideas". Although Vasconcelos attacked the philosophical bases of positivism, he, Caso, and Acevedo defended Barreda's reconstruction of the national spirit on the grounds that Barreda was at least moving in the direction of modern thought. The work of Barreda and the positivists, though limited, served as a stimulus and an incentive. Nevertheless, Vasconcelos remained fundamentally opposed to a system based on the teachings of Comte. Instead, he preferred Schopenhauer's idea of reason as an instrument of will and Nietzsche's concept of force, the will to power, and the dominance of the superman. These ideas replaced the positivism of Comte and Spencer. The members of the *Athenaeum* viewed philosophy as an integral part of life. Vasconcelos in particular professed a genuine enthusiasm for art in its various forms. He believed intuition was an essential feature of artistic thought.

The definitive expression of the group's thought was the essay "Ariel" by the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó. It was published in Uruguay in 1900, immediately after the defeat of Spain by the United States. The Mexican edition was dated 1908.

Rodó believed (as Vasconcelos would do later) that the Mexicans should seek their fundamental values in the classic cultures of Greece and Rome and thus attain a cultural identity different from that of the North-Americans. He believed that the loss of Cuba and the decisive American intervention in Meso-American matters constituted a grave danger for Mexican identity. He presented North-American culture as Caliban and Latin American civilization as Ariel. He recognized the danger of becoming part of the United States Empire. Caliban wanted war, but the intellectuals, especially the members of the *Athenaeum*, identified with Ariel. Building on Rodó's work, they sought a national culture which they believed could develop from the rural and indigenous groups who still remembered the old traditions. They saw the misery of these abandoned groups and the exclusion they suffered. The intellectuals knew that these factors contributed to cultural dissatisfaction and political rebellion. The Ariel philosophy inspired them to defend an autochthonous culture, reinforced by Greek and Judeo-Christian ideas brought from Spain.

Juan Prawda: "Justo Sierra made a critical revision of the development and the situation of positivism, and he declared his sympathy for the new philosophy of free will."

> *Justo Sierra, al igual que Pedro Henríquez Ureña, José Vasconcelos y los jóvenes Antonio Caso y Alfonso Reyes se sumaron a esta renovación. En 1910, en una serie de célebres conferencias realizadas en el Ateneo de la Juventud, Justo Sierra revisó críticamente el desarrollo y situación del positivismo y declaró su simpatía por la nueva filosofía de la voluntad del ser.* [214]

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[213] Ibid, p. 396.

[214] Prawda, Juan, "Desarollo del sistema educativo Mexicano, pasado, presente y futuro", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 62.

At the end of the *Porfiriato,* two ideological currents influenced education: the beliefs of the positivists and the beliefs of their opponents who were divided into the Conservatives, the old liberal non-positivists, and the philosophical critics who would form the *Athenaeum*.

For Vasconcelos the key struggle was "the philosophical battle against positivism."

> *Era como ampararse en la minoría al comienzo de una batalla iniciada antes del arribo de Pedro Henríquez. La batalla filosófica contra el positivismo. El abanderado fue siempre Caso, y nuestro apoyo Boutroux. El libro de éste sobre la contingencia de las leyes naturales, hábilmente comentado, aprovechado por Caso, destruyó en el ciclo de conferencias toda la labor positivista de los anteriores treinta años. No puedo decir que a mí también me impresionara el libro de Boutroux. Negativo en sus conclusiones, no me importaba gran cosa el problema de si las leyes de la ciencia eran simplemente sumas de experiencias o coincidían con la necesidad lógica; lo que yo anhelaba era una experiencia capaz de justificar la validez de lo espiritual dentro del campo mismo de lo empírico. Y es esto lo que creí deducir de Maine de Biran y su teoría del «sentimiento del esfuerzo» [...] De aquí la doble dirección del movimiento ideológico del Ateneo. Racionalisa, idealista con Caso, antiintelectualista, voluntarista y espiritualizante en mi ánimo.* [215]

Vasconcelos insisted on the practical aspects of education, but, in 1920-21, he constructed an educational and cultural system based on the specific spiritualistic philosophy prevalent in the *Athenaeum*. As president of the group, he designed a program for the "rehabilitation of the thought of the race;" he hoped that his ideas would spread throughout Iberia-America. His book, *The Cosmic Race*, published in Spain in 1925, was widely read throughout the continent.

The members of the *Athenaeum* reinvigorated cultural and scientific life in Mexico by refuting the ideological base of the dictatorship. Instead of social Darwinism, they proposed the concept of free will; instead of bourgeois conformity based on survival of the strongest, they spoke about the power of the feeling of human responsibility which should guide individual and social behavior. The members of the *Athenaeum* saw in the autonomy of culture the possibility of reorganizing society.

Martin Luis Guzmán sees Mexicans as "condemned to exist in a constant state of dilettantism."

> *Bien a causa de la pereza mental Mexicana; bien por estar acostumbrados al brillo e interés de los últimos aspectos del pensamiento europeo, no buscamos tener vida intelectual auténtica ni lo que arranca del corazón mismo de los problemas sociales Mexicanos. Estamos condenados a cierta condición perdurable de dilettanti.* [216]

Led by Vasconcelos, the *Athenaeum* of Mexico functioned as an unofficial ministry of culture. Vasconcelos used the Popular Mexican University to provide education for all adults and workers, providing free courses, conferences, readings, and concerts. The *Athenaeum* was declared an apolitical, secular institution. It included the plastic artists Diego Rivera, Angel Zárraga, Francisco de la Torre, and Jorge Enciso.

Ida Rodríguez Prampolini: "The indigenous past ended up being hoisted like a national flag, but understood as a kind of retrograde utopia, as the Golden Age 'pure, infantile but primitive.' "

> *En las últimas décadas del Porfiriato se habían auspiciado los estudios de la antigüedad prehispánica. En un intento de reestructuración de las etapas históricas del positivismo en que se había cimentado el progreso patrio, el pasado indígena llegó a ser enarbolado*

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[215] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 233.
[216] Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1402.

> *como emblema nacional, pero comprendido como una especie de utopía regresiva, como la Edad de Oro "pura, infantil pero primitiva."* [217]

The *vasconcelist* project of Mexican art was based on the best elements of Greek-Latin, Hispano-Indian, and popular traditions. The members of the *Athenaeum* were Hellenists; they looked to the Greek myths for allegories that could be applied to personal situations. In Greece they found everything they could not find in Mexico. By returning to the classics, they acquired a past, a present, and a future with which to define their national identity. The influence of the European classical tradition was very significant in Mexico from the end of the eighteenth century until the mid-twentieth century.

The intellectuals of the *Porfirismo* had seen western culture as the source of genuine Mexican culture. Without denying this fundamental idea, the most radical representatives of the *Mexican Revolution* declared during the twenties and thirties that the *Revolution* itself was the indispensable sieve for any cultural process, and they examined the question of the universal value of Mexican thinking and discoveries. Agrarian and labor reform progressed, but the most significant achievement during Obregón's presidency, was José Vasconcelos's educational program.

Vasconcelos's reflections on the ideas discussed in the *Athenaeum* led him to develope his own philosophical-educational theory. His work sparked an explosion of art in the post-revolutionary period. He was inspired by a passionate combination of elitist, nationalist attitudes with the outlines of theory, class, and committed action developed by the *Athenaeum*. Without Vasconcelos, the art form of Mexican muralist painting would never have developed.

[217] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 315.

CHAPTER III. THE ARTISTIC AND AESTHETIC ANTECEDENTS OF THE *MEXICAN MURAL MOVEMENT* AND MYTHOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS BEFORE 1921

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, and as I will illustrate in more detail in chapters four and five, the subject of the origin of the movement and its mural program is not without problems. As far as I can see, no organized mural activity existed before Vasconcelos, and thus one cannot speak of a continuous tradition of muralist work stretching from Aztec times to the twentieth century muralist movement. This reinforces the idea that Vasconcelos started something new when he initiated the *Mexican Mural Movement* at the beginning of the 1920s. When Vasconcelos entered the Secretariat, the country was in complete chaos – from the economic, social, cultural, and artistic points of view. Moreover, there was no definite program for the arts, and still less for public art, in spite of what some claimed after Vasconcelos's departure from the ministry. Vasconcelos tried to build an educational, cultural and artistic edifice, based on national values, which would create a Mexican national identity. It is in this context that mural painting in Mexico was born. The possible antecedents that can be evoked do not substantiate any idea of continuity. Many people, especially Diego Rivera, have had problems with this issue.

The artistic activity and the sporadic mural paintings of the pre-Hispanic past (discovered much later than 1921) hardly support an argument for continuity. They are often similar to work found in all the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Latin America, religious in character, and seldom use mythological, pre-Columbian topics. The art produced during the post-independence period up to 1921, despite impulses towards regenerating the pre-Hispanic past, is not of the same nature, and one sees no evidence in Mexico of a collective will to create murals during this period. The few murals made in the nineteenth century are not of the same nature and programmatic depth as those which Vasconcelos planned for the public buildings with the help of the artists he recalled from Europe, as I hope to be able to demonstrate.

However during the second decade of the twentieth century, some artists linked to the *Athenaeum* (and thus to Vasconcelos) such as Jorge Enciso, Angel Zárraga, and Saturnino Herrán, did venture in this direction before 1921. But contrary to his oft-repeated assertions, Diego Rivera, who had some connections with the *Athenaeum*, certainly did not paint mural decorations, and he did not have plans for mural works in his homeland before he went to Europe. There is no evidence of any projects related to mural activity during the time he spent in Europe, although later he would say he had planned to start the mural program immediately after the *Mexican Revolution* and long before Vasconcelos.

Rivera is a fervent advocate of the continuity theory and claims that "there are a lot of fantasies about the origin of the mural paintings painted in Mexico between 1921 and the present day. In fact, the production of mural painting has never stopped in Mexico, not even in the most difficult and worst moments in its history, during the time that we can refer to it as such, and that is more than 23 centuries."

> *Se ha fantaseado mucho sobre el origen de la pintura mural en México, la hecha entre 1921 y nuestros días. En realidad, la producción de pintura mural no se ha detenido en México nunca, ni aun en los más difíciles y peores momentos de su historia, durante el tiempo a que podemos referirnos a ella como tal, y que son más de 23 siglos.* [218]

There are three main reasons why the idea of a historical continuity has gained ground. The first reason has to do with a natural process of identification and cultural legitimation with origins previous to the movement itself, in order to increase its legitimacy. If it is necessary, a myth has to be created, as Francisco Reyes Palma affirms:

[218] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 130.

> *In fact, the Mexican myth is a counter-myth destined to resist the paragon of European cultural dominance, while at the same time brandishing its own inversion rituals aimed at reaffirming the hegemony of certain sectors of Mexican society.* [219]

The second reason has to do with the propagandistic and rhetorical activity of Rivera. It is he, but not only he, who insists on historical continuity. The third reason has to do with Vasconcelos's role. There is a clear tendency towards playing down his contribution, and the claim that mural painting already existed before his work as minister serves to devalue his contribution. This attitude is a constant in studies of Mexican muralism, partly as a result of Vasconcelos himself often downplaying his own responsibility for the mural program.

In Mexican Muralism there is a clear attempt to rediscover the pre-Hispanic past, an incorporation of the present and a vision of the future full of promises, all of which assumes mythical proportions alongside the generally accepted explanations of muralism as an offshoot of the *Revolution*.

Indeed, some speak about the *Mexican Mural Movement* as part of a heritage or process of aesthetic continuity, based on a mural tradition with origins in Spain and Italy, and, before that, in the mural painting of the pre-Cortesian indigenous peoples. As will become clear, there are artists, critics, and others who want to see a continuous process in muralism in Mexico with its origin in the pre-Cortesian cultures, its continuation during the colonial period, and its revitalization in the *Revolution*. If that model glorifies the artistic history of Mexico, it also reduces the originality of the idea and the authority of Minister José Vasconcelos's work. Such attacks naturally came easy to Rivera, because of Vasconcelos's virulent (and, I think, accurate) criticism of Rivera's submissiveness towards US interests.

Armando Torres-Michúa, among others, says this idea of continuity is not tenable. "Regarding our indigenous ancestors, it [the idea of a conscious and continuous process] is only an idealization, since in the twenties this important pictorial genre was almost completely unknown, as a consequence of insufficient archaeological discoveries":

> *Se han querido ver antecedentes del Muralismo Mexicano en la pintura mural de los pueblos indígenas precortesianos (teotihuacanos, mayas, zapotecos); en la ornamentación de los muros de iglesias y conventos de la arquitectura novohispana del siglo XVI; en la pintura academicista del siglo XIX. Respecto a nuestros antepasados indígenas no deja de ser un idealismo, ya que en los años veintes era casi desconocido en su totalidad este importante género pictórico, consecuencia de los insuficientes descubrimientos arqueológicos.* [220]

Moreover, he continues with reference to the mural decoration of religious buildings during the colonial period: "Concerning the mural decoration of religious buildings, at that time, their importance and extent was still not known, and neither was much known about the decorations in the big convents":

> *En lo que se refiere a la decoración mural de los edificios religiosos, en esa fecha aún no se conocía la importancia y la extensión, como tampoco los grandes ejemplos conventuales.* [221]

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[219] Reyes Palma, Francisco, "Mythical Structures in Perceptions of 20th Century Mexican Art", *Curare* Nº 9, Otoño 1996, Retrieved 2002-09-30 from http://www.laneta.apc.org/curare/myth.html

[220] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., p. 7.

[221] Ibid.

The mural paintings, the sculptures, and the ceramics of ancient Mexican art were not discovered until well after the *Revolution*. Then, the emerging Mexican artists were at last able to look into the past and revive the life, legends, and myths of the ancient peoples of old Mexico.

For Benjamin Keen, this desire for cultural continuity is comprehensible:

> *The Mexican cult of ancient Mexico reflects above all an intense nationalism, the desire to accent that part of the national cultural heritage which is peculiarly Mexican, a justified pride in a great tradition of remote antiquity.* [222]

I also believe that the dominance of Mexican and American critics in the political and cultural fields, particularly with respect to muralism, is fundamental in the creation of myths. Moreover, even the muralists themselves liked to reinforce the process of cultural legitimacy through an alleged continuity.

For Francisco Reyes Palma, two significant books contributed to the myth of the national cultural heritage:

> *In the quest for a cohesive social factor, it was not too long before the fiction of Mexican art as one continuous line was introduced. Two significant books contributed to this myth: La Historia del arte en Mexico by José Juan Tablada, written in 1923 and published in 1927, and Idols Behind Altars by Anita Brenner, published in 1929, although only in its original English version.* [223]

As noted earlier, the statements of the Mexican artists often hinder the correct interpretation of the facts. This happens regularly with Rivera, which leads to major problems in the general view of Mexican muralism, but even Siqueiros and Orozco contribute to erroneous generalizations to such an extent that these become truths, or rather, myths.

From the many assertions in Mexican, American, and European works about mural art in Mexico, a statement, by José Clemente Orozco is representative. Orozco, in the forties, belittled the movement of 1921/22 and insisted in his thesis that mural painting had begun before its "official" beginning. In his *Autobiography* (1942), he says that "In 1922, mural painting had already set the table, and the idea of painting walls, and all the ideas that will constitute the new artistic stage, those that will give it life, already existed in Mexico; they were developed and defined from 1900 to 1920, that is to say, over a period of twenty years."

> *La pintura mural se encontró en 1922 con la mesa puesta. La idea misma de pintar muros y todas las ideas que iban a constituir la nueva etapa artística, las que iban a dar vida, ya existían en México y se desarrollaron y definieron de 1900 a 1920, o sea veinte años. Por supuesto que tales ideas tuvieron su origen en los siglos anteriores, pero adquirieron su forma definitiva durante esas dos décadas. Todos sabemos en demasía que ningún hecho histórico aparece aislado y sin motivo. Puede hacerse un resumen de lo que se pensaba en México en 1920, en lo que se refiere al arte. 1º. − Eran los días en que se llegó a creer que cualquiera podía pintar y que el mérito de las obras sería mayor mientras fueran la ignorancia y estupidez de los autores. 2º. − Muchos creyeron que el arte precortesiano era la verdadera tradición que nos correspondía y llegó a hablarse del "Renacimiento del Arte Indígena". 3º. − Llegaba a su máximo el furor por la plástica del indígena actual. Fué cuando empezó a inundarse México de petates, ollas, huaraches, danzantes de*

[222] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 467.
[223] Reyes Palma, Francisco, "Mythical Structures in Perceptions of 20th Century Mexican Art", *Curare* Nº 9, Otoño 1996, Retrieved 2002-09-30 from http://www.laneta.apc.org/curare/myth.html

Chalma, zarapes, rebozos y se iniciaba la exportación en gran escala de todo esto. Comenzaba el auge turístico de Cuernavaca y Taxco. [224]

This type of statement tends to detract from the importance of Vasconcelos's work. Significantly these words were written in 1942, when Vasconcelos was very unpopular. [225]

I will now analyze the evolution of the arts and, in particular, muralism in Mexico in its more representative periods, to try to assess the continuity theory. If this proves possible, it will mean that Vasconcelos merely continued an existing tendency, as Rivera and Orozco affirm.

To facilitate the analysis, art produced before Vasconcelos has been divided into three main periods:

The ancient indigenous art before the arrival of the Spaniards
Mexican art during the colonial period
Artistic production during the period from independence until 1921, when Vasconcelos became Minister of Education.

1) The old indigenous art before the arrival of the Spaniards

In broad terms one can say that pre-Columbian art and architecture were concerned with natural dualities such as day and night, sun and moon, land and water, and life and death. In these agricultural societies, religious ideas and rituals were principally determined by concerns about fertility. Much of pre-Columbian art and architecture was involved with astronomy, which helped the indigenous peoples decide on suitable times for planting and harvesting. The pre-Columbian civilizations were in some cases belligerent, and their conquests resulted in widespread trade as well as in wealth that was spent by priests or warrior-priests on the construction of ceremonial centers or cities. These ceremonial complexes and cities served as centers for religion, government, and commerce.

Three chronological divisions are generally used to distinguish the most important characteristics of the pre-Columbian civilizations: the Pre-Classic (circa 1500 b. C − 300); the Classic period (circa 300 − 900), when important architecture and works of art were realized in Teotihuacán, the Mayan culture, the Zapotec culture, the Monte Albán culture; and the Post-Classic period (circa 900-1521). [226]

The most important Mesoamerican civilization was that of the *Mexica*, or the *Aztecs*, as they are now known. This culture is the culture of reference for modern Mexicans. This culture had a confrontation with foreign invaders, and this confrontation is the source of the trauma that overshadows Mexican culture even today, resulting in complex tensions and mythologies. Between 1428 and 1521, the *Aztecs* produced and collected some of the most amazing examples of pre-Columbian art. Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital, now Mexico City, was one of the largest and most beautiful cities in the world when the Spanish conquerors arrived.

The most important pre-Columbian artistic achievements were in architecture, sculpture, painting, and the decorative arts, such as pottery, feather mosaics, and works in metal. The decorative arts were mostly associated with ceremonial and funeral offerings. The *Codices*, made of plant fibers, bark, or animal skins, were often works of art in their own right. The pre-Columbian aesthetic of the *Codices* appealed to several artists of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, particularly to Diego Rivera, as did the architectonic places of reference such as the Teotihuacán, Mayan, and Aztec pyramids. The Spanish conquerors and missionaries destroyed several *Codices* because they saw them as works of the devil. The best known of the preserved

[224] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 79.
[225] The articles that form the Autobiography were written in 1942 and published initially in the periodical *Excélsior*. The first version in book form was published by *Ediciones de Occidente* in 1945.
[226] Pre-Columbian cultures are grouped according to general geographic areas. For a structured vision and a comparison of the cultures before Columbus see the historical summary.

Codices are the Mayan *Codices*. These are now kept in European cities such as Madrid, Paris, and Dresden, but some Aztec works remain in Mexico.

A monumental architecture developed in Mesoamerica. The pyramids, palaces, tombs, and platform temples were cyclically rebuilt over pre-existing structures; the builders used stone or adobe for their construction.

The majority of existing pre-Columbian sculptures are clay figurines and effigy pots.
Once again, one sees that several artists incorporated small ritual statues in the compositions of their murals, as in the case of Rivera, who was a Keen collector of pre-Columbian ceramics.

The *Aztecs* made monumental freestanding sculptures in stone, which were often intended to reveal the internal nature of the divinity, person, or animal represented. Many sculptures were used in architectural decoration and as representations of deities. They were also employed as human sacrificial altars, calendar stones, and other ritual objects.

Fresco painting was practiced in pre-Columbian times. It would be wrong, however, to speak of it in relation to the murals as standard practice, as Rivera, among others, sometimes asserted. The painted temple interiors contained frescoes that often represented historical events. There were buildings in Teotihuacán where both the interior and exterior walls have been first covered with plaster and then painted with decorative compositions or sequences of events. The best examples of fresco paintings were found at Bonampak in the Mayan area. There are others, such as those in Palenque and Tikal. However, as noted previously, those frescos were only discovered very late and cannot be used as an argument for continuity.

Rivera claims: "Prior to the conquest of America by the Europeans, Mexican paintings covered everything from the walls of their magnificent architecture to the surfaces of the humblest utensils used in daily life inside the mud huts. The fresco, painting on cloth and paper, the wonderful feather mosaics, all the ways of applying the magical color on the manifold objects which accompanied and served man in his life made a fiesta of his surroundings."

> *En los ciclos anteriores a la conquista de América por el europeo, la pintura Mexicana cubría desde los muros de las arquitecturas magníficas, hasta la superficie de los más humildes utensilios usados en la vida cotidiana dentro de los jacales con muros de carrizo y lodo y techo de paja. El fresco, la pintura sobre tela y papel, los maravillosos mosaicos de pluma, todas las formas de aplicación del color mágico, sobre todo objeto que acompañaba y servía al hombre en su vida, proporcionaban una fiesta para cada mirada del humano alrededor de sí.* [227]

For many centuries, Europeans did not recognize the art produced before the arrival of the Spaniards as art. The art historian Justino Fernández says, "It was impossible (for the Europeans) to admit that the sculptures, the idols, and the religious images were beautiful. This is the touchstone. There are two reasons why they could not see art or beauty in those sculptures: first, the works seemed anti-natural; second, they were religious images. Because of the first reason, the works seemed to be 'monstrous', ugly, deformed, and frightening. Because of the second reason, the works seemed like demons and 'very diabolical things to see.'"

> *lo que fue imposible (a los europeos) admitir como bellas fueron las obras de escultura, los ídolos, las imágenes religiosas. Ésta es la piedra de toque. Las razones por las cuales no podían ver arte o belleza en aquellas esculturas, son dos: la primera por el antinaturalismo de las obras; la segunda, por ser imágenes religiosas. Por aquélla les*

[227] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 259.

parecieron: "cosas de monstruos", feas, disformes y espantables; y por ésta: demonios y "cosas muy diabólicas de ver". [228]

It is only very recently that some of the works from the period before the arrival of the Spaniards have been reappraised. According to Justino Fernández, "Few true appraisals or studies of indigenous art have been made in Mexico, because only in the last decades have the indigenous works of the past been appreciated as works of art."

Aunque parezca sorprendente, pocos han sido en verdad los ensayos o estudios que se han hecho en México sobre el arte indígena, lo cual tiene su explicación, porque sólo en las últimas décadas han venido a ser estimadas las obras del pasado indígena como arte. Pocas son también, relativamente, las consideraciones hechas por extranjeros sobre él y es que la atención se ha enfocado hacia el interés arqueológico y etnológico y en este sentido sí que los resultados de la investigación en nuestro siglo han sido poco menos que fabulosos, en cuanto a lo que se ha rescatado, reconstruido y catalogado. [229]

Therefore, the whole idea of a cultural process of historical continuity is difficult to accept, since that past was scarcely known in the 1920s. The continuity idea is a later construction, intended to give higher dignity, authority, and legitimacy to the mural program that José Vasconcelos built.

Knowledge about pre-Hispanic culture increased with the contributions of Mexican and foreign specialists in the 1930s. A remarkable achievement of Mexican archaeology was Alfonso Caso's discovery of tomb 7 at Mount Albán, complete with its jewels and gold objects. Other important discoveries of ancient Mexico include the structures and the colossal statues discovered at Tula in 1941 and the Mayan frescos of Bonampak in 1946. Places such as Bonampak, Teotihuacán, Tajín, and Monte Albán are references that are often presented as if they were important links of the chain in the history of the muralism in Mexico. One of the main studies that contributed to the revaluation of pre-Columbian aesthetics is Salvador Toscano's book, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*. [230]

Bonampak

The best known examples of murals accomplished before the arrival of the Spaniards are at Bonampak. The painted murals of Bonampak date from about 800 A.D. The murals appear on several walls and depict the story of the last dynasty of Bonampak with scenes of daily life and history. The topics treated include civilian ceremonies, sacrifices, warlike scenes, processions and ritual dances, symbolic items, historical stories, religious ceremonies, and divine characters in mythical allusions. However, it was not until 1946 that archaeologists found a perfectly preserved Bonampak fresco cycle in southern Mexico, and during the early stages of the muralist movement, the earlier murals were totally ignored. Hence the inadmissibility of using the discovery of Bonampak as an argument for continuity.

In 1966, a full-scale 170 square meter reproduction was made of the fresco murals in the Temple of Paintings at Bonampak. This exact copy of the original building is in the garden to the Mayan Room of the National Museum of Anthropology. Most people know the paintings of Bonampak through those reproductions, whose faithfulness to the originals is questioned by many. For Octavio Paz, there are some dangers in this kind of reconstruction: "In fact, although the copy is excellent; I admit that I find its accuracy deceptive."

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[228] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, pp. 97-98.
[229] Ibid, p. 45.
[230] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1944. The edition consulted was: Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*. Beatriz de la Fuente (ed.), León-Portilla (Foreword), UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984.

Por cierto, la copia es excelente; sin embargo, confieso que su exactitud me parece engañosa: sea por los colores, la animación de las líneas o por otras circunstancias, ofrece notables diferencias con las fotografías de esos mismos murales. ¿Por qué? Sospecho que, una vez más, el intangible "espíritu de la época" se mostró más poderoso que la maestría, la cultura y las buenas intenciones del artista copista. No se trata de un caso aislado: lo mismo ha ocurrido en Ajanta y otros sitios. De ahí el peligro de las reconstrucciones. Todos sabemos que hablamos y pensamos de una manera muy distinta a la de los hombres de otras civilizaciones, pero pocos recuerdan que también vemos de manera no menos distinta. [231]

However, for Rivera the legitimacy of the paintings of Bonampak was not an issue. On the contrary, he considered them to be of vital importance for an understanding of mural painting in Mexico. Referring to his first impressions of the Bonampak murals, Rivera states, "It really seemed like I had made them one day when I surely painted better than I do now":

Confieso ingenuamente que sentí mucha emoción y un miedo vago cuando los vi en fotografías y reproducciones, especialmente el del combate, porque realmente parecía que los había hecho yo un día en que seguramente pintaba mejor de que como pinto ahora. Después me reí de mí mismo, puesto que matemáticamente somos los mismos y yo solamente uno de los muchos que pintaron Bonampak y lo seguirán pintando mientras México sea México y lo amemos con todas y cada una de las células que integran nuestro organismo. [232]

To express the similarity between some of his frescoes in the *National Palace* and the murals of Bonampak, Diego Rivera says, "my drawings resemble those of the Codices like a cactus fig resembles another cactus fig; they are both fruits of the same Mexican cactus":

[...] mis dibujos se parecen a los de los Códices como una tuna a otra tuna porque son frutos del mismo nopal Mexicano. [233]

In a rather curious argument about Bonampak, Rivera states, "The people that arrived in that sterile land had a highly developed culture. Furthermore, they were Negroid. All anthropologists, all men, briefly, who understand something about human anatomy, can see at once that these are representations of the Negroid":

[…] *el pueblo que llegó a ese terreno estéril haya tenido una cultura muy desarrollada. La tuvo y eran negroides. Todo antropólogo, todo hombre, pues, que sepa algo de la anatomía humana, puede constatar que ahí no hay sino representaciones de negroides.* [234]

This is simply another of the typically extravagant theories about Mexican culture that Rivera loved to put forward.

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[231] Paz, Octavio, "Obras maestras de México en París", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista, Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 69.
[232] Cardona Peña, Alfredo, *El monstruo en su laberinto*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1980, p. 38.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Rivera, Diego, "La huella de la historia y la geografía en la arquitectura Mexicana", lecture given by Diego Rivera, in the *Palacio of Fine Arts*, June 25 1954, in a series organized by the architect Alberto T. Arai. The lecture was published in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura***,** nr. 14, INBA, Mexico 1964. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 379.

In Tepantitla, the Teotihuacán priests were represented on the walls of the Palace in frescoes showing the rain god Tláloc and his earthly paradise. Even the character of Quetzalcóatl appears. However, these works were not influential in the development of modern mural aesthetics and practice.

Coatlicue

A very important sculpture is the huge basalt figure of Coatlicue, found in 1790 on the site of the main temple of Tenochtitlán. Octavio Paz has written an admirable essay on it, and many others, art historians, writers, and artists, have become interested in the figure, including: Alfredo Chavero, Salvador Toscano, and Justino Fernández.

According to León y Gama, "The government had ordered that works of ground-leveling and paving would take place in the Plaza Mayor". A decree ordered that the "stone" found be moved to the Real y Pontificia Universidad, where it was placed in one of the angles of the patio, and there it remained until being moved to the Museum where it is today. [235]

Benjamin Keen:

> *The colossal basalt figure of Coatlicue that was found in 1790 on the site of the main temple of Tenochtitlán may serve as a touchstone of Western attitudes toward Aztec art. Before 1900, only two observers, both uncommonly artistic and gifted men, had ventured to praise the awesome earth goddess. One was Alfredo Chavero, who described her as the most beautiful idol in the Museo Nacional; the other was William H. Holmes, who placed the Coatlicue, "brutal and terrible as it is," very close to the head of the list of American sculptures.* [236]

This monumental sculpture of Coatlicue (see **Figure 14**, p. 73) has been used by the painters Saturnino Herrán (see figure **36**, p. 145), Diego Rivera, and many others as a reference in their works. Rivera used Coatlicue's image both in the mural in the *Detroit Institute of Arts* in 1932 (**Figure 71**, p. 412) and in the San Francisco City College mural in 1940 (**Figure 15**, p. 73).

In Toscano's historicist approach, Coatlicue was "the masterpiece of American sculpture":

> *Entre las estatuas de deidades Aztecas que siempre han llamado poderosamente la atención, se cuenta la diosa de la tierra, Coatlicue, "la de la falda de serpientes", la obra maestra de la escultura americana. La diosa representa al monstruo terrestre dispensador de la vida, pero al cual retornamos para ser descarnados, la deidad que oculta al sol y resume las lluvias. La estatua − que alcanza más de dos metros y medio de alto − procede de la plaza mayor de la ciudad de México y debió formar parte del gran templo de Tenochtitlán: el sayal de la diosa lo es una trama de serpientes, cuyas cabezas caen formando la orla de la falda; sus pies, como símbolo de un ser que todo lo devora, lo son dos garras de águila; la diosa aparece, además, como decapitada, surgiendo de su cuello un chorro de sangre que afecta la forma de dos cabezas de serpiente; más aún, como pendiente lleva en el pecho un cráneo signo de que al recogernos en su seno habrá de descarnarnos.* [237]

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[235] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 113.
[236] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, pp. 509-510.
[237] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984, p. 112.

And he continues: "This hallucinating sculpture conceived by the indigenous mentality is a work of art that cannot be judged with the serene canons of the Greek art, nor with the compassionate elements of Christian art: the goddess expresses the dramatic brutality of the Aztec religion, its solemnity and magnificence":

> *Es ésta la escultura más alucinante que concibiera la mentalidad indígena y una obra de arte que no puede juzgarse con los cánones serenos del arte griego o con los elementos piadosos del arte cristiano: la diosa expresa la brutalidad dramática de la religión Azteca, su solemnidad y magnificencia.* [238]

Salvador Toscano wrote other essays on history and on art, such as *El Arte antiguo* and *El Arte y la Historia del Occidente en México* (both published in 1946) in which he expounds with great individuality on the different indigenous cultures. These works furthered the rediscovery of the aesthetic past of Mexico and were both highly influential.

Justino Fernández's essays were also crucial to the acceptance of a non-western aesthetic. His studies of Coatlicue can be seen as a turning point in the evaluation of the aesthetics of ancient Mexican art.

As said by Keen:

> *Justino Fernández' book Coatlicue provides a detailed, analytical survey of the progress of views in this field. Although art historians of the 1920's reflected the current revival of nationalist interest in Indian cultural achievements and praised the beauty of the ancient art, they retained much of the traditional bias in favor of Occidental, classical art.* [239]

According to Fernández, the sculpture of Coatlicue has not been sufficiently studied: "There is not a work of the old indigenous art that has been so badly and so well treated, but, in my view, as regards aesthetic history, not enough attention has been paid to it."

> *Del caos de la monstruosidad, de lo demoniaco, del mundo del terror y del espanto, surgió hermosa, portentosa, poderosa; como obra maestra, monumental; como fuente de inusitada belleza; como concentradora dinámica de los múltiples horrores del universo; como perteneciente a la escultura que cuenta entre las grandes realizaciones del arte mundial- como la más fantástica creación plástica de todos los pueblos; como transformación de lo terrible en lo sublime, como más allá de lo puramente estético. Y ésa es la historia estética moderna de Coatlicue. No hay obra del arte indígena antiguo que haya sido tan mal y tan bien tratada, mas, a mi parecer, no obstante tener su historia estética, no ha sido tratada suficientemente. Es necesario tratarla más y mejor, aunque ella sabe la admiración que despierta y, como buena diosa, gusta de ocultarse; mas asediémosla por todos los medios a nuestro alcance, que ya el primero lo tenemos y es tenerla por bella.* [240]

The value of the old indigenous art was reaffirmed in the work of the poet José Juan Tablada in 1927. [241] He was the first poet to give it its due importance. Aware of the new spirit of rediscovery after the *Revolution*, he claims that "Mexico, among all the nations of the Continent, is the only one that has such a great indigenous, colonial, and modern artistic tradition."

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[238] Ibid, p. 112.
[239] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 517.
[240] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 113.
[241] Concluded in 1923, José Juan Tablada's book was published four years later as *Historia del arte en México*, Compañía Editorial Aguilas, Mexico 1927.

> *México, entre todas las naciones del Continente, es la única que tiene una gran tradición artística indígena, colonial y moderna* [242]

According to Fernández, "Tablada includes not only the painting, the architecture, and the sculpture, but also the minor arts. He considers in first place the Mayan art, in second, the Toltec, in third, the Mixtec and the Zapoteca, and, maybe, in fourth place the Aztec, which is the one that he finds most incomprehensible. Mayan art is comparable to Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hindu, and even to Greek art, in certain aspects":

> *Tablada, incluye no sólo la pintura, la arquitectura y la escultura, sino las artes menores. Considera en primerísimo lugar al arte maya, en segundo al tolteca, en tercero al mixteca y al zapoteca y, quizá, en cuarto lugar al Azteca, que es el que le resulta más incomprensible. El arte maya es comparable al egipcio, asirio e hindú, y aun al griego, en ciertos aspectos.* [243]

For Toscano, "These cultures were not cut down in full blossom as the Indianist Romanticism of the previous century claims, nor can we see them as barbaric cultures without content as the Hispanists claim. The conquest was the defeat of a culture which had no will: Cortés fought against enemies whose numerical superiority was negated by a spirit which was at death's door":

> *El arte de los Aztecas es en no pocas ocasiones realista, pero sólo en oposición al barroco, del que parece deliberadamente huir; no se crean nuevos estilos sino se entregan al Romanticismo del pasado, cayendo el arte, en no pocas ocasiones, en imitaciones serviles o en el más ingenuo academismo. [...] Estas culturas no fueron, pues, cortadas en flor, como pretendió el Romanticismo indianista del siglo pasado − como tampoco podríamos admitir que se trataba de culturas bárbaras y sin contenido, que pretendían los hispanistas. Se venció a culturas sin voluntad: Cortés luchaba contra enemigos cuya superioridad numérica nivelaba un Espíritu al ras de la muerte.* [244]

The aesthetic and artistic past of the cultures existing before the arrival of the Spaniards did not serve as a source of inspiration for the program of Mexican Muralism. Firstly, that past, in respect to the muralist works at Bonampak and other sites, was almost unknown at the time. Secondly, there was no sensibility for these cultures, except within the *Athenaeum*. The objects mentioned above were seen by many as strange and frightening.

2) Mexican art during the colonial period

It is not my intention, nor does it serve the aims of the present work, to carry out a detailed analysis of the art produced during the colonial period. However, it seems important to summarize some of the more relevant periods of that same history, noting names and works that are relevant to the study of the works produced later, especially during the decade that I analyze in full detail, the 1920s.

The art that was created after the arrival of the Spanish conquerors to Mexico had a hybrid language, a blend of expressions from European and indigenous cultures; it began to develop in the late fifteenth century. The indigenous painting traditions included manuscript illuminations, but many of these were destroyed by the Spaniards, along with some murals that decorated temples and illustrated historical events and ceremonies, such as those at Bonampak. There were also other forms of art, such as the *plumería*, or feather mosaics, and jewelry. These strong traditions, supported by the indigenous leaders, represented more of a fusion of

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[242] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 100.
[243] Ibid, p. 100.
[244] Toscano, Salvador, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1984, p. 20.

European and native artistic values than colonial painting, which initially simply reproduced European models.

The early colonial phase, until about 1580, was a combination of European and indigenous traditions. In Hispanic America, the word *mestizo* is normally used to designate the people of mixed European and Native American descent as well as the mixture of artistic styles with European and indigenous roots.

From about 1580 to 1650, the Spanish style became dominant in Mexico, especially in the most important cities where Spanish power was concentrated. European immigration increased, reinforcing the economical, cultural, and artistic importance of the Spanish. By 1600, Spanish artistic traditions dominated artistic activities in Mexico. The most common forms of art were religious paintings, especially for churches. The overall structure of colonial art history was similar throughout Latin America, in spite of the vastness of the region. The common tendency was to simulate the style of Mannerism, or late Renaissance, which was the leading style in Europe at the time when European traditions became established in the Americas. From about 1630 onwards, the predominant style was the baroque.

The Baroque period

The hybrid tendencies were further emphasized in Mexican baroque, which initially followed European models but later began incorporating autochthonous artistic traditions as well. From circa 1680 to 1715, Mexican artists Cristóbal de Villalpando and Juan Correa developed a style that mixed the characteristic sense of realism and emotional drama of the baroque compositions with elements of indigenous art. Cristóbal de Villalpando created the fine painting, *La Plaza mayor de México*, in 1695. Juan Correa was one of the first painters to represent the Virgin of the Tepeyac (symbol of the traditional religion and place of the sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe) with more intensity. In 1669, Juan Correa painted five canvases with the topic of Guadalupe, the *Virgin and the Four Appearances,* for the chapel of the Santos Españoles in Rome. [245] His contemporary, Cristóbal de Villalpando, also produced important paintings on the same theme. [246]

The descendants of the Europeans who were born in Mexico, known as the Creoles, became more and more important as art promoters and frequently commissioned works of art for public buildings. The works represented contemporary events, and painters were encouraged to illustrate the cultural presence and power of their patrons.

At the end of the seventeenth century, José de Ibarra developed an alternative to the style of Cristóbal de Villalpando and Juan Correa. In the saloons of the *Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso*, a building that became extremely important for the accomplishment of murals after 1921, José de Ibarra executed a work depicting the death of San Francisco Xavier. He may have been influenced by the Spanish painter Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, the most popular seventeenth-century Spanish baroque painter.

The eighteenth century

In the eighteenth century, the extension of artistic patronage into the provinces coincided with a growing interest in the country and its indigenous art forms. These provincial patrons gave local artists opportunities to paint portraits and other subjects, such as views of their cities and scenes of daily life. Better

[245] The appearance and iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe is particularly important for an understanding of the complexity of Mexican religious and cultural patterns. It is not by chance that Zapata used the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe and much less by chance that a scandal erupted when Rivera painted the comic Cantinflas in a mural, with the image of Guadalupe on his chest. See **Figure 97**, p. 456.
[246] One of Cristóbal de Villalpando's best known works is *The Tree of Life*, oil on canvas, in the *Museo Regional de Guadalupe*, Zacatecas, Mexico.

communication with Spain and other countries in Europe allowed the Mexican artists to become acquainted with contemporary developments in Europe.
Religious painting in the eighteenth century tried to win space within churches at the expense of the *retablos*, defined here with some irony by Charlot:

> *Retablos are painted ex-votos dedicated by the grateful recipient of a grace to the image of his devotion. They are usually small oils painted on tin, piled high against the walls of the sanctuary around the venerated image, together with other testimonials of thanksgiving, such as crutches, photographs, trusses, and those silver cutouts that represent the miraculously healed limb − leg, spleen, ear, heart, foot, eye.* [247]



Figure 27. Mexican *retablo* from 18th century: *Nuestra Señora, Refugio de Pecadores*.

Because of the competition for space, some church artists of this period created simpler and finer works. In an effort to crowd out the popular *retablos*, other artists initiated monumental paintings, including huge wall compositions and ceiling paintings that tried to create the illusion of space opening up to heaven. **Figure 27** shows a Mexican *retablo* from 18th century, *Nuestra Señora, Refugio de Pecadores*. [248]

However, we do not find here a rooted tradition that can explain the origin of Mexican Muralism. Despite being referred to as a forerunner of the *Mexican Mural Movement*, a position that seems forced to me, the art produced during the Spanish colonial period is not particularly relevant to understanding the murals made after 1921.

Rivera writes: "During the conquest and the organization of the regime that followed, the best paintings in Mexico were the beautiful and strange frescos painted towards the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth, especially when the monks were forced, in order to obtain the very necessary mural images that helped the propaganda and diffusion of the recently imported religion, to send Indian painters to Italy to study Christian art, and they returned to cover the walls of their convents with religious frescos":

> *Durante la realización de la conquista y la organización del régimen que resultó de ella, lo mejor de la pintura en México, fueron los frescos bellos y extraños, que se produjeron aquí hacia fines del siglo XVI y a principios del XVII, especialmente cuando los monjes se vieron obligados, para obtener las necesarísimas imágenes murales que ayudaran a la propaganda y difusión de la religión recién importada, a enviar a Italia pintores indios que estudiaran arte cristiano y volvieran pronto a cubrir los muros de sus conventos con frescos religiosos; tal fue el caso de Epazoyucan y Actopan. Los indios no sé influyeron en Italia por las obras de Miguel Angelo y del Rafaelo, llegadas ya por entonces a la cúspide de fama y gloria, sino por los ya casi olvidados pero siempre maravillosos, primitivos*

[247] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 32.
[248] Retrieved 2003-09-09 from http://kalarte.com/latin/retablo/refugio1lg.jpg

italianos que se acomodaban tan bien con el carácter, de calidad estética superior, de la pintura Mexicana precolombina. [249]

Naturally, we cannot confirm this statement, and nothing indicates that it is true. On the contrary, it rather confirms Rivera's propensity for exaggerations and represents the creation of one more myth.

Rivera continues: "in the dusk of the American old world, which still gave some light to the conquest at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, a form of painting arose that was a happy marriage between the *Codices* of Mexico and the predelas and free frescos of the churches of Italy":

[...] en el atardecer del mundo antiguo americano, que todavía dio alguna luz a la conquista en esos fines del XVI y principios del XVII resultó una pintura que fue feliz matrimonio, entre los códices de México y las predelas y libres frescos de las iglesias de Italia. [250]

But Rivera is quite alone when he makes this kind of statement. Nevertheless, because of his discursive authority, his view of the situation found a place in the collective imagination.

Antonio Rodríguez writes:

Mural painting in Mexico, from the time of the Spanish conquest in 1521 until the climax of the Revolutionary movement of this century, in 1921, was far from expressing the true essence of the country in a language of its own. There was no lack of talent or tradition, as we have seen; and yet during the colonial period Mexican painting − especially mural painting − became a mere offshoot of Spanish or Italian art. [251]

There were mythological representations in the arts, but they followed a program that was rather European, as in other places in Latin America. Francisco de la Maza writes that "mythology was represented in art much more than would be expected in this very Catholic colonial society, and it had a powerful presence next to the bleeding Christ, the suffering or glorious virgins, and the sacred martyrs and ecstatic saints":

La mitología estuvo representada en el arte mucho más de lo que puede creerse en la muy católica sociedad colonial, y tuvo una poderosa presencia junto a los Cristos sangrantes, las vírgenes dolorosas o gloriosas y los santos mártires o extáticos. La majestad de Zeus, Neptuno, Hércules; la belleza de Afrodita, Palas Atenea, o Apolo; la gracia de las musas o las ninfas; la bizarría de los héroes, mitológicos o históricos, fue vista, en toda su plenitud, cien veces, en las calles y en las plazas, desde las pinturas y esculturas de los arcos triunfales y las piras funerarias para reyes, virreyes y arzobispos, hasta en las fiestas y mascaradas públicas que, con cualquier pretexto, se preparaban a todo costo. [252]

Moreover, in 1559, in the biggest ceremonial solemn patio in Mexico, the gods and the heroes alternated with Carlos V. The inhabitants of the city contemplated four gods: Jupiter, Apollo, Hercules and Harpócrates; a demi-god, Phaeton; two mythological heroes, Theseus and Ulysses; three historical kings and a great general, Alexander, Hannibal, Pyrrhus, and Scipio the African; a sage, Archimedes; and an artist, Timantes. [253]

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[249] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 259-260.
[250] Ibid, p. 261.
[251] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 136.
[252] de la Maza, Francisco, *La mitología clásica en el arte colonial de México*, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios y fuentes del arte en México, XXIV, UNAM, Mexico 1968, p. 9.
[253] Ibid, pp. 24-30. See in the Appendix IV, Exposición de pinturas al temple en México, 1560.

In 1560, there was an "exhibition" of tempera paintings in Mexico. Sixty-four original paintings were presented. The first portraits made in Mexico showed Carlos V, Hernán Cortés, Fernando the Catholic, Moctezuma II, Cuauhtémoc, and Atahualpa. Only one of the artists had a model to copy; Titian's painting of Carlos V was already in the Real Palacio. As for Cortés and the kings or Aztec *tecuhtlis*, all the painters had known them.

The idea that Cortés could have burned his ships, instead of only disabling them, probably originated, as Federico Gómez de Orozco supposed, in one of the paintings (No. 23) that adorned the Imperial Sepulchre erected for the funeral of Carlos V in 1559. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar describes the painting as showing Hernán Cortés and his horse with the ships "burnt and keeled over" in the background:

> *[...] los navíos en que pasó, quemados y echados al través* [254]

Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism followed the baroque epoch, and cultured painters turned their eyes towards classical Italy. Neoclassicism, the last phase of colonial art, arrived in Mexico under the patronage of the Mexican government. Neoclassical art generally imitated the solemnity of the ancient Greek and Roman models.

Antonio Rodríguez writes:

> *The neoclassical period coincided with the awakening of national consciousness which culminated in the War of Independence of 1820-1; this encouraged the emergence of nationalistic painters such as Tresguerras. However, none of these strivings resulted in an art that could be called truly national in form or in subject. Art still represented the mestizo tendency which had existed since the first generation born after the conquest; its manner and content was determined by the political and economic rulers. Colors came from the Spanish side and shading from the Mexican; the subject matter was laid down by the Viceroy ship in a multiplicity of rules and regulations.* [255]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a number of large-scale construction projects for new churches and government buildings were carried out. The subjects of the pictures painted for these new buildings were religious, mythological, and historical. Stylistically, there was little exuberance in form or color, although the paintings still had some of the characteristics of the baroque epoch.

An important artist of the period was the Mexican painter Rafael Ximeno y Planes, who painted neoclassical works in the style of Tiépolo and is known for some frescoes in the Cathedral of Mexico City. One of the best-known frescoes was the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which was later destroyed. In these frescoes, Rafael Ximeno y Planes used the illusionist effects characteristic of baroque.

3) Independence

Mexico won its independence in 1821 after a long struggle. The independence of Mexico brought important social changes with long-term consequences for both patrons and artists. The military, the government administrators, and the middle class emerged as important patrons. For obvious reasons, the importance of the aristocracy and the church as patrons declined. Scenes of everyday life, landscapes, and still-life pictures became more important. Artists in independent Mexico still included European elements, particularly in religious art and in architecture, but this appropriation of European elements by the Mexican artists led to these elements losing their specifically European connotations and becoming universal.

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[254] Ibid, p. 26.
[255] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 136.

The Academy of San Carlos, 1785

The academies of art tried to assimilate a European model of the arts, based on both colonial and European artistic traditions. At the same time, Latin American artists now had access to contemporary international developments. By 1785, the San Carlos Academy had opened in Mexico City. This Mexican academy, like others in various Latin American countries, had a program to bring in European artists as teachers. However, many of these teachers were flexible as regards their students' choice of topics, allowing them to paint landscapes and scenes of daily life in addition to portraits and history paintings.

Progressive thinkers became more active in Mexico, and educational institutions dedicated to stimulating and guiding creative activities were founded. One of these was the Academy of Fine Arts of San Carlos, founded by royal decree in the capital of New Spain. It was inaugurated on November 4, 1785, with the goal of educating painters, sculptors and architects.

The Academy's curriculum was copied from similar European institutions; the imported teachers brought the traditional, basic techniques of drawing, copying models, and studying obsolete themes, generally based on religious, biblical, and mythological topics. Despite this, or maybe because conditions were inadequate to implement an academic program, space was left for themes that were not of an academic nature. The last generations of the nineteenth century opened their eyes to the local landscape, from the exuberance of the tropics to the majesty of the volcanoes in the Valley of Mexico. Later, they would try to impress the public with the paintings of Mexican heroes such as Cuauhtémoc.

According to Ida Rodríguez Prampolini: "The historical scenes appeared in answer to the passionate sermons of the liberal critics."

> *Las escenas de historia aparecían en respuesta a las prédicas apasionadas de los críticos liberales; las tiernas y exóticas costumbres Mexicanas comenzaban a ser comprendidas y gustadas y la raza indígena y la mestiza se iban abriendo paso dentro de la gastada iconografía típicamente europeizante.* [256]

In 1821 with the death of almost all of the neoclassical teachers and with the advent of Independence, budgetary difficulties forced the Academy to close its doors. When it reopened in 1824, it led a very unstable existence. Difficult years of artistic decadence followed – until the reorganized academy began a new phase, thanks to the ordinance of 1843, promulgated by Antonio López de Santa Anna. The Academy's educative function reflected the ideology of successive governments, and the normal running of the school suffered due to the struggle between centralists and federalists, liberal and Conservatives. Economically, the school was highly successful during Maximilian's empire. During the *Porfiriato*, it reflected the politics and the contradictions of a disintegrating regime.

In 1910, the San Carlos Academy became part of the University, which had just been reconstituted by Justo Sierra, the Minister of Public Instruction. The social revolution brought dissatisfaction to the fore and the necessity of changing the arts became evident. The director's reluctance to change marked the beginning of what would be a *Revolution* in the field of art.

Diego Rivera, and others, described the Academy as an anachronistic institution, staffed by incompetent teachers. The strike of 1911 has often been described as a revolutionary act which ushered in a new art inspired by the *Revolution*. But this viewpoint is not totally justified, as Orozco makes clear: "When I entered the Academy of Fine Arts to study painting formally, the institution was at the height of its efficiency

[256] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 308.

and good organization. It had received a positive impulse from Don Antonio Fabrés, a great Spanish academic painter brought to Mexico I think by Justo Sierra". He continues: "In the Academy there was a free model, day and night; there were paints and materials; there was a superb collection of old teachers' works; there was a great library of art books; there were good teachers of painting, of anatomy, of art history, of perspective; and, above all, there was an unparalleled enthusiasm. What more could you want?"

Secular portrait painting gradually made its appearance toward the end of the eighteenth century. Pelegrín Clavé, Juan Cordero, Santiago Rebull, and others left an impressive collection of portraits of the outstanding personalities of their time. Paintings of historic subjects were made by the artists José María Obregón and Rodrigo Gutiérrez. The influence of the Academy extended even into distant provinces, where local artists mixed neoclassical and popular elements. A number of painters also flourished away from the influence of the Academy. Pelegrín Clavé, the Academy's first Director of Painting, taught a group of pupils that included Santiago Rebull, Felipe Gutiérrez, José Salomé Pina, and Joaquín Ramírez. Others, including Ramón Sagredo, José Obregón, and Petronilo Monroy, came later.

Pelegrín Clavé (1810-1880)

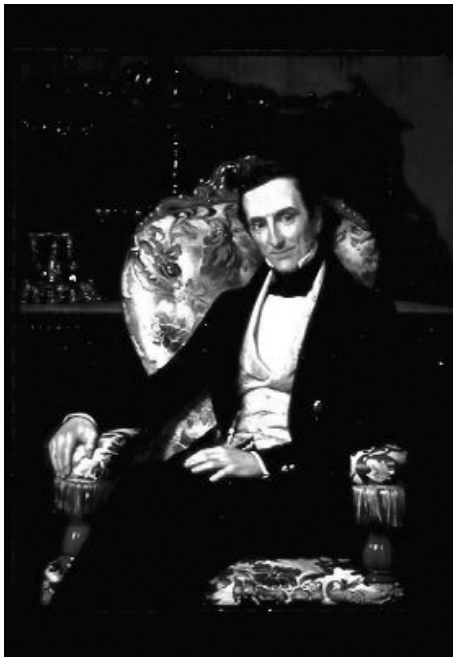


Figure 28. Pelegrín Clave: *Don José Bernardo Couto*. Oil on canvas, 1849. [257]

The Academy hired two Catalan teachers, Pelegrín Clavé, as Director of Painting, and Manuel Vilar, as Director of Sculpture, both from Barcelona. They arrived in Mexico in January 1846. **Figure 28** shows a painting by Pelegrín Clavé.

Jean Charlot tells us:

> *Money raised by means of a lottery paid for the importation of the extremely well-paid Pelegrín Clavé, a Catalan devotee of the German Overbeck. [...] Clavé was czar of fine arts in Mexico for thirty years.* [258]

The teachers immediately revised the study plans, which had been reduced to the copying of sheets. In accordance with the methods of the European academies, they introduced life drawing, the study of anatomy, perspective, and landscape, and the use of mannequins and of living models, which caused great surprise.

Pelegrín Clavé says, "In Mexico I didn't find a good or a bad school, and I began to teach my pupils according to what I had learned in Barcelona and Rome and according to the principles that I had formed from my own observations and relationships with skilled artists in Italy, Spain, and France":

> *Yo no encontré en México ninguna escuela buena ni mala, y empecé a enseñar a mis discípulos según lo que había aprendido en Barcelona y Roma y según los principios que había podido formarme por mis propias observaciones y el trato con hábiles artistas por*

[257] Pelegrín Clavé, Don José Bernardo Couto. Oil on canvas, 1849. Agustín Acosta Lagunes Collection, Mexico City. Retrieved 2003-09-08 from http://www.humanities-interactive.org/splendors/ex048_17f.html

[258] Couto, José Bernardo, *Diálogo sobre la historia de la pintura en México,* Mexico, 1872, pp. 89-90 (first edition 1860). Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 41.

> *Italia, España y Francia. Jamás olvidaré entre ellos al insigne y venerable Overbeck, uno de los creadores de la actual escuela alemana y quizá el primero que comenzó la reacción contra las profanidades del Renacimiento [...]* [259]

Pelegrín Clavé taught and painted what he had learned. He had studied in Rome where he learned the principles of the classicist school which had predominated in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. The neoclassical Pelegrín Clavé greatly admired Johann Friedrich Overbeck and the German *Nazarenes*, who sought to recreate an art of Christian purity which they believed had been lacking since the mid-1500s, and who lived communally in Rome, where they painted several large frescoes. Clavé gave direction to painting in Mexico, largely inspired by the intellectualist and spiritualist art of German idealism. The religious feelings and the formal idealism of German Romanticism were adapted to suit the Mexican feelings of the time, for example, the colored biblical topics with their soft forms and colorful sweetness. Nevertheless, Clavé's actual painting did not reflect the influence of the *Nazarenes* so much as that of Ingres. Curiously, the latter's influence is clearly visible in the works of Clavé's pupils.

Pelegrín Clavé took charge of all the classes. In Rome, he had given special consideration to landscape painting, so he included landscape and history classes in addition to biblical topics.
He furnished an example of history painting with his work *The Madness of Isabel of Portugal* in 1855, painted according to the academic principles of the time. It was the most ambitious painting that Pelegrín Clavé ever painted, and, at the time, it caused a sensation.

It is a commonplace to say that Pelegrín Clavé's ambition was to reintroduce mural painting, the tradition that in Mexico dated back to the sixteenth century, a tradition which had been recovered and then lost again after Rafael Ximeno y Planes and neoclassicism. Apparently, the Spanish painter wanted to carry out a work of mural decoration together with his pupils. The occasion presented itself in 1858 when a proposal to decorate the dome of the temple of *La Profesa* was accepted.

Pelegrín Clavé made the sketches on the theme of *The Seven Sacraments* to correspond to the diverse groupings of the dome divisions. Helped by his pupils Ramón Sagredo, Joaquín Ramírez, Petronilo Monroy, Rafael Flores, and Felipe Castro, he started work in 1861. The political vicissitudes of the time forced him to suspend the work for five years, and it was finished in May of 1867.

He was criticized for painting in oil; this was seen as inappropriate for a work of this nature. Pelegrín Clavé was responsible for the work, although the work was carried out with a team of pupils, but the critics said that the flaws in the paintings began in a weak concept. A fire destroyed these paintings in 1915, but a picture of the paintings has been preserved.

The incongruities, the *Mexicanism* and the *indigenismo*, gave a special flavor to the paintings of the school of Clavé, adding a new element to the academism of the century.

Charlot:

> *Again Indianism rose in the 1860s as republic crushed empire, and with a proper cast, playing the blond Habsburg versus the jade-dark Juárez. Lithographs popularized the Aztec calendar stone which had become a national pride. But soon after, Díaz the renegade bleached his face and hands, and the Mexican esteem of things Mexican sank.* [260]

Antonio Rodríguez:

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[259] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 56.
[260] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 7.

> *The Indian, who had been despised as being 'ugly', belonging to an 'inferior race' and given to 'uncivilized practices', whom the conquistadors considered as 'having no soul', began to be rehabilitated and produced a number of 'native' painters such as Jose Obregón, Rodrigo Gutiérrez, Leandro Izaguirre, José Jara and Félix Parra.* [261]

In the *Diálogo sobre la Historia de la Pintura*, written by José Bernardo Couto in 1860, fourteen years after Clavé accepted responsibility for painting in the Academy, Pelegrín Clavé says, "Besides, I hope it won't be held that we wasted time, when people compare what the Academy is now with what it was twelve or fourteen years ago":

> *Por lo demás, espero que no se encontrará que hayamos perdido el tiempo, comparando lo que es ahora la Academia con lo que era doce o catorce años atrás; cierto es que la protección que se le ha dispensado y los auxilios con que se le ha acudido, merecen el nombre de regios. El soberano más dadivoso y más aficionado a las Nobles Artes, en igual tiempo no hubiera hecho en México más de lo que se ha hecho por este establecimiento, el cual entiendo que en las Américas no tiene competidor, y en cuanto a la manera con que se trata y favorece a los alumnos, en Europa misma hay pocos que se igualen.* [262]

But after twenty-two years, Clavé's time was over. Charlot refers, with some exaggeration, to the "duel of murals fought between the Mexican Juan Cordero and the Catalan Pelegrín Clavé":

> *The colonial style lingered for decades after Mexico had become a nation. Its last chapter was written in mid-nineteenth century just before Díaz clamped his white-gloved fist on the lid of Mexican art. It concerns the duel of murals fought between the Mexican Juan Cordero and the Catalan Pelegrín Clavé.* [263]

Pelegrín Clavé had been suppressed for a short time during the rule of Benito Juárez, and Maximilian did not accept him. Depressed, he returned to Europe with his family in 1868. The painting of the dome of *La Profesa* marked the end of his career.

Juan Cordero

The rivalry between the Catalan Pelegrín Clavé and the Mexican Juan Cordero stimulated the plastic arts in Mexico, and the tensions between the two favored mural painting in Mexico. Diego Rivera considered Juan Cordero as a precursor of the *Mexican Mural Movement*. **Figure 29** shows Juan Cordero's Columbus on his return from America. [264]



Figure 29. Juan Cordero: *Columbus on his return from America.*

His big compositions, *Columbus before the Catholic Kings* and *The Redeemer and the Adulterous Woman,* anticipated the mural painting style of his later works. After his return to Mexico, he painted portraits, including one of General Santa Anna.

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[261] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 137.
[262] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 56.
[263] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 22.
[264] Retrieved 2003-09-08 from http://www.elbalero.gob.mx/kids/history/images/conquista/colonreyes.gif

Clavé was the incumbent when young Cordero returned from his studies in Italy with a juvenile masterpiece, *The Redeemer and the Woman Taken in Adultery*. Shown at the Academy in 1854, it earned him all the publicity that was to be had in the days before headlines were invented. As a result, he was offered the sub-directorship of the School of Fine Arts. Unwilling to take second place, Cordero refused the post in a letter in which Mexican nationalist feeling runs high: "I must admit that I did not sacrifice the best years of my life in foreign countries [...] to come back to my homeland to serve under Señor Pelegrín Clavé". [265]

Charlot says of Cordero:

> *His taste was poles apart from the genteel taste of Clavé, called papilloné, a term suggesting swarms of butterflies in flight.* [266]

Thus, Juan Cordero, unable to occupy the position held by Pelegrín Clavé, became the first painter to paint murals in Mexico. According to Charlot:

> *His proud statement began a feud with the powerfully entrenched Spaniard that lasted a lifetime. Lost to a bureaucratic career, Cordero turned to mural painting. While his contemporaries praised his decorations in oil as superior to his temperas, present taste has reversed the judgment* [267]

In 1855 Juan Cordero undertook his first mural in tempera with the decoration of Santa Teresa's dome, which can be considered his masterpiece. It was finished in 1857, but the mural decoration was not very well received by the critics. Charlot describes the mural:

> *From its zenith, against the giant omelet of an egg-yellow dawn, God the Father swoops down, swaddled in Mars-violet drapes. Seated around the ledge of the circumference are cardinal and theological Virtues, female giants transformed by the ceiling perspective and the epic strength of the brush into heaps of granite hard draperies.* [268]

Juan Cordero's next tempera decoration was in the dome of San Fernando. Charlot's description:

> […] *an attempted mea culpa for having soared so high in that of Santa Teresa; but it was not as disarming as the artist had hoped. The Immaculate Conception, oyster gray in a dark-blue mantle, ascends a heaven changing from golden ochre to a kind of bluing blue, passing by a shade of flesh. A ring-around-a-rosy of rose cherubs encircles the shaft of the lantern, sporting green, red, and purple panties. Adolescent angelic musicians fill the dome, plucking harps, blowing trumpets, tickling cellos; others raise banners and display mottoes. Either their tunics are painted all of a piece out of a single pot of paint, or they have theatrical sheens: a leaf green warms up to Salmon pink; a magenta turns Nattier blue.* [269]

The San Fernando dome was better received than the mural at Santa Teresa. Cordero's relative success inspired Clavé to dedicate himself to mural painting, starting with the decoration in oil of the dome of the Church of *La Profesa* in 1861 referred to above.

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[265] Revilla, Manuel G., Obras, 1, Mexico, 1908, p. 260. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 22.
[266] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 23.
[267] Ibid, p. 22.
[268] Ibid, p. 23.
[269] Ibid, pp. 23-24.

Juan Cordero's activity as a muralist did not stop with these compositions in churches. He was the only artist of his time in Mexico who painted some non-religious themes. Cordero developed a friendship with Dr. Gabino Barreda, the main proponent of positivism in Mexico.

According to Antonio Rodríguez, Gabino Barreda not only had a very clear idea of the function of art, but he also provided concrete support as one of the patrons who commissioned Juan Cordero's secular mural painting in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. [270] Barreda believed Mexico had reached the positive stage envisaged by Comte, and his principles supported the Porfírio Díaz regime and the scientific justification of the Porfirian motto, "order and progress". Under Barreda's influence, Cordero painted the first allegorical mural of the positivist doctrine. It had a philosophical topic, the "Triumph of Science and Study over Ignorance and Sloth," and its historical significance was more important than its artistic importance. It was destroyed in 1900 during the Porfirio Díaz period and replaced by a stained-glass window. The work is considered by some as an antecedent of Mexican Muralism of the twentieth century.

The antagonism between Clavé and Cordero, as mentioned above, was the beginning of mural activity in Mexico. Clavé had returned to Spain, defeated, and the murals of Cordero became the starting point, according to some, for new adventures that would revolutionize mural painting in Mexico.

Charlot:

> *Having fulfilled all the years of his contract, Clavé returned to Spain, and Cordero brushed the last stroke in this pictorial duel with another mural, "Triumph of Science and Study over Ignorance and Sloth [...]"* [271]

Santiago Rebull

Modern art in Mexico was classicist, developed from French classicism and German idealism, two forms of lingering Romanticism. The topics inspired by biblical passages were idealistic and sweetly romantic. One of the best-known and most influential artists of this period was Santiago Rebull. In 1846, whilst Pelegrín Clavé was Director of Painting, Santiago Rebull enrolled in the Academy of San Carlos Fine Arts. In 1851, Rebull executed the first of his big works, *Christ in Agony*, which was admired by the critics. His production as a portrait painter was extensive. The best known of his paintings was a small canvas that represents *The Death of Marat*, which he painted in 1875. The young but influential Cuban critic, José Martí, considered the *Death of Marat* a truly exceptional work. Emperor Maximilian commissioned the work, as well as portraits of himself and his Empress. He also commissioned the fresco decoration of the external walls of the Fortress of Chapultepec in 1864. Rebull was named Director of the Academy in 1860. In his *Datos auto-biográficos*, Diego Rivera names Rebull as one of his teachers: "1899-1901. – I received lessons from Don Santiago Rebull, Don José María Velasco, and Don Félix Parra":

> *1899-1901. – Recibió lecciones de don Santiago Rebull, don José María Velasco y don Félix Parra.* [272]

Surprisingly, Rivera, who had often rebelled against academic painting, claims (in 1942) "If Rebull had been born in France and not in this Mexico that ignores itself, he would have had a room in the Louvre":

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[270] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 137.
[271] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 24.
[272] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100.

> *Si Rebull hubiera nacido en Francia y no en este México que se desconoce a sí mismo, tendría para él una sala en el Louvre [...]* [273]

The contradiction is evident: on the one hand Rivera states that his years in the Academy were a waste of time, on the other hand he recognizes the importance of Rebull, and even accuses Mexico of showing contempt for its most important values.

Ramón Favela Jorge Hernández Campos reports that Diego Rivera, contrary to his myth of himself as a youth renegade, "was … a model student in San Carlos":

> *Por otra parte, cabe señalar que esa Academia impugnada en 1910, desde la perspectiva de fines del siglo XX, se presenta como un lugar distinto, mucho más respetable de lo que se nos ha hecho pensar en los últimos 60 años. Por ejemplo, Ramón Favela señala cómo Diego Rivera − quien contrariamente a su mito de joven renegado "fue [...] un estudiante modelo de San Carlos" − cuando más tarde formulaba sus composiciones y teorías cubistas tenia muy presentes, y podría decirse muy a la mano, las enseñanzas que le había impartido José María Velasco en su clase de teoría de la perspectiva, donde el texto oficial era el Compendio de perspectiva lineal y aérea, compuesto por Eugenio Landesio. El rigor del texto hace que Favela se refiera a la "tradición original de la Academia Mexicana vinculada con la Ilustración del siglo XVIII, remachada y amplificada después a través de la preocupación positivista, muy del siglo XIX, por la naturaleza y el análisis Científico". Es indudable, que en la Academia Diego Rivera consolidó una compulsión muy suya a "fijar el arte dentro de una racionalización técnica", lo que según Favela le permitió "aprehender fácilmente el concepto cubista de un espacio pictórico subjetivo y perceptual".* [274]

Mexican academism in the classic tradition ended with the death of Santiago Rebull in 1902. The following year, Antonio Fabrés was appointed Director.

Wolfe:

> *In 1902 [...] Rebull retired and a new "up-to-date" Catalan painter of Moors and musketeers, Antonio Fabres, was appointed director of San Carlos to "modernize" the school.* [275]

José María Obregón

José María Obregón is particularly interesting with reference to his theme in *El Descubrimiento del Pulque* (The discovery of pulque, **(Figure 30**). [276] The drink called pulque is obtained from the fermentation of the sap of a kind of agave. With this topic taken from the ancient history of Mexico, the artists' latent *indigenismo* appeared for the first time in academic painting.

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[273] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 264-265.
[274] Quoted in Campos, Jorge Hernández, I., "El Dr. Atl en la cultura Mexicana", *Dr. Atl, Conciencia y paisaje*, UNAM, Dirección General de Difusión de Arte, Mexico 1985, pp. 14-15.
[275] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 37.
[276] Retrieved 2003-09-02 from http://www.humanities-interactive.org/splendors/ex048_17g_rgb72.jpg

Figure 30. José María Obregón: *El Descubrimiento del Pulque.*



Intellectuals and artists felt the need to represent Mexican history in art, and in particular the history of the old indigenous world. Therefore, *Indigenismo* made a new appearance, but it was forced to fit into the academic classicist molds; the indigenous models were painted as Roman gladiators, and Queen Xóchitl was represented with a vestal.

According to Justino Fernández, "The academic classicist vision of the nineteenth century was a bad mold for that world so far away from sugary classicism. But the school of Clavé accomplished marvels, and it was able to make believe, as have some historiographers of our time, that this was truly the way the Spaniards conquered the people. *The Discovery of Pulque* is a good example of this tendency":

> *Nada podrá dar mejor idea de lo que es la visión de una época acerca del pasado, como éste y otros cuadros de interpretación del antiguo mundo indígena de México; y es que la visión académica clasicista del siglo XIX fue un mal molde para aquel mundo tan alejado del dulzón clasicismo. Pero la escuela de Clavé hizo maravillas y logró hacer creer, como algunos historiógrafos de nuestro tiempo, que así era en verdad el pueblo conquistado por los españoles. El descubrimiento del pulque es un esfuerzo en el anterior sentido. Aquí sí que podemos hablar en términos occidentales y llamar "sala del trono" al escenario en que el "emperador" Azteca se encuentra, sentado en su gran sillón, con manto, corona y con una flecha por cetro; frente a él la "princesa" o la "reina" Xóchitl, acompañada de su padre, quizá, y seguida de algunas esclavas, presenta en sus tiernas manos al "monarca", una jícara con el néctar maravilloso, extraído de la penca de maguey, que trae por muestra; los cortesanos, viejos y jóvenes a ambos lados del "monarca" son testigos del suceso.* [277]

According to Justino Fernández, "The most remarkable thing is the incongruity of the indigenous ethnic types that the classicist idealization transformed into Hellenic […] this painting [is] a beautiful document of the historical-artistic vision of the nineteenth century of the old native world of Mexico, the one that wanted at all costs to see itself as if it were the [world of Mount] Olympus":

> *Lo más notable es la incongruencia de los tipos étnicos indígenas, que la idealización clasicista trastocaba en helénicos; Xóchitl podría ser una vestal en Grecia y el "emperador" un Apolo helenístico, pero mezclados están los tipos indígenas con pleno carácter, como el viejo en primer término a la derecha y las esclavas jóvenes, a la izquierda. Academismo en la composición, en el dibujo, en la concepción toda y clasicismo en los tipos principales, combinados con los propiamente indígenas, hacen de este cuadro un precioso documento de la visión histórico-artística del siglo XIX del mundo antiguo indígena de México, que a todo trance se quería ver como si fuese el Olimpo.* [278]

[277] Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 63.
[278] Ibid.

And he continues: "The academics neither liked nor understood the autochthonous beauty of the Mexican people; on the contrary, they rejected it; for that reason, they tried to express classicist beauty, the only one that they knew":

> *Los académicos ni gustaron ni entendieron la belleza autóctona del pueblo Mexicano, antes la despreciaron, por eso se esforzaron en darle otra belleza clasicista, la única que tuvieron al alcance por tal. Por todo lo anterior no puede parecerme sino ingenua aquella visión y por su pretendido objetivismo falsa, lo cual no quiere decir que deje de ser interesante y auténtica en cuanto a su tiempo.* [279]

Keen, discussing El Descubrimiento del Pulque, states:

> *A sentimental Romanticism, academic and unadventurous, continued to dominate Mexican art in the second half of the nineteenth century. Aztec subjects were popular, but painters as a rule were not concerned with archaeological fidelity, much less with capturing the spirit of Aztec culture. Indian men and women were almost invariably depicted in conformity with classicist conceptions of beauty. An excellent example is El descubrimiento del pulque of José Obregón, who imbued the central figure of the maid Xóchitl with a gentle, delicate loveliness of a distinctly Occidental type.* [280]

The Spanish past was condemned, and nationalism produced an American attitude in the arts, a kind of return to the search for the origins of *Mexicanidad.* Thus a historicist *Indigenismo*, political and aesthetic, developed. The currents of Hispanism and *Indigenismo* were again in conflict, and they had to serve as banners for the conservative and liberal extremists who did not fully accept historical reality.

The Reform was accompanied by the rise of a fiery nationalism. The need to create a school of national art became an obsession among the liberal critics. The enraged writings of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano and the analyses of Mexican art made by the Cuban José Martí during his years of residence in Mexico show the urgency with which nationalism raged, awaiting the creation of its own art.

Ramón Sagredo

Another important name is that of Ramón Sagredo, a follower of Clavé, who painted biblical scenes and academic topics. Ramón Sagredo's works include *Jesus in Emmaus* and *The Death of Socrates*, as well as some paintings that decorate the galleries of the old Academy. Clavé and his pupils, including Sagredo, were interested in the Old and New Testaments, but they also worked with other aspects of history. They executed these themes on large academic canvases which suited the taste and concepts of their time.

[279] Ibid.
[280] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 461.

Rodrigo Gutiérrez

Another example of the type of painting accomplished during this period is the *Senate of Tlaxcala* by Rodrigo Gutiérrez. The conception of the painting is dramatic; the artist tried to represent the true physical characteristics of the *tlaxcalan* Indian in a less classicist, less idealized way than José Obregón did in *The Discovery of Pulque.* Gutiérrez dared to come close to ugliness in certain figures, but *The Senate of Tlaxcala* does not avoid the theatricality of the scene **(Figure 31**). [281]

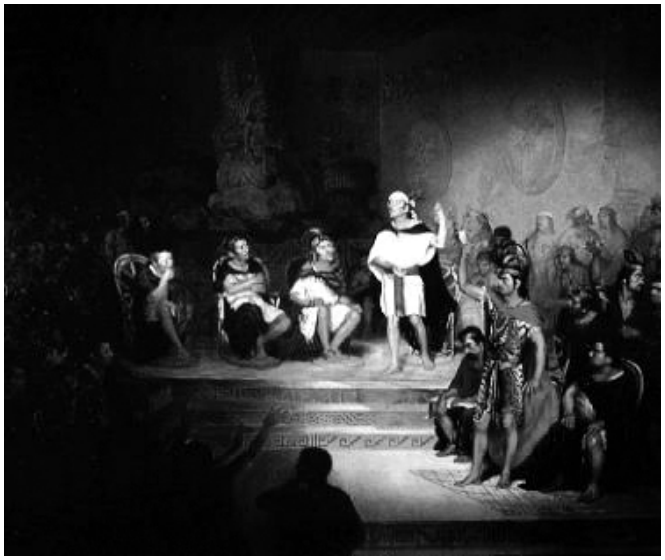


Figure 31. Rodrigo Gutiérrez: *El Senado de Tlaxcala*.

Keen says:

> *The Europeanization of the ancient Mexican milieu reached a certain climax in the skillful painting by Rodrigo Gutiérrez, El Senado de Tlaxcala, in which the Tlaxcalan "senators," dressed in Roman togas, debate the issues of war and peace with Cortés, using appropriate declamatory gestures.* [282]

The *Discovery of Pulque* and *The Senate of Tlaxcala* indicate the strength of the indigenous trend in painting during this period. Although both works treated themes of Mexican history and culture, they were actually Mexican reconstructions of Greek or Roman atmospheres.

Petronilo Monroy

Petronilo Monroy was another of Pelegrín Clavé's followers and his work also exhibits several of the contradictions in this period's way of treating Mexican themes. Charlot discusses Petronilo Monroy and his work, *The Constitution of 1857*:

> *It took the recognized fine arts a long time to contact, unashamed, the Mexican milieu. The critics saw further ahead than the artists, and a leitmotiv runs through writings on art in the mid-nineteenth century, a sighing for a national art to match the national independence that had just been realized. When in 1869 Petronilo Monroy exhibited his allegory "The Constitution of '57," a flying female in Pompeian drapes, critics admired it but suggested:*

[281] Rodrigo Gutiérrez: *El senado de Tlaxcala*. Retrieved 2003-09-04 from http://www.humanities-interactive.org/splendors/ex048_17j_rgb72.jpg

[282] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 461.

"Beautiful as it may be, is it not time that our artists exploit the dormant wealth of our own ways of life, both old and new." [283]

Romanticism

The Academy had European teachers from Spain, Italy, and other nations. It was the main laboratory in the country for contemporary art. Romantic, naturalistic, and idealistic academism, founded on classic principles and sentimental German Romanticism, expressed a sweet idealism, with biblical topics. But new trends, such as landscape painting and realism, developed, and little by little the painting of local customs or "genre painting," began to find its own space.

One could say that Academism, Romanticism, and Modernism, although they cannot be delimited with accuracy, were the periods that divided and characterized Mexican art history during the period from the last part of the nineteenth century until the second decade of the twentieth, when muralism began. Academism and Romanticism can scarcely be separated; on the contrary, they were always found together. Romanticism continued the rediscovery of nature, freely introducing forms from the past with passion and sentimental softness.
But Mexican Romanticism at the end of the nineteenth century was different from that of other countires because it expressed the time in a special place: Mexico.

Romanticism in Mexican art was classicist, as we have seen. At the same time, a religious, idealistic, and indigenous Romanticism existed, expressed in the naturalistic and classicist forms of its time. From within these currents, artists began to spread Mexican history, landscape, customs, and types throughout the country.

Justino Fernández says that "by the middle of the century, the academic aesthetic is idealistic, classicist, and traditionalist with a religious sensibilty and it aspires to mural painting":

> […] *la estética académica a mediados del siglo es idealista, clasicista, tradicionalista con sentido religioso y que aspira a la pintura mural; que ésta se revive en aquel tono y concepto, si bien se anhela una pintura dramática con temas propios. A medida que el tiempo corre, la estética moderna realista, antitradicional, naturalista e historicista se define y se afirma ante el ideal del progreso. Para entonces se rechaza la pintura religiosa, idealista y clasicista, y se exige un arte nacional, con temas y espíritu laicos, que tenga influencia moral y que contribuya al progreso.* [284]

Romanticism in Mexico opened the possibility of other realities – such as that of the indigenous past. The topics of old Mexican history were represented in classical terms, with an incongruity that today seems difficult to accept. It is impossible to turn the Indians into Greeks or Romans.

Academic art reached a final peak, with a new consciousness and some new forms of expression, in what was abusively called *Modernism.* A time dies and another is born, announcing the art of the twentieth century. On the whole, it is the multitude of different directions which characterizes this period. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century brought new ideas about art such as Modernism and impressionism*,* which had their Mexican representatives, as well as the final expressions of a late Romanticism.

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[283] *El Renacimiento*, 1, 53. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 55-56.
[284] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 418.

Further expressions of romantic nationalism can be seen in other fields of art. The monument to Cuauhtémoc (1878-1887) is an important example. The Aztec leader Cuauhtémoc became a representative for the *indigenismo* that characterized these times. To mark the Centennial of Brazilian Independence, Mexico gave Brazil a replica of the monument of Cuauhtémoc that is in the *Paseo de la Reforma*. [285] I will later refer to this monument in relation to both Vasconcelos and Rivera. Cuauhtémoc assumed his role as the "last of the *Aztecs*". Cuauhtémoc, the last defender of the homeland, chose to be sacrificed and became a symbolic yet controversial character in the panorama of Mexican history, mythology, culture, and arts. He was used by several sectors of the Mexican culture in the twentieth century, and his torture and death divided Mexicans into two opposing camps.

The Monument to Cuauhtémoc

Maximilian was the first to suggest building the *Monument to Columbus* in the *Paseo de la Reforma* in Mexico City. In 1875, boxes containing the different pieces arrived in Veracruz from France, and two years later, the monument was installed in the place chosen by Maximilian. The second half of the nineteenth century had become markedly French, and, while Mexican artists made efforts to achieve their own expression and had some success, foreign works were preferred, as in the case of the *Monument to Columbus*, which represents the imposition of French taste.

According to Justino Fernández: "Time has proved that the Monument to Cuauhtémoc, the work of Mexican artists, is superior to that of Columbus, imported from France."

> *[...] el indigenismo lleva a [...] excesos, como el discurso pronunciado en "Mexicano" cuando se inauguró el Monumento a Cuauhtémoc. [...] El tiempo ha probado que el Monumento a Cuauhtémoc, obra de artistas Mexicanos, resultó superior al de Colón importado de Francia.* [286]

It was perhaps this monument that gave General Porfirio Díaz the idea to undertake the vast plan announced in the competition of 1877 for the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc*, in the *Paseo de la Reforma.* By this time, Cuauhtémoc had won a special place among the national heroes and kings from the history of ancient Mexico. The *Monument to Cuauhtémoc* was the first part of a broad project of ornamentation for the *Paseo de la Reforma* that was to present important examples of heroes and patriots from Mexican history for future generations. The objective was to present history by using art with a moral purpose.

In the first paragraphs of the ordinance, General Porfírio Díaz says, "The C. President of the Republic, desiring to beautify the *Paseo de la Reforma* with monuments worthy of the culture of this city, and whose view remembers the heroism with which the nation fought against the Conquest in the sixteenth century and for independence and for reform in modern times, has ordered that in the arbor located to the west of Columbus' statue, a votive monument be erected, dedicated to Cuautimotzin and to the other commanders who distinguished themselves in the defense of the homeland; in the following one, another to Hidalgo and other heroes of the Independence, and in the immediate one, another to Juárez and other commanders of the reform and of the second independence":

> *El C. Presidente de la República, deseando embellecer el Paseo de la Reforma con monumentos dignos de la cultura de esta ciudad, y cuya vista recuerde el heroísmo con que la nación ha luchado contra La Conquista en el siglo XVI y por la independencia y por la reforma en el presente, ha dispuesto que en la glorieta situada al oeste de la que ocupa la estatua de Colón, se erija un monumento votivo a Cuautimotzin y a los demás caudillos que se distinguieron en la defensa de la patria; en la siguiente, otro a Hidalgo y*

[285] See **Figure 32**, p. 131.
[286] Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 172.

demás héroes de la Independencia, y en la inmediata, otro a Juárez y demás caudillos de la Reforma y de la segunda independencia. Para dar principio a la ejecución de este acuerdo, destinado a señalar a la gratitud de las generaciones futuras los nombres de los patriotas que por sus grandes hechos se han distinguido en las épocas de prueba, se convoca para la elección del proyecto del monumento destinado a Cuautimotzin y demás caudillos que lucharon heroicamente, contra La Conquista, a un concurso artístico[...] [287]

Figure 32. Monument to Cuauhtémoc. Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City.



The first stone was laid on May 5, 1878, and the Monument to Cuauhtémoc, by Miguel Noreña (the statue), Gabriel Guerra (the bas-reliefs), and Francisco M. Jiménez (the base), was inaugurated on the symbolically important day of August 21, 1887, the day of the fall of Tenochtitlán in 1521. Poised to shoot an arrow, Cuauhtémoc represents the heroic resistance of the *Aztecs* **(Figure 32**). [288]

The board at the front depicts in bas-relief the hieroglyph of Cuauhtémoc. He is shown in the traditional Aztec representation, as "the Eagle that descended" to draw with its beak the print of a human foot. The lower designs and the north and south sides of the base depict scenes from his life. Noreña modeled the bas-relief of the encounter between Cuauhtémoc and Cortés after the heroic defender of Tenochtitlán had been taken prisoner. The bas-relief that presents the last Aztec king's torture is the work of Gabriel Guerra, one of Noreña's pupils. There is a bas-relief with the *Torment of Cuauhtémoc* that inspired Rivera. In the space that faces north, there is a bas-relief showing Cuauhtémoc's prison. Cuauhtémoc is shown with all his insignia, in a scene where he grasps the handle of the dagger that Cortés has on his belt and pronounces these words:

Señor Malinche: ya he hecho lo que soy obligado en defensa de mi ciudad y vasallos, y no puedo más, y pues vengo por fuerza y preso ante tu persona y poder, toma ese puñal que tienes en la cinta y mátame luego con él. [289]

The bas-relief that faces south represents Cuauhtémoc under torture at the moment when he flares up at Señor de Tacuba, who was being tortured with him. Cuauhtémoc "looked at him with anger and treated him despicably, asking him if he was in some delight or bath" (sic):

[...] lo miró con ira y lo trató vilísimamente como muelle de poco esfuerzo, preguntándole si estaba el en algún deleite o baño [290]

With the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc,* academic sculpture of the last part of the nineteenth century, although still classicist, produced its most powerful expression of a national historical topic. Francisco M. Jiménez was the first to try a style that could be called neo-indigenous, of which the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc* is the only worthy example.

Justino Fernández states that "romantic sculpture and architecture found its highest expression in the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc* (1878-1887) [...] In sum, in the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc,* romantic, classicist,

[287] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 167.
[288] Retrieved 2003-09-04 from http://www.usc.edu/isd/archives/la/pubart/sculptures/Lincoln_Park/cuauhtemoc.jpeg
[289] See note 127.
[290] Se note 133.

and academic aesthetics were synthesized, a high level of originality for the openly indigenous intention and the politics of symbols and images":

> *La escultura y la arquitectura románticas encontraron su más alta expresión en el Monumento a Cuauhtémoc (1878-1887) cuyos autores fueron: del basamento, el ingeniero Francisco M. Jiménez; de la estatua, Miguel Noreña y de los bajorrelieves, Enrique Guerra. [...] En suma, en el Monumento a Cuauhtémoc se sintetizó la estética romántica, clasicista y académica, llevándola a un nivel de originalidad por la intención francamente indigenista y política de símbolos e imágenes.* [291]

He continues: "The whole figure is majestic and monumental in its conception and proportions. The Academy didn't produce any better; base and statue are the artistic peak of the academic indigenism of the nineteenth century":

> *[...] la figura toda resulta majestuosa y monumental en su concepción y proporciones. No produjo nada mejor la academia; basamento y estatua son la cúspide artística del indegenismo académico del siglo XIX [...]. El Monumento a Cuauhtémoc fue descubierto en 1887 y, además de su significación histórica y política, es el único de importancia artística, por su originalidad y cualidades intrínsecas, que produjo el siglo XIX; en él se realizaron viejos anhelos con buen éxito, la pintura aún tuvo que esperar algunas décadas para llegar más alto.* [292]

Besides its historical and political significance, this work can be seen as one of the few works of artistic importance produced in nineteenth-century Mexico.

The indigenous theme also found expression in the exhibitions of the time. Below I give some examples of the type of compositions presented in exhibitions or contests. They are easy to identify because of the very comprehensive titles with unequivocal nationalist and indigenous themes.[293]

In the biennial competition of 1885, Juan Ortega exhibited the painting Moctezuma, accompanied by his nephews the princes of Ixtapalapam and Tlalcotalpam, goes to the centre of the room to receive Cortés who is accompanied by his interpreters Doña Marina and Father Aguilar, and by the captains Sandoval, Alvarado, Velázquez of León, Ordaz and some soldiers.

In the exhibition of 1886, Gonzalo Carrasco and Andrés Ríos presented composition drawings for the annual competition. The drawings depict scenes of ball games played by the ancient Mexicans, Cortés, accompanied by the Emperor Moctezuma, inspecting the city from the platform of the temple of Tlatelolco, and the Spaniards visiting the market at Tlatelolco. Juan Ortega exhibited three paintings with the following scenes: *Cortés, after the removal of Moctezuma's chains, tells him that the measure was fleeting and necessary, but that from that moment he was, as before, completely free, which pleases Moctezuma*; *Morelos is presented to Hidalgo and offers him his services in the town of Charo.* He also exhibited the sketch for the previous painting, *Visit of Cortés to Moctezuma,* which, according to the catalogue, was "finished in six hours".

No paintings with national historic topics were presented in the exhibition of 1877. In 1879, Luis Coto showed two historical landscapes: *The priest Hidalgo in the mount of the crosses haranguing his troops*

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[291] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 422.
[292] Ibidp. 169.
[293] All the information about the competitions is taken from *Catálogos de las exposiciones de la antigua Academia de San Carlos de México* (1850-1898), compiled by Manuel Romero and quoted in Ramírez, Fausto, "Vertientes nacionalistas en el Modernismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 162.

shortly before the battle and *The origin of the foundation of Mexico, that is to say the Aztecs encounter the eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its beak.* Other engravings of historical topics presented in the academy exhibitions included *Portrait of the Commander of the Independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla* and *Allegory of the Independence of Mexic*o by Cayetano Ocampo.

For the twenty-second exhibition in 1891, the paintings from two biennial competitions were exhibited. The topic of the first (1889) was the *Discovery of the cactus and the eagle* (The Foundation of the City of Mexico).

The names of the compositions presented in diverse contests during the last two decades of the century, recorded by Fausto Ramírez, are very revealing: *Several Aztec chiefs describe the Arrival of the Spaniards to Moctezuma, The Aztec painters commissioned by Moctezuma show him Drawings representing the Arrival of the Spaniards, Moctezuma inspects the Portraits of his Predecessors in Chapultepec, Funeral of an Aztec King, Episode of the Conquest,* and *The Election of a Toltec Chieftain.*

After the exhibition of 1898, there were no other comprehensive exhibitions in the remaining years of the *Porfiriato*.

The Universal Exhibition of Paris, 1889

Justino Fernández says, "Ideas about architecture, and the buildings they engendered, aroused much positive interest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. With the erection of the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc* in the capital, a new direction in art, which was aesthetic-indigenous, political, academic, nationalist, and excessively romantic, began. In sculpture classicist naturalism was demanded, although the indigenous types used did not descend 'to rough realism.' This current of indigenous aesthetics produced some works, such as the pavilion of Mexico in Paris in 1889, which demonstrated that the tendency was unacceptable and not to be taken seriously":

> *Las ideas sobre la arquitectura tienen positivo interés en el último cuarto del siglo XIX, así como las obras mismas que se edificaban. Desde la erección del Monumento a Cuauhtémoc, en la capital, se desata una corriente estético-indigenista, política, académica, nacionalista y, por demás, romántica. En la escultura se quería un naturalismo clasicista, aunque se tratase de tipos indígenas, que no llegara "al grosero realismo". Esta corriente de la estética indigenista produjo algunas obras, como el pabellón de México en París, en 1889, que vino a mostrar que la tendencia era inaceptable y que no se la tomaba en serio.* [294]

Some of the historical characters of the pre-Hispanic past were represented: the goddess Centéotl, protector of agriculture; Tláloc, god of the rains; and Chalchiuhtlicue, goddess of water. Other characters included were the three divinities that, according to the old Aztec beliefs, gave life to humanity and fertility to the fields: Xochiquetzal, the god of the arts, Camaxtli, the god of hunting, and Yacatecuhtli, the god of trade, as well as King Izcóatl; the poet king Nezahualcóyotl; Totoquihuantzin, representative of the triple alliance of Mexico; Texcoco; Tacuba; Cacama; Cuitláhuac; and, naturally, Cuauhtémoc.

The morphological and iconographic program developed in the Pavilion of 1889 aimed at summarising the archaeological Mexican monuments and the old national history, connected to the *Nahua* background. The Secretary of Development had designated certain people to take charge of the project and construction of the Mexican building in Paris. According to one writer, "the group of 'technocrats' of scientific or positivist formation that constituted the intellectual dynamo of material progress of the country prevailed":

[294] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 432.

[...] predominaba el grupo de "tecnócratas" de formación científica o positivista, que constituían el dínamo intelectual del progreso material del país. [295]

Antonio Peñafiel describes the national pavilion erected at the Universal Exhibition of Paris as follows: "The basic elements of the building were taken from the few surviving genuinely indigenous ruins, for example, a perfectly preserved wall of an old palace of Texolocalco in Huexotla and the magnificent Monument of Xochicalco in the State of Morelos":

La forma general del edificio se ha tomado de los pocos restos que quedan en las construcciones de un origen verdaderamente regional de las tribus Mexicanas, como son: una pared de un antiguo palacio de Huexotla, perfectamente conservada, que lleva el nombre de Texolocalco, y del magnífico Monumento de Xochicalco, que se encuentra en el Estado de Morelos. [296]

The old indigenous past was seen as the new road to create a national architecture, and the Mexico pavilion at the Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1899 was to demonstrate this. However, according to Justino Fernández, the critics considered the indigenous style a "failure and a dead end."

En cuanto a la arquitectura se pensó, después del buen éxito del Monumento a Cuauhtémoc, que la inspiración en las obras del pasado indígena antiguo era la nueva vía para crear la arquitectura nacional y tal dirección llevó a levantar el pabellón de México en la Exposición Universal de París, en 1899, en estilo indígena, que la crítica consideró un fracaso y un falso camino. [297]

After the pavilion in Paris in 1889 failed because of its strange indigenous style, Mexico did not seek any more exposure to European criticism. For the Mexican pavilion at the International Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1900 Mexico reverted to a classicist academic style.

Leandro Izaguirre

Leandro Izaguirre occupies a special place among the academic painters in the last part of the nineteenth century, mainly because in 1892 he painted a large picture dealing with the torture of Cuauhtémoc. This picture, *El suplicio de Cuauhtémoc* (*Cuauhtémoc's Torture)*, is of vital importance for the understanding of the indigenous thematic at the end of the century **(Figure 33**) [298] Later both Rivera and Siqueiros painted this important episode in Mexican history.

[295] Ramírez, Fausto, "Dioses, Héroes y Reyes Mexicanos", *Historia, leyendas y mitos de México: su expresión en el arte* (XI Coloquio Internacional, en México, D.F.), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de Arte y Estética 30, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1988, p. 209.
[296] Ibid, p. 220.
[297] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 469.
[298] Leandro Izaguirre: *El suplicio de Cuauhtémoc*. Retrieved 2003-09-04 from http://www.tulane.edu/~rirwin/arte/sigloXIX/index.html



Figure 33. Leandro Izaguirre: *Cuauhtémoc's Torture*.

Leandro Izaguirre studied in San Carlos' Academy from 1884 to 1893. His teachers, Santiago Rebull, Félix Parra, and Velasco exercised a powerful influence on the painter's early career. Later, Izaguirre traveled to Europe where his academic training continued. When he returned to Mexico, he was appointed professor of the academy, a position that ranked equally with Germán Gedovius. *Cuauhtémoc's Torture*, his most famous work, together with the *Monument to Cuauhtémoc* can be considered the high points of the indigenous tendency in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Critics such as Ignacio Manuel Altamirano and the Cuban José Martí, who had called for history painting with typically Mexican themes, stated that they saw their requests fulfilled.

Izaguirre's work was conceived according to classic or academic principles as a theatrical representation that takes place inside a palace or Aztec temple. Cuauhtémoc and his partner and cousin, Señor de Tlacopan, are half sitting on a kind of stone throne in an uncomfortable posture, their arms tied and a blazing fire licking at their feet. A Spaniard, perhaps Julián de Aldrete, stands in front of Cuauhtémoc, and several soldiers observe the scene. The representation of Cuauhtémoc, the heroic defender of Tenochtitlán, has a restrained drama, but the Spanish soldiers are represented in a less convincing way. In general, the atmosphere of the painting is more solemn than dramatic.

The art historian Justino Fernández says, "With all its successes and weaknesses, the work tends toward the grandiose, and it produces a certain effect, mainly for its proportions; it is the 'realism' of the end of the century in which the academy found its 'swan song.' *Cuauhtémoc's Torture* constitutes the last great effort of academism to take history painting to its limits, that is to say, the 'realistic' reconstruction of a fact, of historical truth itself":

> *Con todos sus aciertos y debilidades la obra tiende a lo grandioso y produce cierto efecto, sobre todo por sus proporciones; es el "realismo" de fin de siglo en que la academia encontró su "canto del cisne" y El suplicio de Cuauhtémoc constituye el último gran esfuerzo del academismo por llevar la pintura de historia a su máxima expresión, o sea, la "realista" reconstrucción de un hecho, de la verdad histórica misma.* [299]

The critic Antonio Rodríguez notes the climate of contradictions of the time:

[299] Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 141.

> *In this contradictory atmosphere, with many retreats and vacillations, an indigenous form of painting was slowly to emerge. At the very time when everything French was being honoured, Leandro Izaguirre was paying homage to the last of the Aztec rulers in a monumental painting entitled The Martyrdom of Cuauhtémoc; José Jara followed the Aztec legend in painting his Foundation of Mexico, and Félix Parra expresses a temperate indignation at the atrocities committed by the Spaniards in his An episode of the conquest. Only the noble intention and the subjects of these paintings were truly Mexican. Stifled by the atmosphere of the régime and the fashion of the period, these painters, who in many ways were worthy both of admiration and respect, painted Mexicans according to Hellenic standards of beauty and re-created legends of Nahuatl mythology according to the academic precepts brought from overseas by the Spaniard Fabrés.* [300]

Charlot comments on Leandro Izaguirre, who would later teach José Clemente Orozco:

> *In the 1880s Leandro Izaguirre, future teacher of Orozco, painted in "The Torture of Cuauhtemoc" the partial roasting of the last Aztec emperor. To bear stylistic fruits, the lessons incipient in Indian art had to wait for the vindication that cubism afforded them. Only then did artists and critics minimize the implications of subject matter, stop reminiscing about other types of masterpieces, and insist on an appreciation of plastic purity. The luck that we experienced in that regard was potluck. We approached Indian art with a panoply of prejudices as European as that of previous generations.* [301]

For Benjamin Keen, *El Suplicio de Cuauhtémoc* displays an attempt at realism, in spite of the classicist composition and atmosphere:

> *In El Suplicio de Cuauhtémoc of Leandro Izaguirre, classicist conceptions dominate, but some effort at realism is evident in the depiction of the suffering hero and in the general atmosphere of the picture. One may view a roomful of such anecdotal, historical paintings in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Mexico City.* [302]

Leandro Izaguirre exhibited *Cuauhtémoc's Torture* in the biennial competition of 1897. At the same exhibition, Joaquín Ramírez, who painted Old Testament topics on large canvases, exhibited *The Surrender of Cuauhtémoc to Hernán Cortés*, with its classicist idealization of the figures.

Antonio Fabrés

The last European teacher brought to Mexico by the Secretary of Public Education and Fine Arts, Justo Sierra, came to the San Carlos Academy when it was already known as the School of Fine Arts. He was the Catalan painter Antonio Fabrés, an artist with many years of experience, with personality and initiative. He introduced new working methods that created some difficulties when he arrived in 1903, because of the discipline and methods he imposed in the drawing classes. He introduced the European drawing method known as the Pillet System and used photographs as learning aids. These techniques immediately found opponents among the old guard of professors, who were also perturbed by the ideas of Symbolism and Post-impressionism which the young teachers who had recently arrived from Europe brought with them. **Figure 34** shows a painting by Fabrés. [303]

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[300] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 145.
[301] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 8-9.
[302] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 461.
[303] Retrieved 2003-08-04 from http://www.artrenewal.org/images/artists/C/Costa_Antonio_Fabres_y/large/Costa_Antonio_Fabres_y_Keeping_Guard.jpg

Figure 34. Antonio Fabrés: *Keeping Guard*.



Charlot:

> *As Clavé's influence waned with the century, a well-meaning citizen, Don Justo Sierra, Secretary of Public Instruction, imported another Catalan painter, Don Antonio Fabres. José Juan Tablada wrote in 1923: "The Academy then settled to work actively but uselessly. Meanwhile, a few noble influences, such as that of Ingres, which used to make the ghostly rounds of the pedagogical cloisters, vanished forever. Fabres imposed his ideals, literary at bottom and photographic on the surface."* [304]

However, when Antonio Fabrés became responsible for painting in the academy, the interest in historical themes decreased. Fabrés was a conservative. He believed in continuity, and he wanted the classical program and methods for the academies to continue. Among his pupils were Saturnino Herrán (his favorite), Roberto Montenegro, and Diego Rivera. Rivera rebelled against Fabrés' procedures and concepts of art, rejected the Spanish teacher and what he represented, and left for Europe in 1907 on a grant from Teodoro Dehesa, the governor of Veracruz.

Rivera's opinion of Fabrés was not very favourable: "Besides, Don Antonio was a fertile producer of Moors and musketeers, and he possessed an extensive collection of suits which he disguised his models in, and he photographed the whole composition before he painted it":

> *Además don Antonio era fecundísimo productor de moros y mosqueteros, y poseía una extensa colección de trajes, con los que disfrazaba a sus modelos para agruparlos y fotografiar la composición entera antes de pintarla.* [305]

However, in Moyssén's opinion, "Both the natural talent that he possessed and the academic training that he received from Antonio Fabrés, were factors that made Diego Rivera a magnificent draftsman":

> *Tanto la disposición natural que poseía como la formación académica que recibió de Antonio Fabrés, fueron factores que hicieron de Diego Rivera un magnífico dibujante* [306]

Even José Clemente Orozco comments on Fabrés' enormous collection of clothes: "To dress his models he brought a huge quantity of gear, armors, plumages, *chambergos*, layers, and other *carnivalesque* garments from Europe, very up to date then in the studies of the academic painters. With this collection of disguises it was possible to paint real musketeers, bullfighters, pages, odalisques, *manolas*, nymphs, bandits, vagabonds and an infinity of picturesque types which the artists and the public of the previous century so loved":

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[304] In a foreword for Best Maugard, Adolfo, *Método de Dibujo, tradición, resurgimiento y evolución del arte Mexicano*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 41.

[305] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 79.

[306] Moyssén, Xavier, "Autorretratos de Rivera", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. XV, Num. 60, Mexico 1989, p. 121. This text was written in 1985 for inclusion in the catalog of the major exhibition *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1986.

Para los modelos vestidos trajo de Europa una gran cantidad de vestimentas, armaduras, plumajes, chambergos, capas y otras prendas algo carnavalescas, muy a la moda de entonces en los estudios de pintores académicos. Con esta colección de disfraces era posible pintar del natural mosqueteros, toreros, pajes, odaliscas, manolas, ninfas, bandidos, chulos y otra infinidad de tipos pintorescos a que tan afectos eran los artistas y los públicos del siglo pasado. [307]

Orozco was a student at the school at the time and thus benefited from the teachings of Fabrés. There is a certain amount of information about the circumstances in his *Autobiography,* but his information is not completely reliable. For example, Orozco writes that he entered the Academy "six months before Fabrés left Mexico":

Mi entrada en la Academia fué unos seis meses antes de que el maestro Fabrés regresara a Europa. Asistí a sus talleres, sin llegar a ser propiamente su discípulo, pero si lo suficiente para darme cuenta de lo que había que hacer para aprender a pintar, y me puse a hacerlo con tenacidad, con verdadero encarnizamiento, con la determinación de quien quiere alcanzar un fin sin importarle el precio y así fue por varios años. [308]

Justino Fernández has calculated that Orozco actually enrolled in the School of Fine Arts in 1903. Antonio Fabrés was director of San Carlos's Academy from 1903 to 1906. Therefore Orozco's statement cannot be correct.

Orozco tells us, "When I enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts to make formal studies of painting, the institution was at the height of its efficiency and good organization. It had received Don Antonio Fabrés' great impulse, a great Spanish academic painter brought to Mexico I believe by Don Justo Sierra":

Al tiempo de ingresar a la Academia de Bellas Artes para hacer estudios formales de pintura, la institución estaba en el apogeo de su eficiencia y buena organización. Había recibido un gran impulso de Don Antonio Fabrés, un gran pintor académico español traído a México me parece que por don Justo Sierra, ministro de Instrucción Pública, para hacerse cargo de la Sección de Pintura como maestro supremo. Al llegar a Europa hizo una gran exposición de sus numerosas obras en las salas de la Academia, habiendo causado tal exposición una gran sensación entre los artistas e intelectuales de México, pues mostraba profundos conocimientos de la técnica pictórica y una habilidad excepcional. Los temas de sus pinturas eran en su mayoría religiosos y de costumbres. Pintura muy influenciada por Velázquez y otros pintores semejantes, españoles. [309]

And Orozco continues: "In the Academy there was free model, day and night, there were materials to paint, there was a superb collection of old teachers' works, there was a great library of art books, there were good teachers of painting, of anatomy, of art History, of perspective and, mainly, there was a nonpareil enthusiasm. What more could one want?":

En la Academia había modelo gratis, tarde y noche, había materiales para pintar, había una soberbia colección de maestros antiguos, había una gran biblioteca de libros de arte, había buenos maestros de pintura, de anatomía, de historia del arte, de perspectiva y, sobre todo, había un entusiasmo sin igual. ¿Qué más podía desear? [310]

Orozco: "Fabrés' teaching style emphasised intensive training and rigorous discipline, according to the norms of the Academies of Europe. Nature was to be copied photographically and as accurately as possible,

[307] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 12-14.
[308] Ibid, p. 15.
[309] Ibid, pp. 12-14.
[310] Ibid, p. 15.

with no concern for the time and effort expended. The same model, in the same position, sat for weeks and even months in front of the students, without any variation":

> *Las enseñanzas de Fabrés fueron más bien de entrenamiento intenso y disciplina rigurosa, según las normas de las Academias de Europa. Se trataba de copiar la naturaleza fotográficamente con la mayor exactitud, no importando el tiempo ni el esfuerzo empleado en ello. Un mismo modelo, en la misma posición, duraba semanas y aun meses frente a los estudiantes, sin variación alguna. Hasta las sombras eran trazadas con gis para que no variara la iluminación. Al terminar de copiar un modelo determinado durante varias semanas, un fotógrafo tomaba una fotografía del modelo a fin de que los estudiantes compararan sus trabajos con la fotografía. Otro ejercicio muy frecuente era copiar un modelo de yeso, puesto de cabeza, la Venus de Milo, por ejemplo. Por todos estos medios y trabajando de día y de noche durante años, los futuros artistas aprendían a dibujar, a dibujar deveras, sin lugar a duda.* [311]

Fabrés did not remain at the school long. At the end of 1906, he informed the minister of his decision to return to Europe; Justo Sierra answered him in these terms: "Your definitive resolution surprised me. I had hoped that your intention to leave that you had already communicated to me had been forgotten. It is useless to tell you that I deplore it seriously, that the contract with you regarding your return must be fulfilled, and that in that, and in everything else I will help you cordially."

> *Me ha dejado sorprendido su resolución definitiva. Yo esperaba que fuese olvidado el propósito de partir que ya me había comunicado. Inútil es decirle que lo siento de veras; que el contrato con usted respecto a su vuelta se cumplirá, y que en eso y en todo lo demás le he de ayudar cordialmente.* [312]

The academy had its last important moment with Fabrés and his naturalism, a moment of some value, thanks to the rigorous discipline he introduced, which helped in the training of young artists. Leandro Izaguirre and Germán Gedovius succeeded Fabrés.

Orozco's ironical commentary: "it was no longer fashionable to go to Paris 'to be blessed', but to Rome where they copied from the marble the same figures that they had copied here from plaster-casts."

> *Los sucesores de Fabrés fueron don Leandro Izaguirre y don Germán Gedovius. El primero era el autor del cuadro tan conocido del "Suplicio de Cuauhtémoc", de la misma generación del pintor Mateo Herrera, cuando eran los grandes temas históricos los asuntos de las telas y no estaba todavía de moda irse a "consagrar" a París, sino a Roma, en donde copiaban de los mármoles las mismas figuras que habían copiado aquí del yeso.* [313]

Landscape and Genre Subjects

Simultaneously with the development of academic art as the dominant form, another related form developed, sponsored by the small provincial bourgeoisie. The Mexican artist Hermenegildo Bustos, like other painters who lived in the provinces, painted portraits and other themes that seemed to capture the very essence of their provincial subjects.

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[311] Ibid, pp. 14-15.
[312] Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 143.
[313] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 25.

Landscape painting flourished in Mexico during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the result of a combination of factors. In the beginning, artists from Spain and other European countries were attracted by the exotic Mexican scenery. Then, the interest of the academies revealed the landscape's potential for symbolic expression. Finally, the patriotic feelings brought on by independence turned the painters' attention to their home country.

In 1834, the English painter Daniel Thomas Egerton visited Mexico. He was one of the first foreign visitors to really appreciate the exuberance of the Mexican landscape. Fascinated by the country's landscapes, he drew and painted views of various parts of the country. Upon his return to England, he printed beautiful colored lithographs, which, accompanied by brief texts, were published in a collection entitled *Vistas de México por Egerton* (1840).

Other foreign painters such as Friedrich Waldeck, Lord Kingsborough, and Eugenio Landesi were also impressed with the beauty of the Mexican landscape. The Italian painter, Eugenio Landesio, worked with many young artists, including José Jiménez, Salvador Murillo, and José María Velasco, who devoted themselves fervently to painting Mexican landscapes.

José María Velasco

Figure 35. José María Velasco: Valley of Mexico from the Mount of Saint Isabel. [314]



Mexican art found its best expression in a style of landscape painting which was imbued with a sense of history. A prime example is the work of José María Velasco. Velasco's many views of the Valley of Mexico with its twin volcanoes Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl combined wide panoramas with classical structure (see **Figure 35**). Certainly one of the great masters of landscape painting, Velasco is perhaps the greatest Mexican artist of the nineteenth century. He assimilated the teachings of Eugenio Landesio but soon showed his own personality. Two years after entering the Academy, he was awarded a bursary, and in 1868, he became a teacher in perspective.

Velasco painted his most important landscape in 1877. A monumental picture entitled *México*, it shows the Valley of Mexico as seen from the hills north of Mexico City. It is not only a landscape, but also an allegory, full of symbolic and legendary elements, such as the foundation of Tenochtitlán, the cactus and the eagle, Mexico City, the lake of Texcoco, and the volcanoes Popocatépetl and Lztaccíhuatl. It is a monumental and symbolic landscape created with great sensitivity.

Velasco was one of the few Mexican artists whose themes and techniques found widespread acceptance. The critics praised his skill in expressing the history of Mexico without appealing to the idealisms that falsified Mexico's reality. In landscape painting, he could be modern and original at the same time.

As he also tried to do with other painters, Rivera tried to establish links between his own work and that of Velasco. He refers to Velasco as "my teacher Velasco, outstanding landscape painter and a great erudite":

[314] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.mamfa.com/artworks/Velasco/jmv_valle.jpg

[...] mi maestro Velasco, paisajista destacado y gran erudito [315]

Surprisingly, although Rivera had often rebelled against academic painting, he always maintained that his three teachers were not sufficiently recognized in Mexico: "If Rebull had been born in France and not in this Mexico that ignores itself, he would have had a room of his own in the Louvre. The same goes for José María Velasco, a magnificent landscape painter, the discoverer of a new universe in the plastic world, a man who reinvented and re-created the valley of Mexico. Velasco would have for himself, if he were French, not a single room of the Louvre, but a museum for him alone. And Félix Parra, the discreet and profound teacher, who presides over the cult of ancient American art, an extremely original composer of muted tones, a manufacturer of secret beauty which nobody in Mexico understood – nor does anyone today know where to find [such beauty]":

> *Si Rebull hubiera nacido en Francia y no en este México que se desconoce a sí mismo, tendría para él una sala en el Louvre, así como el inmenso paisajista José María Velasco, descubridor de un universo nuevo en el mundo plástico, que reinventó y creó otra vez el valle de México. Velasco tendría para sí, de ser francés de la civilizada Francia, no una sala del Louvre, sino un museo para él solo. Y Félix Parra, el maestro discreto y profundo, mantenedor del culto al arte antiguo americano, originalísimo compositor en tonos en sordina, constructor de belleza secreta, que nadie entendió en México ni sabe hoy en dónde está.* [316]

For Rivera, "Velasco's work is bigger than a mural and a pyramid, it is a poem of color with verses that are mountains":

> *La obra de Velasco es más grande que un mural y una pirámide, es un poema del color con estrofas que son montañas* [317]

Rivera often censures academic art for being bourgeois; however, he praises the artists who were his teachers, including José María Velasco, "a great painter of landscapes, a man who adores nature and who has done a lot for art."

> *Durante el siglo XIX, antes del movimiento de hoy día, que promete cientos de interesantes artistas, usted encontrará, además de los artistas anónimos y oficiales, tres nombres de valor. El primero es José María Velasco, un gran paisajista, un hombre que adora la naturaleza y que ha hecho mucho por el arte.* [318]

Charlot writes that Félix Parra "presented Cortez as a ruffian" in the 1870s, which is interesting; Rivera would on many occasions portray Cortés in controversial ways, as we will see later on:

> *In the 1870s Félix Parra, later praised by Rivera as "upholder of the cult of ancient American art," presented Cortez as a ruffian, his spurred boot on the carcass of a dead Indian. The widow and child looked with horror at the armored cad. In his desire to win*

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[315] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 122.
[316] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 264-265.
[317] Rivera, Diego, "Boletín del Seminario Mexicano de Cultura", t-l, nr. 2. Mexico, October 1943. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 299.
[318] Rivera, Diego, "Genius of America", *Committee of Cultural Relations with Latin America*, New York 1931, pp. 88-94. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 152-153.

the spectator to the underdog, the artist transformed the female into one of the Roman peasant models, kerchief included, popular at the time in Italian academies. [319]

Modernism

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, modernist tendencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including impressionism, post-impressionism, symbolism, and art nouveau, were introduced into Mexico, mainly as a reaction against Romanticism. Modernism developed simultaneously in many parts of America as similar publications arose with similar aims and ideals. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the modernists formed an elite movement, which broadened out and remained influential for several decades.

Modernism arose as a protest against the excesses and deformations of decadent Romanticism at the end of the nineteenth century. The modernist authors were inspired by previous artists, in particular the Parnassians, who had used exotic themes, and by French symbolism. They emphasized the role of the imagination – expressed in literary and artistic symbols – in the creation of a genuinely American artistic expression.

The modernist movement reflected a new world, and the societies transformed by the social and industrial revolutions brought forth a literary and artistic *Revolution* characterized by the longing for freedom, renewal, originality, and freedom of expression.

One of the most important figures at this time was Félix Rubén García Sarmiento, a Nicaraguan poet, journalist, and diplomat, who used the pseudonym Rubén Darío. In the early 1890s, he established a Spanish-American literary movement known as *Modernismo* (Modernism); he inaugurated Modernism in Latin America with the publication of *Azul* (Blue), a collection of his poetry, in Buenos Aires in 1888.

Keen:

In the last decades of the century, Latin American poets, reacting against the outworn forms and ideals of Romanticism, created the literary movement called Modernismo. Drawing on a variety of foreign sources, the Modernistas succeeded in forging a new, ornate poetry and prose, "entirely new, new in form and vocabulary and subject matter and feeling."

One of the movement's founders was the prodigiously gifted Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. If in the first escapist phase of his poetic career Darío peopled his verses with "satyrs, nymphs, centaurs, peacocks, and swans," in its second phase he gave voice to a virile public poetry that reflected a new concern with political and social themes. [320]

In 1894, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, a Mexican poet and prose writer known for an elegant and melancholic style of writing that marked the transition between Romanticism and Modernism, had already founded the *Revista Azul*, a literary review which promoted Modernism in Mexico and in other Hispanic American countries.

The Uruguayan philosopher, educator, and essayist José Enrique Rodó had a vision of American unity, which became a recurrent theme in his work. The publication of his best-known work, *Ariel,* was an important step in the construction of a modern and independent Hispano-American consciousness. *Ariel,* which brought Rodó international recognition, was published in Uruguay in 1900, immediately after the defeat of Spain by the United States. It warned against the materialism of the world and called for spirituality

[319] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 8.
[320] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 458.

and morality. Alarmed by the materialistic decadence of the United States, Rodó wrote a heartfelt apologia for democratic Latin American idealism. [321]

La Revista Moderna (1898-1911) made the transition from late German Romanticism and French symbolism to Modernism. *La Revista Moderna* defined several currents, conflicts, and problems of the aesthetics of the century. Many of the best poets, writers, thinkers, and artists of the time wrote for the journal. The aesthetics of *La Revista Moderna* had a universalistic feeling, but it sought at the same time to express something specifically Mexican.

Important internal changes within the seemingly monolithic body of Porfirian culture began in 1906. In January of 1906, Alfonso Cravioto and Luis Castillo Ledón published *Savia Moderna,* which followed in the footsteps of *La Revista Moderna.* An exhibition in that same year presented young painters such as Ponce de León, Francisco de la Torre, and Dr. Atl, who introduced impressionism into Mexico on his return from Europe. Even Diego Rivera made some illustrations for the magazine.

The twentieth century favored the development of nationalist feelings. The influence and preponderance of French art at the end of the nineteenth century and the dominance of certain international avant-garde currents in the field of the arts led a large number of creative people to reject foreign ideas in favor of their own expression. Modernism led many to become conscious of their own times and of Mexican realities.

Julio Ruelas

The first fruit of Modernism in Mexico at the end of the century was the work of Julio Ruelas, an illustrator for *La Revista Moderna,* whose style influenced the publication's content and reflected a desire for moving introspection and fine sensibility; his work marked the break with positivism.

Painters associated with the modernist movement in Mexico included Saturnino Herrán, the romantic Germán Gedovius, the impressionist Joaquín Clausell, who was adept at pointillism, and Francisco Roman Guillemin, who tried to find and to capture the national soul. Opposed to objective materialism and academic idealism, the artists tried to paint the world of subjectivity, mysticism, and metaphysics. They were also attracted by the new artistic values emanating from the "art for art's sake" doctrine which was so influential in Europe at the time.

The *Mexican Revolution* precipitated a rediscovery and appreciation of the local ideal. To the artists who preferred the pre-Hispanic legacy to the colonial past, figures such as the man-god, representative of the noblest and highest spiritualism in Mexico before Columbus, offered in its diverse conceptions a rich and attractive source of inspiration. On the other hand the *Revolution* left deep wounds in Mexican society, revealing to all a devastated country without consciousness of the past and without future perspectives. There was an air of schizophrenia combined with cultural and artistic inadequacy.

The beginnings of a modern theory of culture within a framework of deeper reflection appeared amongst the group of Mexican intellectuals which also included José Vasconcelos. The group recognized the need to implement a project of national culture different from the one founded on materialism. By 1909, the association had become the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, and, by 1911, it had evolved into the *Ateneo de México,* with Vasconcelos as its president.

Artistic production, and particularly the early sketches for murals, should be seen in the light of the project of cultural renewal presented by the Athenians. I will now analyze artists and projects that preceded Mexican muralism: for example, Herrán, Enciso, and Dr. Atl, and the activities of the open-air schools.

[321] The Mexican edition was dated 1908.

Saturnino Herrán

An artist who was more or less isolated, the Mexican painter Saturnino Herrán, chose the old and now reinvigorated ideal of Mexican painting. His aim was to represent national aspirations and character, and believed that Mexico should distinguish itself and understand itself as different from Europe; the Mexican ideal would have its own character rather than being a reflection of the Old World. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the success of Modernism meant a renewal of man's spiritual capacities. According to this new spirit, a socially committed art was a vehicle to change consciousness and to re-evaluate the present. Art revised the history of the country. Saturnino Herrán was inspired by history, without denying any of its episodes. Herrán responded to this renovating spirit, integrating technique, form, and content in his painting. Between the years of 1911 and 1918, the year of his premature death, Saturnino Herrán introduced national topics far removed from the superficiality and folklore with which national culture had been treated up until then.

In September 1910, the hugely successful Centennial Exhibition opened in Mexico City. Among others, Saturnino Herrán, Germán Gedovius, Jorge Enciso, Romano Guillemín, José Clemente Orozco, Gonzalo Argüelles Bringas, Joaquín Clausell (who had begun a kind of a local impressionism, completely unlike the French original) and Dr. Atl showed works at the Exhibition.

David Alfaro Siqueiros: "In 1908-10, the first exhibitions were held showing works with a nationalist thematic. Francisco de la Torre, Saturnino Herrán, etc., were the first artists [to paint in this style]. It seems that the populist impulse or *popularista*, folklorist in essence, precedes all important art movements":

> *En 1908-10, se produjeron las primeras manifestaciones pictóricas con temática nacionalista. Francisco de la Torre, Saturnino Herrán, etc., son sus primeros autores. Parece ser que el impulso populista o popularista, folklorista en esencia, es el que precede a todos los importantes movimientos de arte.* [322]

Herrán wanted to express a new point of view in this new century in which the world and its peoples demanded change. The new painting aimed at ennobling the Mexicans and dignifying the Mexican beauty of the Indians, *mestizos*, and Creoles. He painted them as heroes, venerable gods, and beautiful princesses.

Saturnino Herrán was born in 1887 in Aguascalientes, where he made his first studies and discovered his vocation. At the age of fourteen, he moved with his family to Mexico City and entered the School of Fine Arts in 1904. He attended the painting classes of Antonio Fabrés. His fellow pupils were Roberto Montenegro and Diego Rivera.

Orozco says about him, "Among Fabrés' favorite pupils, Saturnino Herrán must be mentioned, a true promise for Mexican painting, who would have been a remarkable artist in today's Mexico":

> *Entre los discípulos predilectos del maestro Fabrés, hay que mencionar a Saturnino Herrán, una verdadera promesa para la pintura Mexicana y que hubiera llegado a ser un artista notable en el México de hoy.* [323]

At the Academy, Herrán received a classic artistic education. Besides Fabrés, Herrán was taught by Gedovius and Izaguirre. From Fabrés, Herrán learned about the use of photographs in painting and became familiar with movements that were influencing modern European art such as *japanism* and *art nouveau*. Another painter who influenced Herrán was Ignacio Zuloaga. Saturnino Herrán died very young, when he was only 31. But in his short lifetime, the painter created in his images a unique combination of classicism, Modernism, and *Mexicanism*. It is important to point out that he never traveled to Europe, like many artists of his time did, and did not have the same opportunities to enrich his work with new ways of seeing the

[322] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Cómo se pinta un mural*, Ediciones Mexicanas, Mexico 1951, p. 22.
[323] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 14.

world and art. Rather, he sensed the new air of his time. Herrán is mainly known for his interpretation of the Mexican soul. He sought to incorporate the soul of the nation in his modernist paintings, using subjective, symbolic, metaphoric, and allegorical techniques and national elements. He often painted *mestizo* topics. Herrán transformed everything into his own personal and Mexican language, where the sensibility, the topics, the types, the costumes and the customs were exclusively Mexican. Herrán knew how to renew painting, to move away from academism and romantic, false, and exotic topics such as the musketeers and bacchanals. He found an expressive form, appropriate to his own themes, which not only expressed the new strivings in painting in general, but also of the Mexican in particular.

Figure 36. Saturnino Herrán: *Nuestros Dioses* (Our Gods). Sketch for an ornamental frieze at the National Theater.



Saturnino Herrán was synthetic in his forms and historicist in his choice of styles and topics. For the first time, the lives, customs, and beauty of the Mexican people, including the Indians, the Creoles, and the *mestizos*, found their place in a concept of art that could express them freely without appealing to extraneous ideals of classic beauty. He painted Mexicans, both the indigenous types and the Creoles, as they were and not as Greeks or Romans. With Herrán, Mexican painting acquired a greater legitimacy, and shed its false appearances. The true character and reality of Mexican life could finally be expressed in synthetic forms. Mural painting had its first serious 'rehearsal', and Mexican history was synthesized in the project for a frieze in Mexico City called *Nuestros Dioses* (*Our Gods*).

In 1914, the director of the Academy of San Carlos organized a competition among his pupils. They were to submit sketches for an ornamental frieze at the National Theater (then in construction, today the Palace of Fine Arts) in Mexico City. The intention was to decorate the walls of the theater with some "panneaux decoratifs". Herrán employed typically Mexican symbolism to create a rough sketch, that gradually developed into the most important work he ever did. In this mural project, *Nuestros Dioses* (*Our Gods)*, the indigenous Mexicans, painted in noble attitudes, serve as powerful symbols of Mexican identity. Herrán's mural project is seen by some as the starting point for many of the large-scale public murals that were commissioned in the 1920s. Herrán's sketch is shown in **Figure 36**. [324]

For Antonio Rodríguez the sketch shows "that Mexicans are the result of the fusion of two cultures and races, the *Nahuatl* and the Spanish":

> *More interesting, perhaps, than the sketches themselves, which Herrán enlarged into regular pictures with figures larger than life, are the theme and concept of the mural. The fresco, intended for a frieze, is called Our gods and shows Christ and the Aztec gods intimately blended in a monolithic block representing Coatlícue, the Aztec goddess of earth, life and death. The idea, that Mexicans are the result of the fusion of two cultures and races, the Nahuatl and the Spanish, had often been expressed in literature of the nineteenth century. After 1922 this idea inspired various murals, especially that painted by Tamayo in 1952-3 for the same building, now the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Herrán's achievement lies in having been the first to formulate an idea which was later developed by different painters, Orozco, Rivera, Camarena, Chávez Morado and others, and to comprehend the significance of the themes of pre-conquest sculpture (figures of gods,*

[324] Retrieved 2003-09-07 from http://www.laberintos.com.mx/herran/Coatlicue.jpg

calendar stones etc.); he was also the first to appreciate the importance of the statue of the goddess Coatlícue which is considered today the masterpiece of Aztec sculpture. [325]

The center of the triptych shows a synthesis of the pre-Hispanic deity Coatlicue with a crucifixion. The idea of this coalition of races is quite close to that of Vasconcelos, as will become evident in the following chapter. For Raquel Tibol, "Its unquestionable value lies in having ended up creating one of the best metaphors for miscegenation: Christ crucified in the body of Coatlicue":

Su valor indiscutible se finca en haber llegado a crear una de las mejores metáforas referidas al mestizaje: el Cristo crucificado en el cuerpo de la Coatlicue. [326]

Fernández sees Justino Herrán as "sincere in a way few people are: free of racial and even social prejudices. For Saturnino Herrán the interpretation and aesthetic expression of Mexican life was guided by a wide and deep understanding of the Mexican, not to the negation of some of its parts, as one tends to find in the tradition of the nineteenth century; he accepts the Mexican complexity as fully historical, what interested him was the vital life, the cultural, human miscegenation that we are, as a result of a remote indigenous past":

Sincero como pocos, libre de prejuicios raciales y aun sociales, para Saturnino Herrán la interpretación y expresión estética de la vida Mexicana iba encaminada hacia la comprensión amplia y profunda del ser Mexicano, no a la negación de alguna de sus partes, como había sido en general la tradición del siglo XIX; así pues, aceptando plenamente el complejo Mexicano ser histórico, lo que le interesó fue lo vivo, el mestizaje cultural, humano, que somos, como resultado de un pasado indígena remoto, [327]

And he continues: "The superb Aztec sculpture, Coatlicue, at the center of the frieze [...] has the figure of Christ superimposed on it, and the combination of the two could not be more original nor more grandiose. Our gods, Coatlicue and Christ, as symbols of our being; the rest is the two worlds, the two roots, the indigenous and the Spaniard":

La soberbia escultura Azteca, Coatlicue, al centro del friso [...] tiene incrustado sobre sí a Cristo y la combinación no puede ser más original ni más grandiosa. Nuestros dioses, Coatlicue y Cristo, como símbolos de nuestro ser; lo demás son los dos mundos, las dos raíces, la indígena y la española [328]

For Manuel Toussaint, who dedicated an enthusiastic critical monograph to Herrán, "Herrán is never an archaeologist! His Indians are works of art, not erudition":

[...] ¡Herrán no hace nunca arqueología! Sus indios son obra de arte, no erudición [329]

For Charlot:

Herrán's version of a Mexico mulling over its legendary past, its vitality snuffed out under a silt of decayed gentility, met naturally with but little sympathy from the muralists, whose

[325] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 152
[326] Tibol, Raquel. Quoted in *Artes Plásticas*, Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. 2, nr. 6, December 1987, p. 29.
[327] Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 156.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Toussaint, Manuel, *Saturnino Herrán y su obra*, Ediciones México Moderno, Mexico 1920, pp. 30-31. Quoted in Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 157.

own version of the scene rated arsenic over old lace. But in the short-lived apotheosis that followed his untimely death, Herrán made Mexicans proud of the potentialities of a national school of painting. [330]

And he continues:

When he died, Herrán became a symbol of Mexicanism and was hailed as "the Mexican who was most a painter and the painter who was most Mexican." [331]

Benjamin Keen refers to "a masterful synthesis":

Indian arts inevitably acquired a political and even Revolutionary significance. To insist on the greatness of the old Indian arts was one way of asserting the value of one's own, one way of revolting against the tyranny of the pallid, lifeless French and Spanish academism over Mexican art during the last decades of the Porfiriato. Thus the Revolution that overthrew Díaz inevitably generated an artistic upheaval, one of whose main tenets was the immense worth of the Indian cultural heritage that the arbiters of artistic taste under the Porfiriato had regarded with scorn. It was fitting that perhaps the first great painting to emerge from the Revolution – Saturnino Herrán's moving Nuestros Dioses (1916-1918) – should assign a central place and a complex symbolism to the Coatlicue. Herrán depicted the agony of the Mexican people through a masterful synthesis of the old and the new gods, of Christ and Coatlicue. [332]

In *Our Gods*, Coatlicue was superimposed on a figure of Christ. Herrán summarized his (and Vasconcelos's) intention, and somehow presaged what would come later. I believe that this syncretic philosophy, this synthesis, constituted the base of Vasconcelos's future mural program. With *Our Gods* Herrán demonstrated that he was a *Mexicanist* and that he accepted miscegenation as the only way to understand secular traumas. At the same time, he tried to end Mexico's cultural and artistic stagnation.

The *Porfiriato* had established a national culture based on an *indigenismo*, conceived of as a regressive utopia, but the members of the *Athenaeum* substituted an interest in Hispanic topics which also incorporated indigenous history.

Saturnino Herrán best exemplified the philosophy of the Athenaeum. He had an opportunity to go to Europe, but family ties impeded him, and he did not go. Referring to the painters who visited Europe, Herrán says, "I never understood why the Mexicans will paint cocotas in Paris, villagers in Britain, sleepy rivers in Brujas, or lonely plains in Mancha [...] yo nunca he entendido por qué los Mexicanos van a pintar cocotas a París, aldeanas a Bretaña, canales dormidos a Brujas o desoladas llanuras a la Mancha [...] ¡He aquí la salvación! [333]

Herrán was one of the few painters who were members of the *Athenaeum*. The others were Angel Zárraga, Jorge Enciso, Francisco de la Torre, and Diego Rivera. Herrán was the link which united ideologically committed painting with the political fight and the zeal of the *Athenaeum*.

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[330] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 59.
[331] Ibid, p. 60.
[332] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 514.
[333] González Pena, Carlos, "Nuestros pintores". Interview with Saturnino Herrán, *Vida Modern*a, October 6 1915. Quoted in Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 312.

For Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, "Herrán was the painter of the Indian, the Creole, and the *mestizo* and produced the sort of eloquent synthesis advocated by the *Athenaeum*. His concept was to recover the mythical world of 'Our pre-Hispanic Gods,' using the archetypal ideals of classic Greece. Based on an already mannerist academic drawing, he carved a frieze emphasizing the languid beauty of the indigenous bodies in an ornamental and exuberant design. The figures bore little resemblance to those who fought beside Villa and Zapata":

> *Herrán fue el pintor del indio, el criollo y el mestizo que en elocuente síntesis ateneísta recobró el mundo mítico de "Nuestros Dioses prehispánicos", con el ideal de la Grecia clásica como arquetipo. Con un dibujo académico, ya manierista, recorta en ese friso la belleza lánguida de los cuerpos indígenas, en un afán decorativo y exuberante, en donde los personajes nada tienen que ver con esos que luchaban al lado de Villa y Zapata.* [334]

For Azuela de la Cueva, *Nuestros Dioses* "is the first work of art to express the idea of miscegenation in plastic terms. This idea, first adopted by the Arielistas, the members of the *Athenaeum*, and later by José Vasconcelos appears first in de la Cueva's sketch, which was the forerunner of similar representations in numerous mural works by artists like José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and Rufino Tamayo":

> *Para 1914-1915 Saturnino Herrán realiza el boceto del mural "Nuestros Dioses", proyecto que concurse en la convocatoria de la Academia de San Carlos, para la realización de un mural que debía ser colocado en el Teatro Nacional de México. Este boceto tiene gran calidad artística y trasciende tanto por ser la primera en expresar plásticamente la idea del mestizaje, tratada por los Arielistas, los miembros del Ateneo, y más tarde por José Vasconcelos, como estará representada dentro de la obra mural de numerosas ocasiones por artistas como José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera y Rufino Tamayo.* [335]

Herrán also made a sketch for a painting of Bolivar (1918), but it was not executed on the grand scale that the contest for which it was intended would have required. Later, the figure of Bolivar would be taken up by Vasconcelos, when he commissioned Montenegro to paint Bolívar, the liberator of America, in *San Pedro y San Pablo*. *Nuestros Dioses* expressed the *vasconcelist* intention of a cultural syncretism which included Christian references. Herrán combined classic mythology with *Mexicanism*. As he died in 1918, Herrán did not participate in the muralist program organized by Vasconcelos.

Jorge Enciso

Jorge Enciso was another painter who was a member of the *Athenaeum*. Unlike Diego Rivera, who was in Europe from 1907 to 1921, Enciso began some works of mural painting as early as 1910.

In 1910-1911 Jorge Enciso carried out a commission for Justo Sierra, the Minister of Public Instruction. Encisco decorated the *Gertrudis of Armendáriz* and *Vasco de Quiroga* schools in the *Colonia de la Bolsa*, Mexico, D. F., with Mexican topics. This was the first muralist work of its type in the twentieth century.

For Jean Charlot:

> *Enciso also painted the first twentieth-century murals with AmerIndian content. Painted directly on the walls of two schools, one for boys and one for girls, in the not so*

[334] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 313.
[335] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 38.

> *aristocratic Colonia de la Bolsa, they were begun in December of 1910 and finished on May 16, 1911. They were destroyed when the buildings were renovated.* [336]

And, concerning the question of who had been the first to paint murals in Mexico in modern times, Charlot says:

> *The claim could be shrugged off by Jorge Enciso, whose two friezes on Mexican themes date from a decade earlier, but it is true that his were an isolated effort, soon destroyed and forgotten, while the commission given to Montenegro ushers in the unbroken cycle of government-sponsored mural painting that is still part of our present after forty years.* [337]

And he continues:

> *Montenegro and Rivera returned to Europe, missing most of the Revolution. While Diego, become a cubist, brewed alchemies of the fourth dimension in Paris, Roberto deftly mixed plastic cocktails, Bakst-colored and spiked with a dash of Aubrey Beardsley. Henri de Régnier found his pen-and-ink drawings a match for his own sophisticated poems. In the casino of Palma de Mallorca in 1919 Montenegro painted a mural, his first.* [338]

Xavier Guerrero

Xavier Guerrero, whom we will discuss later, was also one of the first to paint murals in Mexico in modern times. In 1910, when he was an unknown young painter, Xavier Guerrero was entrusted with the mural decoration of the *Palacio de las Vacas*, a large Mudejar style house that served as a stable in San Felipe's Street, Guadalajara. His work, carried out in oil, included all the rooms, walls, roofs, corridors and stairways and covered an area of about 300 m2. Guerrero painted country scenes, biblical topics, still-life pictures, romantic scenes, allegories, borders, and landscapes.

Gerardo Murillo, or Dr. Atl

Dr. Atl, who was born Gerardo Murillo, is frequently associated with Mexican Mural Art. Many believe that he was the first to introduce the idea of a program of mural painting for Mexico. He traveled to Italy in 1896 and stayed in Europe until his return to Mexico in 1903.

In Mexico, Dr. Atl organized a demonstration with the support of numerous students. Enthusiastic about impressionism and the techniques of divisionism, Dr. Atl spoke to the students about new painters such as Sorolla, Zuluaga, Whistler, Carriera, and Regantoni.

After traveling again to Europe, Atl returned in 1904. Enchanted by Renaissance painting, he described it as a model to follow for those who wanted to create a national art with a public purpose. He was very influential in the search for a genuinely national expression.

Much of the information accepted today about Dr. Atl is based on the testimonies of Orozco, which, as we have seen, were not trustworthy and tended to distort the events with a reductive vision. According to Orozco, "Atl spoke to us with a lot of fire about the Sistine Chapel and Leonardo. The big mural paintings! The immense frescos of the Renaissance":

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[336] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 58.
[337] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 99.
[338] Ibid, p. 61.

Poco después encontré a Atl en la Academia; tenía ahí un estudio y asistía con nosotros a los talleres de pintura y de dibujo nocturno; mientras trabajábamos, él nos contaba con su palabra fácil, insinuante y entusiasta, sus correrías por Europa y su vida en Roma; nos hablaba con mucho fuego de la Capilla Sixtina y de Leonardo. ¡Las grandes pinturas murales! ¡Los inmensos frescos renacentistas, algo increíble y tan misterioso como las pirámides faraónicas, y cuya técnica se había perdido por cuatrocientos años! [339]

Prior to the *Revolution*, Mexican national culture had frequently been dismissed as worthless and held in scorn when compared to anything that came from abroad. According to Dr. Atl, the *Revolution* came to amend this situation. Dr. Atl believed that "a vigorous rebirth is taking place, understood and stimulated by the public and the current government":

[…] *un vigoroso renacimiento se inicia, comprendido y estimulado por el público y por los hombres del gobierno actual.* [340]

According to Siqueiros: "Up to 1904, or 1906, the first fertile babblings appeared. Dr. Atl, upon his return from Europe, began a campaign of proselytism, even without concrete theoretical formulations, in favor of mural painting and the 'Mexicanization of art'":

Hasta 1904, o 1906, aparecieron los primeros balbuceos fecundos. El Dr. Atl, a su regreso de Europa, inició una campaña de proselitismo, aun sin formulaciones teóricas concretas, en favor de la pintura mural y de la "Mexicanización del arte". [341]

For Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "The idea of mural painting had been germinating with the return of Atl in 1904, the idea of a revolutionary work was possibly born toward 1911, with the strike at the Academy of Fine Arts, and, above all, as a consequence of the Revolution":

[…] *si la idea de la pintura mural había ido germinando con la vuelta de Atl en 1904, la idea de una obra revolucionaria nació posiblemente hacia 1911, con la huelga de la Academia de Bellas Artes, y sobre todo, como consecuencia de la Revolución.* [342]

Gerardo Murillo changed his name to Atl. In a letter to his mother dated December 4, 1911, Gerardo Murillo informs her of "my new address and my new name: Atl [...] that means water in *náhuatl*":

[...] mi nueva dirección y mi nuevo nombre: Atl [...] que quiere decir agua en náhuatl [343]

Soon after, the Argentinean poet Leopoldo Lugones added the doctor's title to the name. From that moment, all the works and documents signed by the painter appeared under this alias.

Together with Ramos Martínez, Dr. Atl introduced impressionism to Mexico, which marked the end of the academicism that had dominated national painting at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Charlot's account leaves no room for doubt:

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[339] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 19.
[340] Doctor Atl, "La importancia y los fines del Congreso de Escritores y Artistas", *El Heraldo*, May 16 1923. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 531.
[341] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Cómo se pinta un mural*, Ediciones Mexicanas, Mexico 1951, p. 22,
[342] Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, *México: pintura de hoy*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1964, pp. 26-27.
[343] Letter from Gerardo Murillo to his mother. Family archive of Griselda Luna. Quoted in *Dr. Atl, Conciencia y paisaje*, UNAM, Dirección General de Difusión de Arte, Mexico 1985, p. 103.

> *Dr. Atl had absorbed art in France, Spain, Italy, and it would seem even in China, while Rivera was still in pink socks and knee pants, and Orozco a budding agricultural expert.* [344]

In 1910, a series of commemorative cultural events including an "Exhibition of Spanish Painting" was organized to mark the Centennial of Independence. Although the government spent large amounts of money to celebrate Independence, Mexican painters were not even invited to participate in some of the activities. This omission awakened dissent among the Mexican artists and increased the dissatisfaction that they already felt at being expected to set aside their own values in favor of European ones.

Orozco expresses the artists' indignation: "But then we protest to the Secretary of Instruction: the Spanish exhibition was perfect, but why would they not give anything to us, Mexicans, whose independence was in fact, being celebrated?":

> *Pero entonces nosotros protestamos ante la Secretaría de Instrucción: la exposición española estaba perfectamente, pero ¿qué no se nos daría nada a nosotros, Mexicanos, cuya independencia era precisamente lo que se celebraba?* [345]

Headed by Dr. Atl in 1910, the *Sociedad Mexicana de Pintores* sent a protest document to the Director of the Academy. Atl requested permission to use the classrooms of the first year students, the exhibition rooms, and the corridor of the second floor to show an exhibition that the Society arranged to commemorate the Centennial. Dr. Atl obtained permission from the Director, and he also negotiated financial support for the exhibition. He received a contribution of 300 pesos from Justo Sierra. By agreement with the SIPA, Dr. Atl was the organizer, and Joaquín Clausell was treasurer. The poster for the exhibition was one of Dr. Atl's lithographs. The exhibition, which opened in September 1910, was a great success.

Dr. Atl and his colleagues then proposed the creation of an artistic center, with the purpose of obtaining the government's authorization to paint the walls of public buildings. It is usually said that they obtained the authorization to carry out their project in the Amphitheatre of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*.

Orozco's testimony on this subject has not been supported by other documents, which might have confirmed his account. [346] But the words of Orozco have been often repeated in numerous works on Mexican muralism: "The adventure didn't stop there. Delighted by this success, we accepted Doctor Atl's proposal to organize an association that we immediately baptized "The Artistic Center," and whose sole purpose was to obtain walls of public buildings from the Government to paint murals on. We began to make preparations for painting murals in the following November. On the 20th, the Revolution exploded. There was panic, and our projects were ruined or postponed":

> *La aventura no paró allí. Entusiasmados por el éxito, aceptamos una proposición del Doctor Atl: organizar inmediatamente una sociedad que bautizamos con el nombre de "Centro Artístico", y cuyo objeto exclusivo era conseguir del Gobierno, muros, en los edificios públicos, para pintar. ¡Al fin se realizaría nuestra ambición suprema! Tomamos en arrendamiento un local en el segundo piso de una casa en la calle de Monte de Piedad, y la inauguración fué celebrada ruidosamente con unos maravillosos macarrones a la Italiana cocinados por el Doctor Atl en latas vacías de petróleo, y ríos de cerveza cedidos*

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[344] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 47.
[345] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 30.
[346] The version of Orozco is used by many as a source for the reconstruction of that period. His testimony reinforces the idea of the "mesa puesta" (see note 197) according to which everything was prepared for the beginning of mural painting in Mexico in 1910, except that in the meantime the Revolution destroyed the plans. I don't intend here to doubt the truthfulness of Orozco's words. More important for me is the perception that such a version, as told by Orozco more than thirty years later, is invariably used to minimize the importance of Vasconcelos's role in this context, depreciating the program initiated by him.

por una cervecería a cambio de unos carteles de anuncio. Pedimos a la Secretaría de Instrucción el anfiteatro de la Preparatoria, recién construido, para decorar los muros. Nos fué concedido; nos repartimos los tableros y levantamos andamios. La gran exposición de pintura Mexicana había tenido lugar en septiembre de 1910. Empezamos a hacer preparativos para la pintura mural en noviembre siguiente. El día 20 estallaba la Revolución. Había pánico, y nuestros proyectos quedaron arruinados o pospuestos. [347]

Despite his theories, Dr. Atl did not seem to have had the right disposition for this type of painting. He specialized in landscapes and portraits, especially landscapes, and neither style is favorable for mural decoration. Known for his controversial, polemical, and overpowering personality, as well as for his fights against academicism and his strong belief in his new post-impressionist pictorial proposals, Dr. Atl is one of the central characters of the first decade of the century. His vision of a public art could not be carried out during a period of armed struggle, but he left the scaffolds in place so that, at the end of the war, the painters could ascend them.

For Cardoza y Aragón, "Atl's personality, despite his fascism, is much greater than his painting":

La acción del Doctor Atl es importante en esos años precursores. Fue el principal creador de la agitación artística: en él se aunaban el hombre de acción y el artista. Orozco − que vivió cerca de él − se apasionó desde entonces por la pintura pública y monumental. La personalidad de Atl, a pesar de su fascismo, es para mí muy superior a su pintura. [348]

Despite Orozco's testimony, Dr. Atl's activity does not seem particularly decisive in respect to Mexican mural painting. His muralist activity also left something lacking. His connections with ideologies of the extreme right does not seem very important, since, like Vasconcelos, his course was more complex than simple ideology. However, Dr. Atl, like Rivera, is considered one of the great mythomaniacs of twentieth-century Mexico. [349]

For Rivera: "Murillo-Atl is one of the most curious characters of American Modernism. He has the most picturesque history of all the painters, impossible to relate without using several volumes":

Murillo-Atl es uno de los personajes más curiosos que han nacido en la modernidad del continente americano. Tiene la historia más pintoresca de todos sus pintores, imposible ensayar de relatarla sin emplear varios tomos. [350]

The Open Air Schools

On July 28, 1911, an event of crucial political importance in relation to the arts happened. The students of San Carlos Academy, partly influenced by Dr. Atl, instigated a strike aimed at depriving the director of the institution, the architect Antonio Rivas Mercado of his post. The conflict arose when Mercado canceled the permission that he had given for the Union of Students to hold meetings in the school's meeting room, because the students had held public meetings in favor of Francisco I. Madero's electoral campaign, and later because the union discussed ideas regarding the improvement of the school's teaching system.

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[347] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 31.
[348] Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, *Pintura contemporánea de México*, Ediciones Era, Serie Mayor, Mexico 1974, p. 158.
[349] We are often warned that Dr. Atl is none too trustworthy. For instance, in my interview with Antonio Rodríguez, in Mexico City on March 14, 1991, I asked him whether Dr. Atl or Rivera was the greater liar (They are both described as liars and mythomaniacs). Rodríguez had known both well, and he said that they were equal in their lies, and it was impossible to say which was the greater liar.
[350] Rivera, Diego, "La increíble historia del doctor Atl", *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 269.

Here is Siqueiros's version of the strike and the demands presented: "We made both pedagogic and political demands: the removal of the old academic director, the architect Antonio Rivas Mercado; the nomination of the "modern painter" Alfredo Ramos Martínez; the abolition of academic methods, the abolition of the copying of plasters, the abolition of academic anatomical studies, the abolition of the subdivision of matters in isolated classes and teachers, the abolition of exams, the introduction of juries to judge isolated works, etc.; the creation of Open Air schools, lodging and free materials for the students. But we also demanded economic independence and put the politics of our country before the interests of foreign powers. We demanded agrarian reform, labor legislation, the nationalization of the railroads and of the underground, etc":

> *Exigimos simultáneamente reivindicaciones pedagógicas y políticas. La separación del viejo director académico, arquitecto Antonio Rivas Mercado; el nombramiento del "pintor moderno" Alfredo Ramos Martínez; la supresión de los métodos académicos, la supresión de la copia del yeso, de la anatomía académica, de la subdivisión de materias en clases y maestros aislados, la supresión de los exámenes a base de jurados de obras aisladas, etcétera; la creación de escuelas al aire libre, el alojamiento y materiales gratuitos para los estudiantes. Pero también la independencia económica y política del país frente a las potencias extranjeras, mediante la reforma agraria, la legislación obrera, la nacionalización de los ferrocarriles y del subsuelo, etcétera.* [351]

In November 1912, Madero assumed the presidency. Zapata broke with Madero and took up arms against him. The Plan of Ayala was signed, with the objective of implementing the terms specified in the San Luis Plan. But, in the opinion of Charlot:

> *The liberal regime of Madero had failed to free the school from its conservative routine. Paradoxically, artistic freedom had to wait until the military dictatorship of Victoriano Huerta, when the painter Ramos Martínez was named director in September 1913. Though somewhat belittled by the historians of the mural movement, Ramos could hardly be overrated as a catalyzer. Once in power, he regularized the work in the open air that the San Carlos students had started accidentally when, locked out of the Academy building, they squatted, sketchbooks in hand, in city parks.* [352]

In the summer of 1913, the strike at the Academy ended, and a new manager, Alfredo Ramos Martínez, a painter recently returned from Europe, was named. He brought enthusiasm for the first European avantgarde which had conquered the *plein air*: impressionism. Ramos Martínez was responsible for the Academy of Fine Arts of San Carlos between September 1913 and the end of 1914. He opened the institution to the outside world and, in particular, to what he believed should be the main source of a painter's inspiration: nature. Discussing the appointment of Ramos Martínez, the press at the time relates, "We have to be proud to have a true Director who will know how to direct us as he directed himself, to end up being men, artists, teachers, and patriots. To uplift national art, that is our destiny":

> *Orgullosos debemos estar de tener un verdadero Director que nos sabrá dirigir como se dirigió él mismo, para llegar a ser hombres, artistas, maestros y patriotas. Levantar el arte nacional, ése es nuestro destino.* [353]

Ramos Martínez established the first Open Air School in Iztapalapa, a district of Santa Anita. The school was successful and soon, thanks to this success, similar ateliers of artistic education were founded. The project consisted of taking the students outside of the classrooms so that they painted *au plein air.* Accordingly, the

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[351] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 94-95.
[352] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 46.
[353] Vera Córdova, Rafael, "Ramos Martínez será un director estimable", *Nueva Era*, Mexico, November 27 1911.

Santa Anita school was baptized Barbizón, although its activities had little to do with the activities of its French namesake. Other schools opened in Xochimilco, Coyoacán, Chimalistac, Churubusco, and Tlalpan.

The new director, in spite of his innovatory intentions, did not suddenly instil the Academy with a revolutionary attitude, as he implied later when he created the Open Air Schools, but rather he introduced European methods to Mexico.

According to Fernando Leal the small colony of painters "settled in a modest house, in the middle of Santa Anita's *chinampas* [...] and, to the admiration of the indigenous population, put a label with the cabalistic name *Barvizón* on the door of the garden that surrounded the house."

> *En una modesta casa, enmedio de las chinampas de Santa Anita, se instaló la pequeña colonia de pintores formada por los principales promotores de la huelga y ante la admiración de los indígenas, se puso en la puerta del jardín que rodeaba la casa, un rótulo con el nombre cabalístico de "Barvizón".* [354]

Charlot:

> *Barbizon lasted no longer than Huerta's grip on the presidential chair. Ramos was ousted before the end of 1914, but not before a phalanx of young painters sickened with academism had started on the way to recovery under his benign influence.* [355]

Ramos Martínez interrupted teaching activities because of the civil war, and the students dispersed to take up other tasks. Many became revolutionaries, others devoted themselves to journalism, and some left the country. Dr. Atl succeeded Ramos Martínez at the Fine Arts Academy, an institution which he soon closed. The Academy was reopened later.

Charlot:

> *Ramos' successor, appointee of First Chief Carranza, was fierce Gerardo Murillo, painter, agitator, and vulcanologist, whose nom de Revolution was Dr. Atl. Never has a school been ruled by a less conventional pedagogue* [356]

In 1920, Vasconcelos became Rector of the University. Ramos Martínez returned and organized a new Open Air School in Chimalistac, later transferred to Hacienda de San Pedro in Coyoacán. Students of all ages and from different parts of the city attended the school. Although in 1932, the heroic phase of muralism had already passed, another school of this nature was opened in Taxco, Guerrero.

Fernando Leal was a pupil of Alfredo Ramos Martínez, and he was involved in the foundation of the Open Air School of Chimalistac. It was transformed the following year when José Vasconcelos took charge of both the University and the National School of Fine Arts. In 1921, Fernando Leal painted an oil painting on canvas, called *Zapatistas at rest.* (The work is also known as *The Encampment of One of Zapata's Colonels* or, according to Rodríguez, *Zapata's Camp)*:

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[354] Leal, Fernando, "El arte y los monstruos. Origen y evolución de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre 1934-1938". Quoted in Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 309.
[355] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 46.
[356] Ibid, p. 47.

Leal had already painted an excellent picture called Zapata's Camp, showing a peasant sitting in an open landscape. [357]

Figure 37. Fernando Leal: *Zapatistas at rest* or *The Encampment of One of Zapata's Colonels* or *Zapata's Camp*. Oil on canvas, 1921.



In the composition (**Figure 37**), [358] the *zapatist*, surrounded by men and women, and bearing the image of the virgin of Guadalupe on his *sombrero*, is playing a harmonica. When Vasconcelos saw the still unfinished picture, he invited Leal to paint the walls of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. Folgarait says:

> *The picture in question is tailor-made to Vasconcelo's needs at this time, a perfect synthesis of authentic Mexican Folk-culture in the vehicle of a European style.* [359]

Vasconcelos's project began to take shape:

> *Desirous of stimulating painting in the grand manner, José Vasconcelos offered to a number of artists, whose names were more in evidence than their work, the task of decorating the Auditorium of the Preparatoria School. For sundry reasons none of them dared face such a problem. The proposition was then broached to painter Diego Rivera, just returned from Europe, who accepted with alacrity.* [360]

According to Fernando Leal, Vasconcelos was forced to put his faith in painters mostly untried and unknown:

> *A few days later, Vasconcelos, on the lookout for fresh contingents, called me to his office – I was only a student at the open air school of Coyoacán – and said:"I want you also to shoulder the task of decorating the Preparatoria. Paint what you like, and in the medium that you deem most suitable. I leave you entire freedom of judgment, because, come tomorrow, I do not want you, the painters, to excuse your own mistakes by advancing the argument that such and such subject matter, such and such technique, were forced upon you."*
>
> *He also asked me to invite in his name those of my comrades that I judged capable of executing a mural decoration, as well as of understanding the transcendency of the new position that opened before us. Of the young painters whom I invited, the only ones bold enough to accept the offer were: Ramón Alva de la Canal, Fermín Revueltas, Emilio García Cahero, and a French student who worked in my studio, called Jean Charlot.* [361]

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[357] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 184.
[358] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 43.
[359] Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 42.
[360] "El '93' de la pintura Mexicana," unpublished manuscript, written around 1934. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 150.
[361] Ibid, pp. 151-152.

This chapter's analysis of the forerunners of the Mexican Muralism Movement shows that the idea that the movement merely continued an ongoing process cannot be sustained. In my understanding, the adventure of Mexican muralism began with the mystical force of Vasconcelos's personality, as I intend to demonstrate in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV. VASCONCELOS AND THE PROJECT OF THE *MEXICAN MURAL MOVEMENT*

José Vasconcelos, who was Rector of the National University of Mexico and later Secretary of Public Education during the first half of the twenties, is one of the most complex, contradictory and fascinating personalities in Ibero-American history and culture. It is impossible to understand the construction of post-revolutionary Mexican society without analyzing the part José Vasconcelos played. Yet few people have shown any interest in the educational and cultural project which José Vasconcelos directed during this period. It is generally acknowledged that it was Vasconcelos who summoned Mexican painters back from Europe and who financed their mural works up to 1924, but for most critics that is the full extent of his role. Hardly anybody has examined the educational and cultural project directed by Vasconcelos, first during the interim presidency of Adolfo de la Huerta, and later within President Álvaro Obregón's cabinet between June 1920 and July 1924. For a period of almost fifty months, Vasconcelos was in a position, first as Rector and later as Minister, to combine theory and praxis – a situation which can be considered exceptional in the Latin-American context. The results of his actions are still visible. My intention is to show how Vasconcelos's concrete decisions as Secretary of Public Education were an expression of his aesthetics; further, to examine his role in the *Mexican Mural Movement* and to investigate the full extent of his political and cultural activity.
The neglect into which Vasconcelos has fallen can be explained by two factors: his virulent criticism of developments in post-revolutionary Mexican politics from the middle of the twenties onwards and his personal conflicts with Diego Rivera, which will be analyzed in Chapter V. [362] José Vasconcelos's works are essential reading for anyone wanting to know more than the official version of the history of Mexico.

Vasconcelos was a distinguished lawyer, teacher, historian, liberal politician, academic writer, a "Teacher of America". His thought was influential both inside Mexico and beyond its frontiers. José Vasconcelos was a revolutionary, a philosopher, a writer and an educator. As Rector of the National University and as Secretary of Public Education he was responsible for all cultural activities, including the arts, in Mexico for several years. His biggest single contribution was initiating the mural program. Yet there are only passing references to him in the majority of studies of the *Mexican Mural Movement*. According to these studies, his deeds and importance cannot be compared to those of the great artists Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros.

For Octavio Paz "[An] ideological and political misunderstanding has affected the critics, and it has deformed certain central episodes in the history of the muralism", and "a veil has been drawn over the beginnings of muralism, and there have been squabbles over the participation of certain artists, such as Jean Charlot, or of certain personalities, such as José Vasconcelos [...] whose action was decisive".

> *[Un] equívoco ideológico y político ha afectado también a la crítica y ha desfigurado ciertos episodios centrales de la historia del muralismo. Se ha intentado velar el sentido del momento inicial y se ha regateado e incluso escamoteado la participación de ciertos artistas, como Jean Charlot, o de ciertas personalidades, como José Vasconcelos. En el caso del primero, se pretende ignorar que fue él, no Rivera ni Orozco, el descubridor de Posada; tampoco se mencionan sus trabajos teóricos, decisivos en el momento de iniciación. A Charlot le debemos, por otra parte, el primer fresco del movimiento. En cuanto a Vasconcelos: su acción fue determinante.* [363]

The most favorable studies recognize that Vasconcelos took the initiative by summoning the artists who were abroad at the beginning of the twenties back to Mexico and by subsidizing their works for a few years. Many believe that his role finishes there and that the further development of *Mexican Muralism* has no connection with Vasconcelos's initial conceptions. Indeed, this is also what he himself claimed – an attitude which will be discussed later.

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[362] See **Figure 54**, p. 263 and **Figure 55**, p. 264.
[363] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, pp. 37-38.

David Alfaro Siqueiros, the painter, wrote about Vasconcelos: "In an astonishing paradox, the man who made possible the material appearance of our pictorial work was contemptuous of it throughout his life. This contempt reached an inconceivable extent in the last days of his existence":

> *Durante toda su vida, asombrosa paradoja, el hombre que hizo posible la aparición material de nuestra obra pictórica, sintió desprecio por ella y este desprecio adquirió la escala de lo inaudito en los últimos días de su existencia.* [364]

I believe that this contempt is responsible for the misunderstandings that Paz speaks about. Despite Vasconcelos's claims to the contrary, I believe that his legacy extends well beyond the period during which he was directly responsible for education and culture in Mexico (1921-1924).

The marginalization of Vasconcelos has to do with the political attitudes, often contradictory and incoherent, that he adopted after his resignation as Secretary of Public Education in 1924. Vasconcelos became highly critical of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexico, despite having been an active participant.

Figure 38. José Vasconcelos in 1929 in Culiacán.



After his unsuccessful candidature for President in 1929, he was definitively marginalized. Figure **38** shows Vasconcelos in Culiacán, during the campaign of 1929. [365] Disillusioned with the direction taken by Mexican politics, Vasconcelos became attracted to anti-democratic politics. According to Carlos Monsiváis, "Vasconcelos was in an ideological rut from the '40s onwards", his reputation destroyed and turned to dust. For many years this "prevented a re-evaluation of his work":

> *A partir de los cuarentas, Vasconcelos se irá desgastando y petrificando en un despeñadero ideológico. Allí concluirá exaltando dictaduras como la franquista, situándose como símbolo de la extrema derecha. Este más que melancólico ocaso de Vasconcelos (asumido con orgullo) ha dificultado durante muchos años la reconsideración de su obra.* [366]

Siqueiros, who had political divergences with the minister, shows nevertheless respect for his work, recognizing the difficulty of the evaluation of Vasconcelos's contribution:

> *Es fácil comprender que en mi polémica escrita y hablada con Vasconcelos, me encontraba yo siempre con la indudable incomodidad de mi respeto al gran escritor y al maestro de toda una generación en la cual indudablemente yo había en parte figurado. Era también un obstáculo para mí el reconocimiento de lo que objetivamente había hecho Vasconcelos, desde el ángulo de sus posibilidades burocráticas, por nuestro movimiento pictórico Mexicano revolucionario.* [367]

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[364] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 183-184.
[365] Reproduced in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, n.p.
[366] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1428.
[367] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 410.

Vasconcelos was viewed as an inconvenient political figure, and institutional power had difficulties dealing with him. He did not adapt to the new direction taken by Mexican politics and culture in the middle of the twenties; he denounced a system that he characterized as populism, rhetoric, opportunism and the continuation of a barbaric and uncultured system that served the interests of the United States, which was the main enemy of the *Mexican Revolution*. His accusations concerning political corruption, etc., were a thorn in the flesh for the powers-that-be and the system in general.

In the artistic world, Diego Rivera participated actively in this marginalization and often ridiculed Vasconcelos. The most violent of Rivera's attacks can be seen in a mural in the Secretariat of Public Education, a building that Vasconcelos himself had commissioned. [368]

Vasconcelos's opinion of Rivera and his opportunism is unequivocal: "- Today, (Rivera) calls himself communist. But who can believe in him? − The only one in whom I believe, in that regard, is Siqueiros. He was really in the Revolution, he was imprisoned, and he has been persecuted. And he is sincere in his convictions. Also, I am convinced that he is a good boy."

> *- Hoy, (Rivera) se dice comunista. ¿Pero quién puede creer en él? − El único a quien creo, en esa calidad es a Siqueiros. Ese si, estuvo en la Revolución, fue preso, ha sido perseguido. Y es sincero, en sus convicciones. Además, estoy convencido de que es un buen muchacho.* [369]

The controversies with Rivera and his supporters put an end to Vasconcelos's political and cultural career. Vasconcelos, for his part denounced Rivera as an opportunist and called him "the old pensioner of the Porfirist dictatorship."

> *El antiguo pensionado de la dictadura Porfirista comenzaba a hablar de comunismo y adulaba a los nuevos, temeroso de que lo echasen a la calle, ya que uno de los cargos que se esgrimían en mi contra era el haberlo apoyado. Le dio resultado la maniobra; pronto fue el pintor oficial del nuevo régimen, y un año o dos más tarde, cuando empezó a ladrarme el callismo por lo que escribía desde mi destierro, el gran Diego Rivera me retrató, en el patio posterior del edificio que había yo levantado, en posición infame, mojando la pluma en estiércol.* [370]

For Vasconcelos Rivera was "a toad who is, at the same time, a great painter":

> *Un sapo, que es a la vez un gran pintor* [371]

The study of Vasconcelos's character reveals an incredible mixture of certainties, pronouncements and victories combined with hesitations, contradictions, failures and setbacks. Vasconcelos's action was indeed often contradictory. But, as Antonio Rodríguez asks:

> *How could one avoid being contradictory in a country and in a period full of contradictions?* [372]

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[368] **Figure** Error! Main Document Only.. Diego Rivera: *Los sabios*, 1928. North wall, *Patio de las Fiestas*, Secretariat of Public Education, Mexico City, p. 263.
[369] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", *Hoy*, February 19 1949. Typed copy in the CENIDIAP.
[370] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 260-261.
[371] Ibid, p. 718.
[372] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 356

Vasconcelos's development can be traced by means of his writings, in the impulses he gave to culture and the fine arts, particularly muralism, and in the spread of education and the creation of the Secretariat as an entity in charge of guiding, directing and implementing national education. Vasconcelos was acutely aware of the big problems in educational and cultural matters in Mexico in the twenties and believed that he could find the solutions which those problems demanded. The scale of the problems which Vasconcelos tried to address was such that many critics denounced his actions as demagogic, megalomaniac or utopian.

There is a larger acceptance of, and even fascination and admiration with, the figure and work of Vasconcelos on the part of non-Mexicans than on the part of Mexicans. This reinforces my contention that the marginalization of Vasconcelos was determined by internal political and artistic polemics. Claude Fell for instance displays respect and admiration for Vasconcelos's work in the Rectory and in the Secretariat, while most Mexican specialists mention him with contempt.

For Fell, who wrote in 1989 an important work on Vasconcelos, "Mexico is still living today, to a large extent, according to the cultural and artistic principles which were elaborated and postulated during the decisive years from 1921 to 1924":

> *[...] el México de hoy vive aún, en gran medida, sujeto a los lineamientos culturales y artísticos descubiertos, elaborados y postulados a lo largo de esos tres años decisivos que van de 1921 a 1924.* [373]

Vasconcelos wanted the Mexican population to have an ideology and aspirations appropriate to countries at a higher stage of development. He viewed art in general and the muralism program in particular as a means to help the people escape from "bad habits", such as alcoholism, and to distance the people from the manifestations of a shallow subculture which had been their only cultural fare for too long:

> *Mientras haya pulque y corridas [...] no habrá teatro Mexicano ni arte Mexicano ni civilización Mexicana* [374]

On many occasions Vasconcelos rejected the epithet "intellectual ".Vasconcelos was a Mexican philosopher and as such was considered a minor thinker, whose program of cultural independence did not fit well into the framework of relationships with Mexico's North American neighbor.

According to Julián Josué Virgil:

> *Vasconcelos himself predicted that he would be considered a minor philosopher because he was a Mexican – and he was right. His work has suffered the same fate as that of almost every other Latin American thinker: remaining unknown or inaccessible to anyone who cannot read the original Spanish.* [375]

José Vasconcelos was one of the first people in Latin America to fight for a culture which was at the same time national, continental and popular. His practical decisions (the publication of large editions of classic books, muralism as a cultural and aesthetic program) had a mixed reception – sometimes received with enthusiasm, sometimes with hostility.

Vasconcelos believed that painting was simply one element of cultural politics, on the same level as drawing and the popular arts, music, architecture, sculpture, theater and literature. There was much controversy about the popular editions of the classics and the proliferation of libraries. Vasconcelos was not able to win over left-wing critics, even when he pointed out that, in Russia, Lunacharsky had proceeded similarly.

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[373] Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 14.
[374] Vasconcelos, José, interview to *El Universal*, January 12 1922.
[375] Virgil, Julián Josué, *José Vasconcelos' Christian aesthetic Utopia*, translations from the Cosmic Race and Aesthetics, Oklahoma State University 1977, p. 4.

Vasconcelos: “the opposition to the measure is so imbecilic that if I tell the story it is simply to show the sorts of enemy that my work encountered.”

> *[...] la oposición a la medida es cosa tan imbécil que si la cuento es para que se vea la calidad de los enemigos que tuvo mi obra. No logré convencer a los que me censuraban desde el campo izquierdista, diciéndoles que, en Rusia, Lunacharsky había hecho otro tanto, por inspiración de Máximo Gorki, El Maestro proletario* [376]

The task of the post-revolutionary government was to rebuild everything that the *Revolution* had destroyed. the creation of a national culture was seen as a political task which aimed at legitimizing the ‘new’ country brought forth by the *Revolution*. As will soon become evident, Vasconcelos was often inconsistent – which does not facilitate attempts at clarifying the extent of his participation.

In 1991, when I visited Mexico for the first time, I told some people of my intention of investigating Vasconcelos's role in the context of Mexican muralism. The reaction was one of strangeness and incomprehension. For example, Antonio Rodríguez became confused when I indicated my interest in Vasconcelos as a patron of the *Mexican Muralism*. [377]

Other critics have already encountered problems getting to the heart of things; for example, Claude Fell writes: “When I tried to know more, in 1964, during my first stay in Mexico, the faces became closed and the possible sources of information immediately dried up.”

> *Cuando intenté saber más, en 1964, durante mi primera estancia en México, los rostros se cerraban y de inmediato se agotaban las posibles fuentes de información. A cinco años de su muerte, José Vasconcelos era todavía una especie de remordimiento de México, a quien se reprochaba indistintamente la actitud de algunos de sus artículos − él mismo se consideraba “escritor violento” − , su gusto por el escándalo, su campaña presidencial de 1929, su largo destierro, su participación controvertida en los acontecimientos revolucionarios, el hecho de haber dirigido durante la guerra una revista abiertamente pronazi − Timón − , su antiamericanismo luego transformado en una sonada adhesión a los Estados Unidos durante la Guerra Fría, sus ataques contra la Iglesia y su catolicismo un tanto exaltado, etcétera.* [378]

However, none of the personalities of this period are free from contradiction. The fact that Vasconcelos said different things at different times does not invalidate his statements. When one examines the question of his role in the muralism movement, there is other evidence and testimony which can be used to confirm the facts.

David Alfaro Siqueiros described Vasconcelos as a “man of great strength and mental and physical dynamism”:

> *Hombre de gran frondosidad y dinámica mental y física, se comprometió a sostener nuestros primeros ensayos en su carácter de Secretario de Educación Pública. Al hacerse cargo de esa Secretaria nos dijo: «Ya tienen ustedes paredes para pintar [...]»* [379]

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[376] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 49.
[377] Amaro, Fernando, Interview with Antonio Rodríguez in Mexico City, March 14 1991.
[378] Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 659.
[379] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 166-167.

1) Vasconcelos: from birth to the rectorship of the University of Mexico City

José Vasconcelos was born in the city of Oaxaca, in Oaxaca State, on 27 February, 1882. He died in Mexico City on June 30, 1959. As a boy, he lived in Sásabe, Sonora, Piedras Negras, Coahuila, and Campeche. Vasconcelos's first memories were of life on the border with the United States, in the desert areas of the homeland, where his father worked as a customs official. Vasconcelos attributed a decisive influence on the formation of his personality to his experiences on the frontier. He saw the contradiction between the violent and Creole North and the subjected indigenous South as a variation of the Latin American conflict between civilization and barbarism. José Joaquín Blanco, who wrote an essay on Vasconcelos, states that, even when Vasconcelos was a boy, nationality was "something imaginary and idealized, extremely fragile and always about to be assaulted and finally annulled by Indians and North Americans":

> *La nacionalidad fue para el niño algo imaginario e idealizado, extremadamente frágil y siempre a punto de verse asaltado y finalmente anulado por indios y norteamericanos. Contra la realidad, había que arraigarse en un México vislumbrado a través de los recuerdos de la madre y la abuela, de textos y grabados como el atlas de García Cubas, de la religión y de las anécdotas de la historia nacional. El nacionalismo de la clase media Porfiriana a que perteneció Vasconcelos era tan débil como ese grupo minoritario que el maderismo habría de representar.* [380]

The Mexican border position where his father worked and his family lived became an obsessive symbol for his homeland: a small and improvised bastion of civilization in the middle of the desert, at the mercy of two main enemies: the terrible assaults of the Apache and the efficient voracity of the United States. According to Blanco the "North American Commission of Limits decided that the border camp of Sásabe belonged to the territory of the United States, and Porfirio Díaz accepted that decision; the family had to abandon it and to go back to a new place, to found a new Sásabe in the newly receded frontier":

> *El otro enemigo también se desemboscó pronto: la Comisión Norteamericana de Límites decidió que el campamento fronterizo de Sásabe pertenecía al territorio de los Estados Unidos, y Porfirio Díaz acató esa decisión; la familia tuvo que abandonarlo y retroceder a un nuevo lugar, a fundar un nuevo Sásabe en la nueva y retrocedida frontera.* [381]

The United States seemed to continue pursuing the Vasconcelos family, according to Blanco, who compares the Mexican to a wandering Jew:

> *Los Estados Unidos parecían ir persiguiendo a la familia Vasconcelos, robándole los lugares en que se asentaba (como Sásabe). El Mexicano sería, en esta situación, un judío errante.* [382]

Vasconcelos studied in Piedras Niegras and Eagle Pass (in Texas), later in Campeche and finally in Mexico City, where he studied at the National Preparatory School. In his memoirs Vasconcelos recalled his experiences at the Eagle Pass school and the humiliation he suffered in the lessons about the history of Texas:

> *Mi primera experiencia en la escuela de Eagle Pass fue amarga. Vi niños norteamericanos y Mexicanos sentados frente a una maestra cuyo idioma no comprendía.* [383]

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[380] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, pp. 13-14.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid, p. 28.
[383] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 25.

Later, Vasconcelos's educational project would reveal a certain admiration for the American school, and in his *Memoirs* Vasconcelos refers to "another aspect": that the North Americans dedicated "a careful attention to schooling":

> *Del otro lado, los yanquis no tenían un caudillo napoleónico ni Leyes de Reforma a lo Juárez; sin embargo, acompañaban su progreso material acelerado, de una esmerada atención a la escuela.* [384]

It hurt Vasconcelos's patriotic feelings to recognize the superiority of the Eagle Pass village school:

> *Humillaba mi patriotismo haber de reconocer la superioridad de la escuelita pueblerina de Eagle Pass. ¿Sería posible que una escuela de aldea norteamericana fuera mejor que la anexa a un Instituto ufano de haber prohijado a Ignacio Ramírez, a Ignacio Altamirano?* [385]

In his *Memoirs,* Vasconcelos described a scene at school when a student claimed that a hundred *Yankees* could make a thousand Mexicans run. Vasconcelos got up to say that this was not true:

> *– Eso no es cierto.* [386]

Worse, he became irritated when a student, likening the customs of the Mexicans with those of the Eskimos, said:

> *– Mexicans are a semi-civilized people.* [387]

Vasconcelos affirmed, on the contrary, that the *Yankees* had only recently advanced towards culture. He got up, therefore, to repeat that "Mexico had the printing press before the Americans":

> *– Tuvimos imprenta antes que vosotros.* [388]

From his earliest childhood on, Vasconcelos was aware of the dominant Mexican drama, that of North American penetration and of Mexico's vulnerability:

> *Durante toda su vida, el tiempo alegórico que Vasconcelos dio a la vida Mexicana fue la inminencia de su anexión a los Estados Unidos y/o la inminencia de la regresión a la barbarie Azteca por la sublevación de los indios.* [389]

The so-called '*Yankee* danger' deeply influenced Vasconcelos's personality. On the other hand, Vasconcelos (and, incidentally, Rivera, as well) ended up admiring and envying the United States. He described the United States as "a country open to the effort of all the people, the land of the free", where he could have become a *yankee* philosopher:

> *En la frontera se nos había acentuado el prejuicio y el sentido de raza; por combatida y amenazada, por débil y vencida, yo me debía a ella. En suma: dejé pasar la oportunidad de convertirme en filósofo yanqui. ¿Un Santayana de México y Texas? Los Estados Unidos*

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[384] Ibid. p. 24.
[385] Ibid, p. 77.
[386] Ibid, p. 32.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid.
[389] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 28.

eran entonces país abierto al esfuerzo de todas las gentes. The land of the free. ¿Los años maduros me hubieran visto de profesor de Universidad enseñando filosofías? [390]

But race does not explain everything; to understand the relationship between the north and the south one needs to consider the effects of deeply divergent economic systems. Diego Rivera shared Vasconcelos's ideas about the efficiency of North-American society and would later assert, to justify working in the United States, that "it's the law of life, whether we like it or not":

Tras la invasión española post independiente vino la primera invasión francesa; fracasadas éstas, vino la norteamericana que, con éxito completo, tomó para Estados Unidos la mejor mitad del territorio Mexicano. Federico Engels dijo entonces con frialdad clarividente: "los yanquis siguen peleando con los Mexicanos, por las tierras del oeste que contiene el oro y muchas otras enormes riquezas naturales. Esperemos que los yanquis, que parecen ir derecho al triunfo, sabrán explotar mejor esas riquezas naturales, para beneficio de la humanidad entera, de lo que habían sabido hasta ahora los Mexicanos que mantenían esas tierras en el atraso sin explotación eficaz". Así es la ley de la vida, gústenos o no. [391]

Vasconcelos later went to the United States, which he considered "[to be] the land of freedom and the meeting place for all the races of the world," where he could have worked as a philosopher at a university or have opened an international law office:

A los Estados Unidos me iría, que era entonces tierra de libertad y punto de cita de todas las razas del mundo. Acaso podría abrirme paso en una Universidad como filósofo; tal vez, por lo pronto, en un despacho internacional de abogacía podría ganarme la vida. [392]

This mixture of fear and admiration toward North American culture led Vasconcelos, conscious of Mexico's backwardness, to propose a pragmatic cultural program of national recovery and of cultural identity, which was different from and in some respects opposed to the North-American model. Vasconcelos always felt "the *yankee* danger, the preoccupation of my childhood."

El peligro yanqui, preocupación de mi niñez [393]

The painter Jean Charlot refers to another aspect of Vasconcelos's childhood in Piedras Negras, where "he came into contact with the *gringo*."

José's youth was spent in Piedras Negras, or as it is called "over the bridge," Eagle Pass. Little José crossed the border every morning to the English-speaking world and to school. Thus early in life he came into contact with the gringo, as fair as he was dark, morally fair also through some congenital goodness or perhaps simply a dearth of Latin imagination. [394]

The fact that Mexico had lost an immense amount of territory to the United States was painful for young José, just as for many other Mexicans. He never forgave Santa Anna's betrayal. [395] The episode of "His

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[390] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 64.
[391] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 264.
[392] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 331.
[393] Ibid, p. 104.
[394] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 82.
[395] See page 61.

Serene Highness Santa Anna" surrendering to a *yankee* sergeant was drummed into the students in the class on Texan History, and thumbing through his "beloved atlas" brought Vasconcelos a mixture of pleasure and shame:

> *El episodio de Su Alteza Serenísima Santa Anna rindiéndose a un sargento yanqui nos era restregado en la clase de Historia texana, y un dolor mezclado de vergüenza enturbiaba el placer de hojear nuestro atlas querido. Mientras nosotros, ufanos de la «Independencia y de la Reforma», olvidábamos el pasado glorioso, los yanquis, viendo claras las cosas, decían en nuestra escuela de Eagle Pass: When Mexico was the largest nation of the continent [...] frente al mapa antiguo, y después sin comentarios: Present Mexico.* [396]

His obsession with the map and the territory lost to the *Yankees* was a constant concern. Resentment towards North America fitted in well with his attitude towards the Spaniards; as an enthusiastic *Hispanist*, he had a boundless admiration for Cortés, seeing in him the founder of the Mexican homeland, as evidenced in this passage from his *Brief History of Mexico*, published in 1937:

> *[...] El mapa comienza a crecer con don Hernando, y se integra en sus manos en forma grandiosa. El mapa crece aún más y se consolida bajo ciertos virreyes, como no lo soñaron jamás las pobres mentes confusas, envilecidas, de toltecas y Aztecas y mayas. Por primera y por última vez, bajo los virreyes, la Ciudad de México es la capital de un reino que va de Honduras a lo que hoy es el Canadá. En esa época nuestra lengua, nuestra religión y nuestra cultura eran soberanas en el continente septentrional.* [397]

I believe that Vasconcelos's experience in Texas was of decisive importance for the future minister and his cultural projects. Santa Anna had betrayed Mexico by renouncing an immense parcel of territory when surrendering. The future minister's task was to rescue Mexico through a cultural project.

José Vasconcelos completed his law studies in 1907 at the National School of Jurisprudence, National University in Mexico City, where he was the most brilliant student of his time. From 1908 to 1912, Vasconcelos was a successful young lawyer. As he spoke both Spanish and English, Vasconcelos even made himself very useful for a number of North American companies:

> *Pese a la proximidad económica y a los intereses particulares que lo estrechaban al mundo de los negocios norteamericanos, desde su antiguo despacho de abogado, Vasconcelos asumió una peculiar repugnancia al símbolo estadounidense. Lo asociaba al materialismo soso, sin sentido de grandeza y desprovisto del vigor placentero de Dionisos; al mismo tiempo les reconocía su inigualable capacidad para organizar y para poner al alcance de todos las mejores obras de literatura universal en las bibliotecas mejor provistas. Su odio/amor a los Estados Unidos nunca quedó resuelto. Toda vez que tenía problemas en México salía hacia ese país y allí se quedaba sin mayores dificultades.* [398]

In his *Memoirs,* Vasconcelos often refers to the pride that he felt in his mastery of the English language, which he spoke as if it were his maternal language, and the fact that he could switch easily from one language to the other. Nevertheless, Vasconcelos called Plutarco Elías Calles, his biggest political adversary at the time, "Pocho, that is to say the Americanized, the bastard."

> *El nuevo Presidente se había criado en Arizona, en territorio yankee; sus únicas letras eran dos o tres cursos primarios, en escuela de los Estados Unidos, por lo que hablaba el*

[396] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 43.
[397] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 16.
[398] Robles, Martha, *Entre el poder y las letras: Vasconcelos en sus memorias*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1991, p. 76.

> *inglés mejor que el español. Esta circunstancia y sus relaciones con los explotadores norteamericanos de los juegos de la Baja California, le valieron el sobrenombre del Pocho, o sea el americanizado, el bastardo. El pensamiento de Poinsett quedaba cumplido con exceso. Un mexico-americano era Presidente. Y no por cierto un mexico-americano ilustrado, sino un producto híbrido de la frontera inculta y bárbara.* [399]

In 1908, José Vasconcelos actively participated in the build-up to the *Mexican Revolution*, joining Francisco I. Madero's revolutionary movement, which opposed the dictatorship of General Porfirio Díaz. Throughout his life, Vasconcelos referred to Madero as "the apostle"," the saint"," the martyr". Vasconcelos worked to spread *maderista* ideals and to promote the movement's programs. Vasconcelos became one of the four secretaries of the *Centro Antirreeleccionista de México*. Together with Félix F. Palavicini, he ran the newspaper *El Antirreleccionista*. Later on, when weapons started to be used, Vasconcelos carried out confidential assignments for Madero in Washington. He also worked for Venustiano Carranza, who designated him as confidential agent to the governments of England and France. When the movement was victorious, Vasconcelos was elected President of the *Athenaeum of Mexico* and promulgated a program calling for "the rehabilitation of the thought of the race."

In 1908, Justo Sierra sent his proposal for Primary Education in the Federal District and the Territories to the Congress of the Union. In it, he claimed that it was essential for the state to play a major role in education. Sierra also proposed an integral or balanced education, emphasising the harmonious development of the individual's physical, intellectual and moral capacities, a classic conception of ancient Greece. He fought for a nationalist education based on the national language, native history, the geography of Mexico and constitutional civics. This education aimed at strengthening the student's sense of national identity. Besides being nationalist, education should be non-confessional. Vasconcelos's own cultural program reflected ideas developed in the *Athenaeum*.

Vasconcelos: "The group known as the Scientists gathered around big business at this time."

> *En torno a los grandes negocios de la época, se constituyó el grupo apodado de los "Científicos", porque, según Justo Sierra, obedecía a una política fundada en la "ciencia positiva", ya no en el liberalismo jacobino. La economía política, la sociología, eran las normas. Y la doctrina oficial, la del evolucionismo Spenceriano, que venía a ser como la coronación de la tesis de Poinsett, puesto que en nombre de la ciencia se justificaba la entrega de los recursos de la nación a los aptos, los superiores, los fuertes, o sea los anglosajones; con desdén de todo lo latino y más aun, de todo lo Mexicano, condenado por indio, por mestizo, por español.* [400]

According to Blanco, with the victory of constitutionalism, Carranza named Vasconcelos director of the National Preparatory School, but he fired him after a few weeks, because Vasconcelos refused to declare his opposition to Villa and Zapata:

> *Al triunfo del constitucionalismo, Carranza lo nombró director de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, pero lo cesó después de unas semanas porque Vasconcelos se negó a pronunciarse contra Villa y Zapata, que ya rivalizaban con Carranza. Pese a todo su odio por esos caudillos, Vasconcelos reconocía que eran ellos quienes estaban haciendo la Revolución, mientras Carranza le parecía una especie de bufonesco emperador de la barba florida ocupado casi exclusivamente de emperifollarse para desfilar galantemente por las plazas que Villa y Zapata conquistaban.* [401]

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[399] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 628.
[400] Ibid, p. 510.
[401] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 64.

The political situation in Mexico forced Vasconcelos to go into exile in the United States, where he had "Greek philosophy as his homeland ", in the years 1916 to 1920:

> *Expulsado de mi país por las balas de Carranza y por el asco de la situación que triunfaba, me encerré en la Biblioteca de Nueva York y allí tuve por patria a la filosofía griega.* [402]

Faced with North American utilitarianism and with the Marxist materialism that seemed to have triumphed in Russia, Vasconcelos responded by seeking to create a new culture, which should be both national and universal, and which should establish the mystical basis of the future, based on a more authentic religiosity, stripped of dogmas and rites, and using the power of aesthetic emotions. Vasconcelos's ideas on education and culture were strongly influenced by the anti-positivist debate in the *Youth's Athenaeum* and by his reading of Plato, Maxim Gorky, Lunacharsky and others. Between 1916 and 1920 Vasconcelos devoted himself to an intensive study of oriental philosophies and mysticism, which formed a further element in the elaboration of his thought system and his belief in a "world philosophy".

During this period Vasconcelos published four works in which he defined an anti-colonialist position for Latin American culture: *Pitágoras, una teoría del ritmo*, 1916, *El monismo estético*, 1918, *Estudios indostánico*s, 1919, *Prometeo vencedor*, 1920.
Vasconcelos said that the latter came to his mind in one piece and that he wrote it in three days:

> *Encerrado en una humilde casita de Redondo, trabajaba días y a veces semanas, sin presentarme en Los Ángeles. De esa época es mi Prometeo vencedor, que se me vino a la mente de una pieza y lo escribí en tres días, levantándome a las dos de la mañana para apuntar alguna frase que podía perderse [...]* [403]

These works are philosophical and cultural essays which call for a big investment in culture and philosophy in order to solve the huge problems facing Mexico.

According to Carlos Monsiváis: "For him (Vasconcelos), it is necessary to arm the nation, to defend the nation aesthetically."

> *Para él (Vasconcelos), hay que armar, defender estéticamente a la nación. En obras como Pitágoras (1916), La raza cósmica (1925), Indologia (1927) va articulando sus teorías: la fase estética es la fase superior de la humanidad, la estética es superior al conocimiento racional, para avanzar hay que crear una "estética" bárbara" que supere la decadencia y afirme el vigor del mundo nuevo. Lo importante es producir símbolos y mitos, imaginar un pasado heroico y hacerlo habitar, Wagnerianamente, por dioses crepusculares como Cuauhtémoc.* [404]

Vasconcelos theories hold that the aesthetic phase is humanity's most advanced phase; that aesthetics is superior to rational knowledge; that in order to advance it is necessary to transform indigenous barbarism into an aesthetic which can triumph over decadence and affirm the vigor of the new world. Vasconcelos's point of departure is a conception of the universe as a vibration of energy produced by God:

> *Concebimos el universo entero como la obra multiforme de la energía. En algunos seres la fuerza va de ascenso y produce la infinitud de las tendencias superiores; en otros fenómenos la vemos como entorpecida y degradada; se hace ahí materialidad sombría,*

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[402] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 733.
[403] Ibid, p. 930.
[404] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1421.

pero no cambia de esencia; es la misma potencialidad que anima lo mas alto; hay en la materia disminución, pero no ausencia total de esencia divina. [405]

In his *Memoirs,* Vasconcelos wrote that he then "traced the letters of that worthless essay", *El monismo estético*, which presents Christ not only as the one announced by the Hebrew prophets but also as the figure foreseen in Hindu ideology, under the invocation of the Buddha Maitreya, the Merciful Buddha, the final revelation of eternal wisdom:

Y para apuntar algo de todo lo que danzaba en mi mente, tracé las letras de ese pobre ensayo del volumen dEl monismo estético que presenta al Señor JesuCristo no sólo como el anunciado de los profetas hebreos; también previsto en la ideología indostánica, bajo la advocación del Buda Maitreya, el Buda Misericordioso, la revelación final de la eterna sabiduría [...] [406]

Vasconcelos viewed culture as a liberatory factor. He believed that humanity's development can come from the creation of a perfect civilization. He rejected the "poor Mexico" theory that Mexico's geographical location next to the United States predisposes it to a colonial situation and cited India; the Hindu civilization and the imminent Ibero-American civilization were "fruits born in the places that are filled with the all potentialities of the planet."

[...] frutos natos de los lugares que están henchidos de las potencialidades todas del planeta. [407]

Vasconcelos wrote his "book *Estudios indostánicos*", which was "intended to combat falsifications" during his stay in California. It was published in the Mexican capital in 1920:

Cada anochecer, tras el baño de mi pensión de seis dólares semanarios el cuarto, cenaba en el restaurante popular que hallaba al paso. Siempre uno distinto para elegir algún manjar nuevo, aunque ya prevalecía el tipo de comida estándar. Por huirlo me regalaba, incluso en los puestos al aire libre, el par de soft shell crabs jaibas tiernas riquísimas-, o los ostiones fritos, todo sin regla y a la hora que entra el antojo; a veces antes, a veces después de la lectura. Consumaba ésta en la biblioteca de mi barrio. Allí empecé las lecturas indostánicas de Max Müller y Oldenberg, sin omitir el caos teosófico de la Blavatzky y la Bessant. La confusión de estas últimas me dio la idea de tomar notas que más tarde se convirtieron en mi libro Estudios indostánicos, destinado a combatir falsificaciones. [408]

In this book, he sketches a kind of sociology of dominance, which he then enlarged on in his *Nueva Ley de los Tres Estados* (the three states were: the materialist or warring, the metaphysician and the aesthetic state). [409] According to Vasconcelos, the Nordic, Saxon and Germanic peoples, who live in cold climates, have created a civilization, which is capable of exploiting the wealth of the earth and developing effective instruments of physical domination but which is devoid of ideals.

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[405] Vasconcelos, José, *Pitágoras, Una teoría del ritmo*, México, Cultura, t. XIII, nr. 2, 1921, p. 53, Quoted in Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, et al., *Orozco: una relectura*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1983, p. 67.
[406] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 803.
[407] Vasconcelos, José, Estudios indostánicos, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1938, p. 29.
[408] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, pp. 338-339.
[409] Vasconcelos, José, "Nueva Ley de los Tres Estados", *El Maestro*, II, 2, November 1921, pp. 150-158.

Blanco writes that, basically, "*Estudios indostánicos* was an irrational allegation in favor of the myth of the abundant and spontaneous energy of an original and vitalistic culture, preached in messianic tone":

> *En general, Estudios indostánicos fue un alegato irracionalista en favor del mito de la energía abundante y espontánea de una cultura original y vitalista, predicada en tono mesiánico (aunque con frecuentes descensos al resumen escolar y esquemático del tema expuesto).* [410]

But to achieve the goals he intended, Vasconcelos needed a program of pragmatic action. When preparing and implementing his politics, Vasconcelos clearly gave a major role to the action of the state and of central government. This applied in the educational, the cultural and indeed in the ideological field. There is a strong practical connection between Vasconcelos's aesthetic thought, as set down in his writings before 1920, and the cultural work that he developed at the Secretariat of Public Education, when he invited the intellectuals to cooperate in a sort of cultural national service.

> *Tarea tan distinguida requería talento de primera capacidad. Para obtenerlo hicimos de los misioneros los más bien pagados entre todos los maestros de la Secretaría. Y no contentos con usar lo mejor del normalismo, lanzamos una convocatoria que cualquiera puede ver en las publicaciones del ramo, invitando a los poetas jóvenes, a los artistas, a los hombres de letras y de talento de todo el país, para que nos dieran su colaboración, como quien presta servicio militar de la cultura. Uno o dos años les pedíamos que dedicasen a visitar las zonas indígenas y a convivir en ellas, con los indios.* [411]

Confronted with events and realities, Vasconcelos, in contact with the men and the facts, was obliged to match his system of thought – which had its origin and its force in the opposition to Porfirismo and to its dominant, underlying ideology, positivism − to the daily, imperious necessities, the urgent needs of his country regarding education and culture.

In order to tackle Mexico's immense problems, Vasconcelos sought inspiration in the Soviet experience. During his American exile, Vasconcelos had studied the reforms of Soviet education initiated by Lenin and Krupskaya in 1918 and implemented by Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, the Commissioner of the People for Public Instruction, and by Maxim Gorky. Vasconcelos borrowed ideas for an education system from the Russian, whose initiatives in the cultural and educational field had attracted much attention in the world press since 1918-1919. A fundamental idea was that, to function properly, the educational system should be totally coherent from kindergarten to university. Vasconcelos also learned certain techniques of cultural diffusion from Lunacharsky, such as the organization of popular festivals, low-priced editions of great works, the proliferation of libraries, the systematization of literacy, the preservation and development of the national cultural heritage, and the suppression of elements of foreign culture. Vasconcelos's work is also clearly indebted to Lunacharsky in the organization of the rural schools, the schools' activities, the kindergartens, the diffusion of culture amongst illiterates and the organization of the Ministry of Public Education. Yet the harmonious structures of education that Vasconcelos conceived clearly derived from his readings of Plato, which supplemented his study of the work of Maxim Gorky and Lunacharsky. Vasconcelos himself states that his ideas owe more to Lunacharsky than to any other non-Mexican.

> *Pero yo ya tenía mi ley en la imaginación. La tenía en la cabeza desde mi destierro de Los Ángeles antes de que soñara volver a ser Ministro de Educación, y mientras leía lo que en Rusia estaba haciendo Lunacharsky. A él debe mi plan más que a ningún otro extraño.* [412]

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[410] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 73.
[411] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 125.
[412] Ibid, p. 19.

The North American press decried the vasconcelist educational project, even before it started, as an attempt to "sovietize the schools of Mexico". Vasconcelos was continually accused of bolshevism right through until his presidential campaign of 1929:

> *Las acusaciones de bolchevique fueron un lugar común durante toda su actuación de secretario e incluso años después, hasta su campaña de 1929. La prensa norteamericana consideró que el ministerio vasconcelista, aun antes de que entrara en vigor, era un intento de "sovietización de las escuelas en México".* [413]

In face of the immensity and the diversity of the task that confronted him, Vasconcelos was frequently obliged to improvise or to appeal to sources that he later rejected, Lunacharsky's work being a case in point. "In coffee houses and in modest inns we passed long hours discussing Lenin's methods or Lunacharsky's innovations. One of the innovations I copied from him when I was in charge of education of Mexico was the cheap editions of the classics. Certain writers of local fame have criticized me for this supposedly aristocratic measure."

> *En cafés y modestas fondas pasamos horas largas discutiendo los métodos de Lenin o las novedades introducidas en Educación por Lunacharsky. Una de ellas le copié cuando me tocó dirigir la educación de México: la edición de los clásicos, que ciertos escritores de renombre local me han criticado suponiendo que se trata de una medida aristocrática [...] Oyen palabra clásico y caen en la trampa [...] No, señores despistados; la idea fue de Gorki y la tomé de Lunacharsky… Gorki es plebeyo, plebeyo genial, que se acordó de los suyos y se dijo: «Hay que abaratar los clásicos [...] hay que darlos a los pobres [...] No es justo que sean privilegio de ricos [...]» Qué mejor tesoro por repartir.* [414]

The Iberian-American civilization idealized by Vasconcelos was to be a synthesis of Greek culture, the humanism of the evangelium, oriental philosophies, and the practical experience of Lunacharsky in the Soviet Union.

According to the investigator Martha Robles: "As an educator he was more familiar with the work of Lunacharsky than with the project of Ignacio Ramírez." [415]

> *Como educador estuvo más familiarizado con la obra de Lunacharsky que del proyecto de Ignacio Ramírez, pues los Mexicanos han tendido a ponderar lo externo disminuyendo lo propio.* [416]

2) Vasconcelos, Rector of the National University of Mexico, 1920

Vasconcelos returned to Mexico in 1920. Three days after the death of Carranza, the Congress named Adolfo de la Huerta, Governor of Sonora, and a supporter of Álvaro Obregón, as interim president. Villa and the *zapatista* bosses recognized the new government.

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[413] Phillips, Richard, *José Vasconcelos and the Mexican Revolution of 1910*. Ph. D. thesis, Stanford University 1953, pp. 216-219. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos*: *Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 85.

[414] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 928.

[415] Ignacio Ramírez, known as "el Nigromante", was a liberal thinker and politician. He is however more famous for having declared, in a speech at the intellectual *Academy of Letrán* in 1836, that "God does not exist,"an utterance which caused political upheaval. Rivera included the same words in his controversial mural *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central* in 1948.

[416] Robles, Martha, *Entre el poder y las letras: Vasconcelos en sus memorias*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1991, p. 45.

Charlot:

> *Vasconcelos remained a roving exile from 1915 to 1920. In Mexico thrifty First Chief Carranza, intent on decentralization, mutilated and eventually suppressed the Ministry of Education. General Obregón, wearying of his allegiance to Carranza, went to the United States to enlist Vasconcelos into the coming fray, promising that "he would not remain dissatisfied." A political mouthpiece once again, Vasconcelos wrote tracts that backed the budding revolt with Keen lawyer's logic.* [417]

Blanco: "The murder of Carranza closed the first part of the life and the work of Vasconcelos, who was then thirty-seven years of age." This first phase can be defined as his search for a coherent set of intellectual and political beliefs. In the next phase (1921-1924) he had a unique opportunity to put these ideas into practice.

> *El asesinato de Carranza cerró la primera parte de la vida y la obra de Vasconcelos, a los treinta y siete años de su edad. La construcción de puntos fijos en el caos, la elaboración de mitos, teorías y alegorías que, más que explicar o desvanecer la confusión, permitiera una exaltación para combatirla. De todas esas ideas y preocupaciones embrolladas, desmesuradas, saldrá su política educativa y cultural durante el gobierno de Obregón y, luego, el personaje del profeta colérico.* [418]

A period of peace followed. Illiteracy had increased in the preceding years, and the number of schools had fallen. Radical changes were urged, and first steps were taken in 1920, when Adolfo de la Huerta appointed Vasconcelos as Rector of the National University of Mexico for four years. Vasconcelos decided to structure the institution as an organism dedicated to the orientation and supervision of education, with the immediate aim of playing an active role in all the schools under his jurisdiction. Suddenly, Vasconcelos was in a unique position to be able to turn his vision of the world into action.

In the *vasconcelist* vision, the educational process was something completely articulate and integral to all sectors of society. He fought for a nationalism that integrated indigenous and Hispanic traditions to form a single identity. In order to bring that nationalism into being, it was necessary, according to Vasconcelos, to eliminate racial and class oppositions: to cease to be Indian and to become Mexican. He viewed the Indians as Mexicans first, then as Indians. In order to establish an appropriate national program, Vasconcelos planned the incorporation of indigenous minorities in the Mexican nation by means of a national school system. The indigenous dialects should not be used in teaching; they should take second place to Spanish. Vasconcelos opposed Manuel Gamio's plans for segregated education:

> *La política de educar al indio [...] según normas separadas de cualquier clase, no sólo es absurda entre nosotros, sino que resultaría fatal.* [419]

Vasconcelos believed that the university should come closer to the people and elevate it to the manifestations of high culture, to return to the people its consciousness of itself and of its lofty historical and spiritual destiny. His was a redemptory ambition that embraced all the Latin peoples of America in a great *mestizo* culture. This is the idea behind the shield and the motto which he proposed to the University Council and which the University of Mexico still uses to this day. He referred to "the great Spanish American homeland that will represent a new expression of human destiny". The shield depicts an eagle and a condor, guarding a Latin America which extends south from the Mexican frontier with the United States, and the text "Through my race the Spirit shall speak."

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[417] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 87.
[418] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 78.
[419] Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1419.

Considerando que a la Universidad Nacional corresponde definir los caracteres de la cultura Mexicana, y teniendo en cuenta que en los tiempos presentes se opera un proceso que tiende a modificar el sistema de organización de los pueblos, sustituyendo las antiguas nacionalidades, que son hijas de la guerra y la política, con las federaciones constituidas a base de sangre e idiomas comunes, lo cual va de acuerdo con las necesidades del Espíritu, cuyo predominio es cada día mayor en la vida humana, y a fin de que los Mexicanos tengan presente la necesidad de fundir su propia patria con la gran patria hispanoamericana que representará una nueva expresión de los destinos humanos; se resuelve que el Escudo de la Universidad Nacional consistirá en un mapa de la América Latina con la leyenda "POR MI RAZA HABLARA EL ESPÍRITU"; se significa con este lema la convicción de que la raza nuestra elaborará una cultura de tendencias nuevas, de esencia espiritual y libérrima. Sostendrán el escudo un águila y un cóndor apoyado todo en una alegoría de los volcanes y el nopal Azteca.
México, D.F.; 27 de abril de 1921. El Rector, José Vasconcelos. [420]

Figure 39. Shield of UNAM University, depicting an eagle and a condor, guarding a Latin America which extends south from the Mexican frontier with the United States, and the text "Through my race the Spirit shall speak".



Later Vasconcelos referred to the shield and the slogan disdainfully. This is typical of Vasconcelos's later efforts to disparage or to minimize his own role in historical events: "We were, like the Jews, a people that had to find the strength [to create] powerful works from its secular pain."

Imaginé así el escudo universitario que presenté al consejo, dibujado toscamente y con su leyenda: «Por mi raza hablará el Espíritu», pretendiendo significar que despertaba nuestra raza después de la larga noche de su opresión. Éramos, como el judío, un pueblo que de su dolor secular debía extraer fuerza para las creaciones poderosas. [421]

But, in fact, the permanency of the symbol which he sketched for the university shield symbolizes the permanency of Vasconcelos as Secretary, as well as of the whole mural program (**Figure 39**). [422] The symbol appeared in Diego Rivera's *The Creation* and also in Roberto Montenegro's 1924 mural *The Party of the Cross*, on a banner held by a woman.

When Vasconcelos left the power some artists, notably Rivera, ridiculed the former minister.

Charlot:

While Vasconcelos was in power, surrounded by artist-courtiers, flattery, or rather recognition of his substantial help, was the rule. Flattering allusions to the Maecenas are found in the murals of the period. In his fresco "The Feast of the Cross" Montenegro ushered in Vasconcelos as the banner holder of the university. Rivera's Tehuantepec series

[420] Vasconcelos, José, "Memoria de la exposición sobre la autonomía universitaria", UNAM, Mexico 1980, p. 72. Quoted in de los Reyes, Aurelio, "El nacionalismo en el cine. 1920-1930: Búsqueda de una nueva simbología", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, pp. 276-277.
[421] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 75.
[422] Retrieved 2003-09-07 from http://www.cifn.unam.mx/images/logos/UNAM_logo-green_4_web.gif

of frescoes in the first court of the Ministry were in homage to the birthplace of the Secretary, and the artist gratefully dedicated a water-color study used for its first panel "To José Vasconcelos, thanks to whom I can work." At the end of 1924 dethroned Vasconcelos turned to newspaper writing for a living and did not spare his successor the rod in his political articles. The only two painters who had safely bridged the change of regime were Montenegro and Rivera, and both were now called upon to prove their fealty to their new employer, Dr. Puig. Both readily obliged: Montenegro destroyed the portrait of Vasconcelos featured in "The Feast of the Cross," replacing it by a politically neutral female in floating drapes. Not to be left behind, Rivera represented Vasconcelos in a panel of the Ministry that Vasconcelos himself had built as a dwarf comically straddling a white elephant, dipping his pen in a spittoon. [423]

José Vasconcelos was one of those rare Spanish American intellectuals who enjoyed the power and the means to elaborate and to apply a general plan of education and culture. Mexico's situation in 1920 was typical of that of most of the nations of the continent. Vasconcelos preached understanding and unity among the Spanish American peoples, he opposed all interference by the United States, and he rejected so-called Pan-Americanism. He believed that the best way to avoid future problems was to educate the Indian masses and to integrate them in the comforts of civilized life.

Even though his ideas were rather utopian, Vasconcelos was pragmatic, and he had no problems working with politicians and the state institutions, in this case with Alvaro Obregón's government. It was not the Indian who defined Mexico and, in general, Latin America, but a mixture of racial elements in which Spanish elements prevailed. Vasconcelos insisted that a Latin American education would make the Latin American countries better prepared to confront the social, political and economic supremacy of the United States. According to Vasconcelos: "it was necessary to infuse the Mexican people with trust in its own capabilities. "

Sí en un pueblo el halago propio resulta chauvinismo, en un pueblo como el nuestro, enfermo de un justificado complejo de inferioridad, era parte de la tarea de educar que utilizaba los triunfos de aquel incipiente reconocimiento para despertar los ánimos e infundirle confianza en las propias capacidades. [424]

The unity of all Latin American nations, including Mexico, was apparent in the community of language, of religion, of tradition and, especially, of Iberian blood. The Ibero-Americanist program also aimed at rescuing the country from the isolation in which Mexico found itself in 1920 .The new government had not been recognized by the United States. Whereas previously Mexico had turned to Europe, Vasconcelos chose to look south. Obregón's nationalist and populist projects and Vasconcelos's cultural program thus also fulfilled another important function: that of affirming the unity of the nation in the face of external hostility. It was not until August of 1923, three years after Obregón had come to power, that the United States finally recognized the legitimacy of the Mexican government.

Faced with the problems of post-revolutionary Mexico (the population's cultural heterogeneity and the lack of authentic and solid principles on which to base the socio-economic restructuring of a country in chaos) Vasconcelos tried to combat the Anglo-Saxon cultural infiltration at a philosophical-educational level by instilling classical values. This brought Vasconcelos much criticism. His response was simple: all bad elements in national life came from the United States and from Protestantism.

According to José Joaquín Blanco: "His best card was North American imperialism (as the best card for the politicians was the Revolution)."

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[423] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 302-303.
[424] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinson a Odiseo*, Editorial Constancia, Mexico 1952, p. 214.

> *Su mejor carta fue el imperialismo norteamericano (como la mejor carta de los políticos era la Revolución). Para Vasconcelos, todo el mal nacional provenía de los Estados Unidos y de su protestantismo. Su principal acusación contra el Estado Mexicano fue la de representar un lacayo − así, término aristocrático − de los Estados Unidos. Esto se complicaba con ideas racistas, desprecio al indio, y con el desdén hacia los pobres con el pretexto de que eran analfabetos. Y aún más: se confundía en abstractas alegorías de la Historia, en la que regían los combates de los hijos de la luz contra los hijos de las tinieblas.* [425]

The Arielist thought that, from the nineteenth century onwards, had sought the identity of Latin America, contended that the acceptance of the cultural and racial miscegenation of Spanish America was the only basis for the formation of a true Latin America.

For Blanco: "Vasconcelos acted as the revolutionary vanguard of the Continent":

> *En el momento en que el populismo Mexicano no liquidaba aún los sueños liberales de la vieja clase media Porfiriana, y con esos sueños Vasconcelos actuaba como vanguardia revolucionaria del Continente, se declaró en obras como Indología (1926) Mexicano y latinoamericano arquetípico por mestizo, parangonándose con Bolívar y Albizu Campos, mulatos para él* [426]

Successor to the Arielist generation, Vasconcelos seized on education as the redeeming element for a *mestizo* people in Latin America and, in turning to *Hispanidad* with its classical roots, he also furnished a philosophical basis on which Mexico could found its identity.

Monsiváis: "He [Vasconcelos] conceived of the Revolution as a universal experience encompassing the political, the social and the artistic [spheres]."

> *Él [Vasconcelos] concibe a la Revolución como una experiencia universal en lo político, lo social y lo artístico [...]. Hay un mensaje: Por la (nuestra) raza debe hablar, efectivamente, el Espíritu. Hay que fiarnos de nuestra propia expresividad.* [427]

The faith in a new Latin America, a feeling awakened by the *Mexican Revolution*, inspired promises and hope, not only for Latin America but also for man's salvation and cultural wealth.

Vasconcelos felt a sense of shame for his fellow-Mexicans. The "*hispanoamericanismo* was thrown, and October 12 was our day."

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[425] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 208.
[426] Ibid, p. 17.
[427] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1419.

Y llegó la fiesta de la Raza. En México no se quiso hacer de ella ceremonia oficial mientras fue fasto racial español; ahora celebran el día como Columbus Day, porque así lo dispuso la Panamericana de Washington. [...] Con ira habíamos inaugurado esa cátedra [historia de la América española], haciendo notar que existía un curso de ese género en cada Universidad yanqui. En cambio, nosotros nunca habíamos otorgado el honor de cátedra especial a la lucha común y la existencia paralela de veinte nacionalidades hermanas por la lengua, la religión, la raza y la cultura. Se hallaba, pues, lanzado el hispanoamericanismo y el 12 de octubre era nuestro día. [428]

As Rector of the National University, Vasconcelos founded one hundred and ninety-eight libraries (sixty-four municipal, eighty labor libraries and fifty-four school libraries) which carried a total of twenty thousand books. Two years later, when he was Secretary of Education, the number of libraries increased to six hundred and seventy-one, including twenty-one traveling libraries and a total of sixty-five thousand books.While a law on education that would create a Federal Ministry was being discussed, Vasconcelos had already begun to act like a Minister:

En la Rectoría, mientras discutíamos una ley de Educación que debía crear un Ministerio Federal, se empezó a actuar ya como Ministerio. Invité de Estados Unidos y Europa a muchos desterrados o ausentes que debían contribuir poderosamente al gran impulso que tomó el trabajo. Sin exclusivismos ni exclusiones, se abrieron las puertas al mérito y fue mi mejor amigo el que mejor trabajó en la tarea común. Pronto se sintió en el país que algo serio comenzaba. Y no faltó quien comparara nuestro pulso al de un motor en vibración, del cual está fluyendo la energía. [429]

Vasconcelos created a staff of traveling agents who traveled the country to study and to assess the educational needs of the different domestic regions and to organize, in consultation with the regions, the necessary educational services. At his investiture as Rector of the National University of Mexico (1920) he said: “poverty and ignorance are our worst enemies”:

[...] Lo he querido porque he sentido que este nuevo gobierno en que la Revolución cristaliza como en su última esperanza, tiene delante de sí una obra vasta y patriota en la que es deber ineludible colaborar. La pobreza y la ignorancia son nuestros peores enemigos, y a nosotros nos toca resolver el problema de la ignorancia. Yo soy en estos instantes, más que nuevo rector que sucede a los anteriores, un delegado de la Revolución que no viene a buscar refugio para meditar en el ambiente tranquilo de las aulas, sino a invitaros a que salgáis con él a la lucha, a que compartáis con nosotros las responsabilidades y los esfuerzos. [430]

Vasconcelos proclaimed that “In this moment I don’t come to work for the university but to ask the university to work for the people”:

En estos momentos yo no vengo a trabajar por la Universidad sino a pedir a la Universidad que trabaje por el pueblo. [431]

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[428] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 27-28.
[429] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 955.
[430] Vasconcelos, José, “Discurso con motivo de la toma de posesión del cargo de Rector de la Universidad Nacional de México”, Mexico 1920. Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, “Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX”, *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1416.
[431] Ibid.

In his first speech as Rector on June 9, 1920, José Vasconcelos spoke of his wishes to create a Ministry of Public Education and to organize teaching at a federal level. By 1920 he had already planned the dates on which the new system would be introduced in the various states. The Secretariat of Public Education would centralize all educational activities, from the literacy campaigns through secondary education up to the university. Vasconcelos envisaged a complex mechanism that would take charge of producing the didactic materials, publishing practical manuals and basic literary texts, and enriching the leisure time of the people by arranging cultural festivals, choruses and popular entertainment. In his speech, he said: "Hopefully this university can reach the glory of being the initiator of this enormous work of national redemption."

> *Yo soy en estos instantes, más que un rector que sucede a los anteriores, un delegado de la Revolución que no viene a buscar refugio para meditar en el ambiente tranquilo de las aulas, sino a invitaros a que salgáis con él en la lucha, a que compartáis con nosotros las responsabilidades y esfuerzos. [...]. Organicemos entonces el ejército de los educadores que sustituya al ejército de los destructores. Y no descansemos hasta haber logrado que las jóvenes abnegadas, que los hombres cultos, que los héroes todos de nuestra raza se dediquen a servir a los intereses de los desvalidos y se pongan a vivir entre ellos para enseñarles hábitos de trabajo, hábitos de aseo, veneración por la virtud, gusto por la belleza y esperanza en sus propias almas. Ojalá que esta Universidad pueda alcanzar la gloria de ser la iniciadora de esta enorme obra de redención nacional* [432]

He described Mexican cultural institutions as still being at the ape stage of simple, aimless imitation:

> *[...] lo que yo debo decir es que nuestras instituciones de cultura se encuentran todavía en el periodo simiesco de sola imitación sin objeto, puesto que sin consultar nuestras necesidades, los malos gobiernos las organizan como piezas de un muestrario para que el extranjero se engañe mirándolas y no para que sirvan.* [433]

As President, General Obregón actively supported the plans of his Secretariat of Public Education and granted larger budgets than had ever been seen before. Obregón named Vasconcelos Head of the University Department of Fine Arts (December 1920 − October 1921) and then gave him the task of reorganising the Secretariat of Public Education (October 1921 − July 1924). Obregón increased the educational budget to fifteen million pesos in 1921, to thirty million in 1922 and to thirty-five million in 1923. The battle against illiteracy brought with it the faith in books and in libraries and in rural schools. The aim was to adapt to the requirements of the rural communities. Basic instruction was complemented with lessons on the rudiments of history and geography, the teaching of hygiene and of modern medicine and the practice of local crafts. The socialist tendency in this extension of learning did not prevent the preservation of privilege also being a part of the educational project.

For four years, between June 1920 and July 1924, Vasconcelos determined the course of post-revolutionary art and education. Culture and art were state matters, based on the ideas of *Mexicanidad* and the unification of races.

Vasconcelos had a high opinion of Obregón, whom he described as a "born military man, a captain comparable to Cortés and, without doubt, the best soldier in Mexico after Hernando":

> *Obregón era un militar nato, un capitán comparable a Cortés y, sin duda, el mejor soldado de México después de Don Hernando.* [434]

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[432] Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *José Clemente Orozco: una vida para el arte*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1984, pp. 58-59.
[433] Vasconcelos, José, *Discursos 1920-1950*, Ediciones Botas, México, 1950, p. 8. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 362.
[434] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 583.

Álvaro Obregón's enlightened policy led not only to the creation of the Secretariat of Public Education by José Vasconcelos, the founding of rural technical schools and libraries, the publication of books of universal culture for the people but also to promotion of the arts, in particular the muralism of the major Mexican painters.

The powerful personality of Vasconcelos, the support of General Álvaro Obregón, and the enthusiastic and optimistic atmosphere of revolutionary Mexico were all decisive factors in the emergence of what would be called the "*Mexican School*".

Despite everything that he and others later said and wrote Vasconcelos was a man of action. Octavio Paz described José Vasconcelos as Secretary of Public Education as a man "not running a Ministry but leading a crusade":

> *José Vasconcelos dirigía la Secretaría de Educación Pública − no como se maneja un ministerio sino como se encabeza una cruzada.* [435]

According to Vasconcelos, the essential characteristic of all the *Revolutions* that had ever shaken Mexico was that they tried to break down the racial barriers imposed by the colonial system. His goal was that the Secretariat should help the people rediscover that deep sense of social calling which characterised the main events that define Mexican nationality.

3) The Secretariat of Public Education

One of Vasconcelos's undisputed achievements was the creation of the Secretariat of Public Education with its integral vision of the solution to Mexico's educational problems.

The Constitutional Reform, published July 20, 1921, was the legal basis for the creation of the Secretariat of Public Education – which was finalized by means of a decree promulgated September 29, 1921. In October of the same year, José Vasconcelos assumed his functions at the new Secretariat. Conceived of as a complicated apparatus, the Secretariat was presented as a system that governed thought; hence Vasconcelos was also deeply concerned with its physical construction, which should reflect his aesthetic ideas. Vasconcelos organized the Secretariat in three big departments: the Schools Department, to impart scientific teaching and technique; the Library Department, to teach youth the pleasure of books and to encourage reading throughout the whole country; and the Fine Arts Department, to promote artistic culture among the educated, to teach singing, drawing and gymnastics on a national level, and to promote the study of particular arts in specific institutes. Besides these departments Vasconcelos also organized the *Departamento de Alfabetización* (Department of Literacy), and the *Departamento auxiliar de Enseñanza Indígena* (Auxiliary Department of Indigenous Teaching), where the teachers would imitate the action of the Catholic missionaries of the Colony:

> *Como departamentos auxiliares y provisionales establecí también el de Enseñanza Indígena, a cargo de maestros que imitarían la acción de los misioneros católicos de la Colonia, entre los indios que todavía no conocen el idioma castellano, y un Departamento de Desanalfabetización, que debía actuar en los lugares de población densa, de habla castellana. Intencionadamente insistí en que el Departamento Indígena no tenía otro propósito que preparar al indio para el ingreso a las escuelas comunes, dándole antes nociones de idioma español, pues me proponía contrariar la práctica norteamericana y*

[435] Paz, Octavio, "Nuevo mundo y conquista", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. I: *El peregrino en su patria, Historia y política de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz y Luis Mario Schneider, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 95.

protestante que aborda el problema de la enseñanza indígena como algo especial y separado del resto de la población. [436]

The new Secretary replaced the old concept of Porfirian positivist instruction by a federal education system. Vasconcelos began the colossal task of building the educational apparatus. Vasconcelos had wide-ranging ambitions for Mexico, and the country's educational structures still bear his mark today.

Vasconcelos sought "to tie the Catholic missionary effort that engendered our nationality, with a regenerator proselytism":

[...] ligar el esfuerzo misionero católico, que engendró nuestra nacionalidad, con un proselitismo regenerador, que sin perjuicio de especializarse en los aspectos técnicos de la cultura moderna, lograse frutos de Espíritu tan fecundos como los antiguos, cuya raíz es el amor del semejante. [437]

When Vasconcelos was named Secretary of Public Education, the hour of "national redemption" arrived. Vasconcelos sought to link education to a new culture, the culture of miscegenation and of *Revolution*, which was to express the highest values of the human condition. On achieving these goals, the Mexican people would no longer be condemned to failure and would be liberated from a past that chained it to error and barbarism. To educate, for Vasconcelos, meant to carry out the synthesis of freedom, culture and democracy. Education should forge a new nation, cultured, autonomous and democratic. An enthusiastic proponent of the Mexican rural school, Vasconcelos created cultural missions with improvised teachers, transforming their profession into a true apostolate and making schools into instruments of social transformation.

Vasconcelos worked with his old associates from the *Youth's Athenaeum* and also with young Mexican university students and educators. Vasconcelos invited prestigious educators such as Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Gabriela Mistral to work in the country. The major figures of the new Latin American generation greeted his work with enthusiasm and were inspired by the attempts made to solve Mexico's problems through educational policy.

Vasconcelos: "My aspiration was to make Mexico into a Metropolis of the Latin Continent; an Athens."

Mi aspiración era hacer de México una Metrópoli del Continente latino; una Atenas, no por la ridícula pretensión de emular a la antigua, sino por el amor a la cultura y por la liberalidad, la hospitalidad para el talento extranjero. A cada uno de nuestros visitantes sudamericanos o españoles, procurábamos informarlos detalladamente y los hacíamos viajar por el interior del país. [438]

Conscious of Mexico's enormous cultural and linguistic problems, Vasconcelos proposed miscegenation as the notion on which the future Mexican nation be built. This entailed the integration of the Indian communities. Vasconcelos proposal was "to Hispanicize the Indian," and he categorically rejected the solution of the "reservation" that some of his contemporaries proposed:

A un grupo de antropólogos yanquis que me visitó por esos días y me ofreció los servicios de no sé qué Instituto que acababa de terminar investigaciones entre los indios de Bolivia, le dije: "Aquí ya tenemos investigado todo eso, y resuelto, desde hace cuatro siglos." Y, en efecto, los educadores españoles en el XVI, después de ensayar la creación de institutos

[436] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 20.
[437] Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1418.
[438] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 205.

para indios, resolvieron que era mejor educar juntos a indios y españoles. Y eso evitó que entre nosotros aparecieran problemas terribles como el del negro en los Estados Unidos. Por otra parte, les dije: "Si hacemos reservación, como en los Estados Unidos, ¿quién va a distinguir al que es indio del que no lo es? Todos nosotros tendríamos que meternos a la reservación. Por fortuna, aquí dejamos de ser indios desde que nos bautizan. El bautismo dio a nuestros ancestros categoría de gentes de razón, y basta." [439]

The formula of incorporating the Indian into civilization should not entail the eradication of regional dialects, traditions, customs or even of man's deep feelings of attachment to the land. On the other hand, nobody sought a revival of pre-Cortesian indigenous systems. The goal was the incorporation of the Indian into a universal culture, i.e., the full development of all the potential and natural abilities of the race and improvements in their standard of living.

The concept of incorporation was one of the minister's basic concepts. Another was that of the coalition of races, the essence of *Mexicanidad*. One of the vehicles for his program was muralism. Taking issue with the positivist theses, Vasconcelos asserted that miscegenation had created an enormous potential in the American peoples but that they were in a period of indecision and expectation.

He proposed single schools open to all, without distinction of race or color: thence the necessity of Hispanicizing the Indian. In a conference in Washington in 1922, Vasconcelos defined his position with particular clarity:

[...] recientemente se ha escrito mucho acerca de la mejor manera de educar a los indios de pura raza, siendo numerosos los partidarios de la creación de escuelas especiales de indios; pero siempre he sido enemigo de esta medida porque fatalmente conduce al sistema llamado de la reservación, que divide la población en castas y colores de piel, y nosotros deseamos educar al indio para asimilarlo totalmente a nuestra nacionalidad y no para hacerlo a un lado. En realidad creo que debe seguirse, para educar al indio, el método venerable de los grandes educadores españoles que, como Las Casas, Vasco de Quiroga y Motolinía, adaptaron al indio a la civilización europea, creando de esta suerte nuevos países y nuevas razas, en lugar de borrar a los naturales o de reducirlos al aislamiento. [440]

Vasconcelos considered that schooling alone was not enough; a country without books or readers would remain backward as regards culture and progress. The Library Department was responsible not only for the creation of libraries but also for publishing books. Vasconcelos's original plan was to publish five hundred and twenty-four titles in five collections of universal culture at affordable prices:

Sumarían millones: la Ilíada, la Odisea, Esquilo, Sófocles, Eurípides, Platón, Plutarco, Plotino, Manual de budismo, los Evangelios, la Divina comedia, Shakespeare, Lope, Calderón, el Quijote, Goethe (Fausto), Ibsen, Shaw, Rolland, Tolstoi, Historia universal de Justo Sierra, Ruiz de Alarcón, Pérez Galdós, Balzac, Dickens, Victor Hugo, Aristóteles, Marco Aurelio, San Agustín, Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal, Kant, Rousseau, Sor Juana, Othón, Urbina, Nervo, González Martínez, Díaz Mirón, Ignacio Ramírez, Rabasa, Caso, Prieto, Micrós, etcétera, más manuales de legislación, psicología, sociología, economía, historia del arte, geografía, sindicalismo, agricultura, pedagogía, ciencia industrial, antologías de prosa y poesía Mexicana, española y latinoamericana, historia de México, etcétera. En total, en el plan original eran 524 títulos en cinco colecciones: clásicos,

[439] Ibid, p. 20.
[440] Vasconcelos, José, "Conference in the Continental Brief Hall, Washington, December 9 1922, Secretaría de Educación Pública", Educación, revista mensual, v. II, núm. 1, May 1923, p. 10. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 206.

biblioteca agrícola, pedagógica, industrial y biblioteca de consulta para agricultores e industriales. [441]

By the end of the Obregón's government's first year, the Library Department had published first readers for children, classic stories, anthologies, teaching manuals, technical books, reviews of general culture, and the famous universal classic editions for the reading rooms, for children and adults. The Department also published the magazine *El Maestro* (*The Teacher*), and a series of readers for women and the classic readers for children. These readers were anthologies which presented major works of world literature. The classic reader for children *Lecturas clásicas para Niños*, which appeared in 1924, was an exceptional book, with beautiful and copious illustrations by Roberto Montenegro and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, who also worked for Vasconcelos on mural decorations.

The Department of Libraries was modeled on the Carnegie libraries in the United States. Vasconcelos had a political objective and a practical aim: to fill the people's consciousness with books, to incorporate books into the vital space of the people. Vasconcelos wanted to publish works by classical authors at accessible prices. Many felt this task to be impossible, but as Vasconcelos said, "to [everyone's] surprise, the first copies appeared throughout the Republic."

Y con sorpresa aparecieron por toda la República los primeros ejemplares, en pasta verde, de Homero, Esquilo, Eurípides, Platón, Dante, Goethe, etc.; no llegué, ni con mucho, a los cien clásicos, sino apenas a diecisiete ediciones de más de veinticinco mil volúmenes la mayor parte de ellas. [442]

El Maestro, which was published from 1921 until 1923, was a small manual of general culture, with sections on national and international affairs, universal history, literature, a children's section, a practical knowledge section, poetry and general interest items. The magazine had some "communist notions."

El Maestro, con tiraje de 75 mil ejemplares, estaba pensada como una revista total, útil tanto para el público más elevado como para los alumnos de las escuelas, e incluso como una revista familiar. Trataba absolutamente de todos los temas: teorías económicas de Henry George, nociones de comunismo (por Henri Barbusse, III, 3), clases de dibujo, natación, geometría, trigonometría, baile, lechería. Conocimientos modernos de geología, geografía, arte nacional, agricultura, ganadería, fertilizantes, alimentación racional, vegetarianismo, lecciones de higiene. Orientación sindical, historia del trabajo, teoría de la relatividad, flores y juegos, cuentos para niños, juegos de ilusión óptica, sugerencias para el mejor cultivo del garbanzo. Historia y geografía de los países latinoamericanos, por entregas: el Brasil, la Argentina, Chile, el Perú, Colombia, etcétera. Fisiología del gusto. Los daños del alcoholismo. Reforma agraria, importancia del buen humor, ventilación del hogar e higiene del vestido, filosofía, economía, arqueología, antropología americana; respiración indostana, importancia del baño diario (ilustrado por el ejemplo japonés), gimnasia, traslación y gravitación de la Tierra, primeros auxilios, los hombres célebres ante los niños. [443]

[441] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 105.
[442] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 17.
[443] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, pp. 107-108.

4) Vasconcelos and the Raza cósmica

One of the main pieces of the puzzle that Vasconcelos represents is his theory concerning the coalition of races. Vasconcelos's Ibero-American thought is contained in a book published in Spain in 1925 and much discussed in Latin America: *The Cosmic Race*.

In the preface, Vasconcelos delineates the central thesis of the book: that the different races of the world will mix together more and more until a new human type is formed, an amalgam made up of elements of each of the existing peoples. This vision was first published at a time when the Darwinist doctrine of natural selection and the survival of the fittest prevailed in the scientific world. That doctrine, in which the weak are doomed, had been adapted to the societal level by Gobineau, and ultimately led to the theory of the pure Aryan, a theory which was defended intellectually by the English and which eventually led to the aberrations of Nazism.

> *Es tesis central del presente libro que las distintas razas del mundo tienden a mezclarse cada vez más, hasta formar un nuevo tipo humano, compuesto con la selección de cada uno de los pueblos existentes. Se publicó por primera vez tal presagio en la época en que prevalecía, en el mundo científico, la doctrina darwinista de la selección natural que salva a los aptos, condena a los débiles; doctrina que llevada al terreno social por Gobineau, dio origen a la teoría del ario puro, defendida por los ingleses, llevada a imposición aberrante por el nazismo.* [444]

Vasconcelos claimed that "the present circumstances are favorable, in consequence, for the development of interracial sexual intercourse, which lends unexpected support to the thesis that, for lack of a better name, I have entitled: the future Cosmic Race":

> *Las circunstancias actuales favorecen, en consecuencia, el desarrollo de las relaciones sexuales interraciales, lo que presta apoyo inesperado a la tesis que, a falta de nombre mejor, titulé: de la Raza cósmica futura.* [445]

Vasconcelos believed that the white man had placed the world in a situation where all types and all cultures can be melted together.

> *El blanco ha puesto al mundo en situación de que todos los tipos y todas las culturas puedan fundirse. La civilización conquistada por los blancos, organizada por nuestra época, ha puesto las bases materiales y morales para la unión de todos los hombres en una quinta raza universal, fruto de las anteriores y superación de todo lo pasado.* [446]

As José Carlos Mariátegui pointed out in the year that *The Cosmic Race* was published, Vasconcelos's great achievement was to create a myth, since "without a myth, man's existence doesn't make any historical sense":

> *[...] sin un mito la existencia del hombre no tiene ningún sentido histórico. La historia la hacen los hombres poseídos e iluminados por una creencia superior".* [447]

The *Cosmic Race*, or the mixture of the races, would obey the laws of the social community, of sympathy and of beauty, and the result would be a superior humanity whose ideal type is the synthesis of the best

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[444] Vasconcelos, José, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana, Argentina y Brasil*, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Colección Austral, Nº 802, Mexico 1986, prologo, p. 9.
[445] Ibid, p. 10.
[446] Ibid, p. 16.
[447] Mariátegui, José Carlos, *El alma matinal y otras estaciones del hombre de hoy*, Obras completas, Empresa Editora Amauta, Lima 1959, p. 18.

qualities of all races. To reach this stage it was indispensable to overcome two problems: poverty and low education. According to Vasconcelos, Latin America's natural resources are so extensive that they could satisfy the needs of an indefinite number of people. Latin America would be able to conquer poverty if it used science to exploit this natural wealth. Educational problems would be solved by means of a humanistic and anti-imperialist education that integrated classic and Mexican cultures, creating solid Latin American values able to counteract the Anglo-Saxon influence which had permeated Mexico.

According to Vasconcelos, any teacher can see that groups of children and of youths in the North American Universities, descendants of Scandinavian, Dutch and English people, are much slower, indeed almost clumsy, than the children and mestizo youths of the South.

> *[...] cualquier profesor puede comprobar que los grupos de niños y de jóvenes descendientes de escandinavos, holandeses e ingleses de las Universidades norteamericanas son mucho más lentos, casi torpes, comparados con los niños y jóvenes mestizos del Sur.* [448]

Vasconcelos's ideal was the societal ascent towards the Cosmic Race. According to this conception, civilizations would pass through five states: the praetorian (barbarism), the democratic (Greece, nineteenth century Europe), the economic (imperialism), the technical (society organised and directed by humanist technicians), and finally, the philosophical or aesthetic state (the Cosmic Race).

> *En el proceso de nuestra misión étnica, la guerra de emancipación de España significa una crisis peligrosa. No quiero decir con esto que la guerra no debió hacerse ni que no debió triunfar. En determinadas épocas el fin trascendente tiene que quedar aplazado; la raza espera, en tanto que la patria urge, y la patria es el presente inmediato e indispensable.* [449]

This thesis was the key to solving the huge problems that Mexico faced. Even if others did not accept his proposal explicitly, it ended up being taken for granted by many, from the artist to the politician, each in his different way.

For Vasconcelos the specifically Mexican, specifically Spanish-American, is the Spanish element. Vasconcelos saw Catholicism as a fundamental component of Latin American cohesion, and he even saw it as a way to reach racial synthesis. In *The Cosmic Race,* he advances the possibility that the Spanish American constitutes a racial synthesis, based on the capacity for miscegenation. *The Cosmic Race* is a *mestizo*, the only possible race with a Spanish potentiality. For Vasconcelos, only crossbreed races are capable of great works:

> *Sólo las razas mestizas son capaces de las grandes creaciones.* [450]

He held that "fate determines the destiny of peoples, as it does the destiny of individuals. Now, with a new phase of history beginning, it becomes necessary to reconstitute our ideology and to re-organize life on our continent according to a new ethnic doctrine. Let us thus begin making our own life and our own science. If the Spirit is not liberated first, matter can never be redeemed":

> *Hay cierta fatalidad en el destino de los pueblos lo mismo que en el destino de los individuos; pero ahora que se inicia una nueva fase de la Historia, se hace necesario reconstituir nuestra ideología y organizar conforme a una nueva doctrina étnica toda*

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[448] Vasconcelos, José, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana, Argentina y Brasil*, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Colección Austral, Nº 802, Mexico 1986, p. 43.
[449] Ibid, p. 25.
[450] Vasconcelos, José, Estudios indostánicos, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1938, p. 27.

nuestra vida continental. Comencemos entonces haciendo vida propia y ciencia propia. Si no se liberta primero el espíritu, jamás lograremos redimir la materia. [451]

Vasconcelos: "Only the Iberian part of the continent has the spiritual and racial factors, and the necessary territory for the great task of initiating humanity's universal era. All the races that must make a contribution are here; the Nordic man of action, who had humble beginnings and seemed inferior, having experienced the rise and fall of several great cultures; the black, a reservoir of potential reaching back to the remote days of Lemuria; the Indian, who witnessed the disappearance of Atlantis, but still has its mysteries in his consciousness; we have all the peoples and all the aptitudes, and it is only necessary that true love organizes and sets the law of history in motion":

Solamente la parte ibérica del continente dispone de los factores espirituales, raza y el territorio que son necesarios para la gran empresa de iniciar la era universal de la Humanidad. Están allí todas las razas que han de ir dando su aporte; el hombre nórdico, que hoy es maestro de acción, pero que tuvo comienzos humildes y parecía inferior, en una época en que ya habían aparecido y decaído varias grandes culturas; el negro, como una reserva de potencialidades que arrancan de los días remotos de la Lemuria; el indio, que vio perecer la Atlántida, pero guarda un quieto misterio en la conciencia; tenemos todos los pueblos y todas las aptitudes, y sólo hace falta que el amor verdadero organice y ponga en marcha la ley de la Historia. [452]

José Vasconcelos was preoccupied with Ibero-American, and not just Mexican, goals in *The Cosmic Race*. His position can be summarized as follows: the Mexican or Ibero-American must reorganise life in harmony with emotion and not with reason, a Saxon characteristic which the Mexican had imitated to his detriment. Vasconcelos believed that a people must express itself in terms of the spirit. He was concerned with the future, with the realization of man's best possibilities.

According to Kubler,

Jose Vasconcelos was the most eloquent proponent of mestizaje. He identified raza mixta with the beginning of a new era, produced by the best stock choosing the best, and yielding the first really new race known to history, the sole hope of the world, prophetic of future mestizaje on a global scale: the Cosmic Race; the total man. He seems not to have realized that the age of mestizaje was already ended; that colonial life was the historical theater of mestizaje; or that the future will be dominated not by the mestizo but by economists, agrarian experts, engineers, and computer technicians of all races and no race. [453]

The Ibero-American stands in sharp contrast to the Anglo-Saxon. The *mestizos*, people of mixed European and Native American ancestry, are destined to become the highpoint in the development of humankind and are the key to Ibero-American culture. The essence of the Cosmic Race lies in the mixture, in contrast to more limited peoples, who are bound in spirit to materialism, and cannot re-create or renew themselves. For Vasconcelos the inclusion of other cultures, other races – characterizes universality. The central idea of the thesis was already in fact the essence of the program that he imposed. He described the thesis as being little more than a development of the old Catholic Spaniard thesis of the equality of men before the Spirit.

La tesis etnológica que va implícita en el sistema de la enseñanza en común de indios y blancos la desarrollé más tarde en mi libro La raza cósmica; pero la idea central de la tesis era ya la esencia del programa que impusimos, en realidad, y no consistía sino en un

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[451] Vasconcelos, José, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana, Argentina y Brasil*, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Colección Austral, Nº 802, Mexico 1986, pp. 45-46.
[452] Ibid, p. 51.
[453] Kubler, George, *Studies in Ancient American and European Art: The Collected Essays of George Kubler*. Thomas Reese (ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1985, pp. 76-77.

desarrollo de la vieja tesis católica española de la igualdad de los hombres ante el Espíritu. [454]

One of the main theories that I propose is that the concept of the *Cosmic Race* as advanced by Vasconcelos, in spite of being often ridiculed, was shared by many artists and given concrete form in many projects of *Mexican Muralism*, from Rivera to Tamayo. These artists and projects are no more than fruits of the seed sown by Vasconcelos in the early 1920s.

This racial mix produces a new race: "the Cosmic Race". "Doña Malinche giving children to the Spaniards was the symbol of the new nationality that would be imposed on indigenous barbarism":

Y ningún hombre que tenga elemental concepción de los valores de la cultura dejará de sentirse solidarizado con los españoles. La mayoría de nuestros indios ya lo estaba. Y Doña Malinche dando hijos a los españoles era el símbolo de la nueva nacionalidad que se impondría a la barbarie aborigen. [455]



Figure 40. José Clemente Orozco: *Cortés and Malinche*. Fresco, National Preparatory School, 1926.

The artists who worked with Vasconcelos made his theories material on the walls. One of those artists is Orozco. I believe that the program in Orozco's first murals reproduced the *vasconcelist* vision, pragmatic and syncretic. In the first tract of the stairway of the National Preparatory School, Orozco represented Malinche, seating next to Cortés who has his foot firmly planted on a conquered figure. Cortés and Malinche are represented as a kind of Adam and Eve, who initiated the Mexican race, she indigenous, he Spanish (**Figure 40**). [456]

The fifth race (Vasconcelos's Cosmic Race) will be the stronger race, thanks to the power of miscegenation. According to Vasconcelos: "the fifth race will be the fruit of the superior powers"

Hasta la fecha, la vida ha recibido su carácter de las potencias bajas del hombre; la quinta raza será el fruto de las potencias superiores. La quinta raza no excluye, acapara vida; por eso la exclusión del yanqui como la exclusión de cualquier otro tipo humano equivaldría a una mutilación anticipada, más funesta aun que un corte posterior. Si no queremos excluir ni a las razas que pudieran ser consideradas como inferiores, mucho menos cuerdo sería apartar de nuestra empresa a una raza llena de empuje y de firmes virtudes sociales. [457]

There are many other examples in *Mexican Muralism* of this coalition or mixture of the two races. In chapter VI further examples will be discussed, one such being Jorge Camarena's *La pareja original latinoamericana*, in English The Original Mexican Couple (in the Skissernas Museum, Lund). In this work

[454] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 123-124.
[455] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 138.
[456] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 46.
[457] Vasconcelos, José, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana, Argentina y Brasil*, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Colección Austral, Nº 802, Mexico 1986, p. 36.

Cortés and Malinche are an allegory of that simplistic "coalition of two races", of "two cultures", which has so often been used to try to explain the complexity of the Mexican character.

Even the theme of Rivera's *The Creation*, which will be examined later, was determined by José Vasconcelos, since it was he who had responsibility for the mural program and the subject matter was too important to be assumed by the artists.

> *[...] debido a que la plástica no es un asunto sino una de las maneras de expresar asuntos; una de las voces del ser y no el ser. Esto hace indispensable que el mecenas no sólo dé las monedas, sino también el plan y el tema.* [458]

In *The Creation* Vasconcelos wanted Diego Rivera to represent the creation of the *Cosmic Race* and a new world arising out of the peaceful meeting of races and cultures.

> *El primer mural de Rivera, La Creación [...] Exalta el nacimiento de una futura cultura universal, en la que se amalgaman armónicamente elementos europeos y americanos; un nuevo mundo surgido del encuentro pacífico de las razas y las culturas. Sus personificaciones de la belleza del hombre Mexicano evocan lo que La raza cósmica vasconceliana significa como programa y como meta.* [459]

5) Cultural nationalism

The post-revolutionary painters re-examined the indigenous past. The study of the Meso-American cultures produced highly diverse results, which is hardly surprising given the wealth of source material. According to Carlos Monsiváis, the muralists followed the basic command of cultural nationalism: to instill national pride.

> *Los muralistas aceptaron la encomienda básica del nacionalismo cultural: la provocación del orgullo, lo que conduce a Diego Rivera a afirmar que deriva su técnica de fuentes precolombinas. Casi sin variantes, a este nacionalismo cultural se le ratifican los antiguos encargos: la adquisición de una identidad nacional, la aspiración de originalidad, la captura artística de lo genuino Mexicano, el sistema de recompensas psicológicas para quienes han nacido en el atraso. Con un agregado: la tarea de reducir a términos entendibles (o sea, manipulables) el sentido de la Revolución, de los ejércitos populares de Zapata y Villa, del combate sin tregua por la Silla Presidencial.* [460]

Indeed, one encounters many expressions of this pride. For Rodriguez Ida Prampolini, muralist painting can be considered the artistic pride of the *Mexican Revolution*. There were big achievements and enormous failures, but the *Mexican Revolution* was the first twentieth century *Revolution*, and *Mexican Muralism* was the first great world artistic production since the Italian *quattrocento* – which, in turn, provided muralism with a huge source of inspiration.

> *La pintura mural puede considerarse el orgullo plástico de la Revolución Mexicana en la que hay grandes logros y enormes fracasos, pero así como la Mexicana fue la primera*

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[458] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinson a Odiseo*, Editorial Constancia, Mexico 1952, p. 60.
[459] Haufe, Hans, "Rivera, la historia y los mitos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 117.
[460] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudos Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, pp. 1423-1424.

Revolución del siglo xx, fue el muralismo la primera gran producción artística mundial después del quatroccento Italiano, en que tanto se inspiraron nuestros propios artistas. [461]

Octavio Paz writes: "Mexican painting is a chapter of the modern art. But, also, it is the painting of a people that has just discovered itself and, not wanting to be recognized for its past, looks for a historical project that locates itself in contemporary civilization. A painting with these ambitions needed [...] a philosophy that justified and transcended it. This need was not accidental, nor was it a product of the temperament or of the caprices of Mexican painters. It obeyed the same causes that led Vasconcelos – the first patron of the muralists – to found Mexican education on a philosophy of the "Cosmic Race" and that led the Revolution to look for a universal tradition that transcended its national limitations":

Nuestra pintura es un capítulo del arte moderno. Pero, asimismo, es la pintura de un pueblo que acaba de descubrirse a sí mismo y que, no contento con reconocerse en su pasado, busca una proyecto histórico que lo inserte en la civilización contemporánea. Una pintura con estas ambiciones necesitaba – salvo en el caso de Orozco, dispuesto a dejarse devorar por los extremos y que siempre se burló de las ideas – el concurso de una filosofía que la justificara y trascendiera. Esta necesidad no era accidental ni partía del temperamento o del capricho de los pintores Mexicanos. Obedecía a las mismas causas que llevaron a Vasconcelos − primer protector de los muralistas – a fundar la educación Mexicana en una filosofía de la "raza cósmica" y a la Revolución a buscar una tradición universal que trascendiese sus limitaciones nacionales. Ninguno de los sistemas que les ofrecía la realidad Mexicana podía satisfacer a los pintores; por eso volvieron los ojos hacia el Marxismo. [462]

Raquel Tibol writes that "in the beginning, the artists tried to give form to the neoclassical idealization of Vasconcelos; they painted rationalistic allegories and depicted pagan myths next to Christian myths and occultist signs. Before moving towards a civic, national, popular, political and revolutionary art, the painters asserted themselves in the familiar field of religious art":

Al comienzo los artistas trataron de dar forma a la idealidad neoclásica de Vasconcelos; se pintaron alegorías racionalistas para cuya grafía se emplearon mitos paganos junto a mitos cristianos y signos ocultistas. Antes de orientarse hacia un arte cívico, nacional, popular, político y revolucionario los pintores se afirmaron en lo conocido y consagrado: el arte religioso. [463]

Octavio Paz claims that muralist painting did not have the uniform ideological coloring that it later assumed and which led to its eventual petrification in a rhetoric of revolutionary commonplaces.

Debo mencionar ahora otro olvido, mucho más grave, de varios críticos e historiadores: en sus primeros años, entre 1921 y 1924, que fueron los que le dieron carácter y fisonomía, la pintura mural no tuvo la uniforme coloración ideológica que tendría después

[461] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 321.
[462] Paz, Octavio, "Los muralistas a primera vista", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 13.
[463] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 25.

y que acabó por petrificarla en una Retórica de lugares comunes revolucionarios. Para comprobarlo basta con echar un vistazo a los murales pintados en la etapa inicial. [464]

6) Vasconcelos: the Construction of a Myth

In the nineteenth century, under Porfiro Díaz, *Hispanicism* had been rejected in favor of a reorientation towards Europe. Vasconcelos tried to reinvigorate *Hispanicism* whilst not rejecting *indigenismo*. In the rediscovery and idealization of Cuauhtémoc, the construction of a Cuauhtémoc myth, he wanted to combine the two elements. Later, when he was no longer responsible for the muralist program, when he was no longer minister and did not need to be pragmatic, Vasconcelos abandoned this attitude and in his isolation denounced the whole program of muralism with its "foolishness", its *indigenismo*, etc. Thus Vasconcelos himself discounted the importance of muralism and, by denouncing the myth built by himself, separated himself from the history of muralism, from the process initiated by him, from the myth. Later in life, Vasconcelos's thought was characterized by feelings of resentment and contradiction; he was constantly trying to minimize his own actions and to deny that he had been the dominant figure in culture and education in Mexico. However, the government continued to use the program started by Vasconcelos in order to propagate its own myths through Rivera, with muralism now enrolled under the sign of the *Revolution*.

The key issue for Vasconcelos was to produce symbols and myths. The project of national salvation needed myths which Mexicans could identify themselves with. Vasconcelos's mission, the salvation of the Mexican homeland, required sacrifices from him and from everyone. If sacrifices were necessary, they would be made. Vasconcelos was perfectly conscious of this. When someone ommented on his contradictions, he replied: "I do not make history; I try to create a myth". [465] This statement is vitally important for the understanding of the affirmation process of post-revolutionary culture and Mexican Muralism.

In Vasconcelos's view, Mexico entered history with the Conquest, and the pre-Hispanic past of his country could be mined pragmatically as a reservoir of symbols. The pre-Hispanic past could not be extinguished, nor should it be idealized. Cuauhtémoc, the hero of the Aztec resistance, symbolized for Vasconcelos the last spasm of the weak in the claws of the powerful, the desperate and noble values of the conquered.

For many Mexicans, Cuauhtémoc was the symbol of autochthonous culture, of resistance to imperialism. In his *Breve Historia de México*, Vasconcelos writes:"The Cuauhtémoc myth was invented by Prescott and the North American historians, those who defend it are the indirect agents of the Protestantism that wants to erase all traces of the Spanish element in America":

El mito Cuauhtémoc lo inventan Prescott y los historiadores norteamericanos, lo defienden los agentes indirectos del protestantismo que quieren borrar toda huella de lo español en América. Si en México prescindimos de lo español, nos quedaremos como los negros, atenidos al padrinazgo dudoso de un Lincon que, sólo por razones políticas, abolió la esclavitud, o peor aun, un padrastro como Washington que mantuvo esclavos negros pese a sus timbres de libertador. El sentimentalismo en torno a Cuauhtémoc es parecido al que hoy manifiestan los influenciados inconscientes del imperialismo inglés, en favor del Negus de Abisinia, que antes de ser expulsado por los Italianos del reino que oprimía, ya se había hecho célebre entre sus salvajes conciudadanos por el asesinato, envenenamiento y prisión de rivales y parientes. Desventurados los pueblos que se empeñan en construir tradición con personajes semejantes; acaban por ser traicionados

[464] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 38.
[465] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 132.

por ellos, tal y como el Negus abandonó el país a la hora del peligro, a estilo Antonio López de Santa Anna, llevándose los fondos de todas las aduanas que atravesó en su fuga. [466]

Yet when Mexico had Tiffany's of New York make a replica of the monument of Cuauhtémoc which stands in the *Paseo de la Reforma*, and presented it to Brazil on the occasion of the Centennial of Brazilian Independence, it was Vasconcelos who spoke at the unveiling ceremony in Rio de Janeiro in October 1922. Vasconcelos's speech revealed an attitude diametrically opposed to the attitude cited above and to everything that he would say a decade later (and continue saying until his death) against *indigenismo* as a weapon of North American penetration. In the Rio de Janeiro speech, Vasconcelos proclaimed Cuauhtémoc the greatest and most popular Mexican hero, a hero who is sublime because he chose to surrender.

Un héroe sublime porque prefirió sucumbir a doblegarse, y por que su memoria molestará eternamente a los que tienen hábito de halagar al fuerte, y son esclavos incondicionales del éxito, en cualquiera de sus formas [...] el conjuro creador de una raza nueva, fuerte y vigorosa [...] la lucha desigual, la lucha eterna y sagrada del débil que posee la justicia contra el fuerte que la reemplaza con sus conveniencias [...] hermano [de Cortés] en la grandeza y el dolor [...] dos razas en perenne conflicto, hasta que la República [liberal, juarista] viniera a poner término a la pugna [...] Pues este indio es símbolo de la rebeldía del corazón [...] los incrédulos de hoy, lo mismo que los que aconsejaban a Cuauhtémoc que no batiese a los españoles, porque los españoles eran de raza superior, la raza civilizada, pasarán como pasaron los pusilánimes de antaño, sin dejar siquiera un rastro [...] Y ahora Cuauhtémoc renace porque ha llegado, para nuestros pueblos, la hora de la segunda Independencia, la Independencia de la civilización, la emancipación del Espíritu. [467]

In his foreword to Salvador Toscano's book, *Cuauhtémoc*, Rafael Heliodoro Valle refers to the "magnificent" speech which José Vasconcelos made when presenting the statue to Brazil.

[...] magnífico discurso con que José Vasconcelos entregó al Brasil la estatua del prócer [468]

These contradictory positions obviously pose problems of interpretation. I believe however that it would have been impossible for Vasconcelos to make such a magnificent speech if he had not believed in what he was saying. I believe that later Vasconcelos indeed tried to deny his participation in the construction of that myth, which had been more important to him than his own personal preferences.

On the other hand Vasconcelos declared in his speech that the Cuauhtémoc cult did not indicate the wish to return to the stone age of the *Aztecs*, as Mexico was not prepared to be the colony of any nation.

[...] claro está que la nación Mexicana, en su culto por Cuauhtémoc, no quiere significar un propósito de hacerse estrecha y de cerrar sus puertas al progreso; no pretendemos volver a la edad de piedra de los Aztecas, como no aceptaríamos ser colonia de ninguna nación. [469]

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[466] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, pp. 14-15.
[467] *Vasconcelos, José, Discursos 1920-1950*, Ediciones Botas, México, 1950, pp. 92-97. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 118.
[468] Toscano, Salvador, *Cuauhtémoc*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, pp. 13-14.
[469] Vasconcelos, José, "Discurso en el ofrecimiento que México hace al Brasil de una estatua de Cuauhtémoc", *José Vasconcelos, Discursos 1920-1950*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico, 1950, p. 96. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 96.

I believe that Vasconcelos was perfectly conscious that he was indeed creating a myth, despite the ironic attitude that he adopts in his memoirs. It was necessary to build a myth, a meta-myth, the myth of *Mexicanidad* or of the coalition of races, in order to solve all the problems and conflicts in Mexican history and culture. Even if later Vasconcelos renounced any sympathy for the figure of Cuauhtémoc, it was Vasconcelos's pragmaticism that led him to affirm Cuauhtémoc's importance in the re-construction of Mexican nationality. At the same time, Vasconcelos contributed to the construction of his own myth.

Once again, in his memoirs, Vasconcelos disclaimed his responsibility by asserting that he was thwarted in his offer of the statue of Cuauhtémoc to Brazil. "And to those that made me recognize the inconsistency, I said: I don't make history; I try to create a myth."

> *En vísperas de embarcarme para Río de Janeiro, Pansi me informó que estaba ya vaciada una réplica de la estatua de Cuauhtémoc del Paseo de la Reforma y que ése sería el obsequio de México al Centenario de la hermana República. [...] me puse a trabajar con el pensamiento y pergeñé un discurso que tuvo tanto éxito precisamente, según creo, porque se da en él a un Cuauhtémoc un poco fantástico, aderezado como símbolo de nuestros deseos de Independencia, pero no respecto de España, que nos dejó en paz hace un siglo, después de habernos criado, sino respecto del monroísmo, que es la amenaza viva y patente. Buena prueba de que no me atuve a la historia es que pongo en boca de Cuauhtémoc aquellas palabras sobre que no quería ni el cielo si en él había de hallarse entre españoles, palabras que son de no sé qué cacique antillano, si mal no recuerdo. Y a los que me hicieron observar la inconsecuencia, les dije:*
> *- No hago historia; intento crear un mito.* [470]

However, in his *Brief History of México,* he wrote that "the Conqueror's figure covers the homeland of the Mexican, from Sonora to Yucatan and further on in the territories lost by us, won by Cortés," while "Cuauhtémoc is, at most, the ancestor of the *otomí* of the plateau of Anáhuac, without any relationship to the rest of the country":

> *Y fortuna fué de México el haber sido creado por la primera raza del mundo civilizado de entonces, y por instrumento del primero de los capitanes de la época, el más grande de los conquistadores de todos los tiempos, Hernando Cortés, cuya figura nos envidia el anglosajón, más aun que los territorios que su conquista nos ha legado. Y el más grave daño moral que nos han hecho los imperialistas nuevos es el habernos habituado a ver en Cortés un extraño. ¡A pesar de que Cortés es nuestro, en grado mayor de lo que puede serlo Cuauhtémoc! La figura del Conquistador cubre la patria del Mexicano, desde Sonora hasta Yucatán y más allá en los territorios perdidos por nosotros, ganados por Cortés. En cambio, Cuauhtémoc es, a lo sumo, el antepasado de los otomíes de la meseta de Anáhuac, sin ninguna relación con el resto del país.* [471]

His praise for Cortés was the counterpoint to his earlier admiration for Mexico's biggest indigenous hero. Cuauhtémoc's statue, placed in a square in Rio de Janeiro, symbolised a decisive hour not only for Mexico but also for the whole of Latin America. This was Cuauhtémoc reborn, who returned at the moment of the second Independence.

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[470] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 131-132.
[471] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 14

[...] Y ahora Cuauhtémoc renace porque ha llegado para nuestros pueblos la hora de la segunda Independencia, la Independencia de la civilización, la emancipación del Espíritu, como corolario tardío, pero al fin inevitable de la emancipación política. [472]

Octavio Paz says that we cannot reduce history to the size of our bitterness and that the Cortés that Diego Rivera paints us is as false as the Cuauhtémoc that Vasconcelos describes.

No se puede reducir la historia al tamaño de nuestros rencores. El Cortés que nos pinta Diego Rivera es tan falso como el Cuauhtémoc que nos describe Vasconcelos. Si se empequeñece a uno de los antagonistas, se degrada al otro: Cuauhtémoc y Cortés son inseparables. [473]

7) Department of Fine Arts, the Directorate of Drawing and Work Manuals

Vasconcelos organized the Secretariat of Public Education in three big departments. One of them was the Department of Fine Arts. The Department of Fine Arts was divided into two sections: one oversaw the National Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnology, the National Music School, the Academy of Fine Arts, the Inspectorate of Artistic Monuments and the permanent Exhibition of Popular Art; the second included the Directorate of Aesthetic Culture, the Directorate of Physical Culture and the Directorate of Drawing and Work Manuals.

Vasconcelos believed that it was the government's duty to provide a lead in the popular arts and that one should not expect the people itself to accomplish this task. Later in his life, resentful and critical, Vasconcelos declared, "We deserve our lack of culture and the decadence of our popular arts, because the arts lack the inspiration of the ruling classes. This is the only impulse that could revive them, because it is nonsense to suppose that the people can invent forms of art by itself":

Nos merecemos, pues, nuestra incultura y la decadencia de nuestras artes populares que hace tiempo carecen del soplo que viene de arriba y él es el único que puede reanimarlas, pues es un disparate suponer que el pueblo inventa por sí solo las formas del arte. [474]

Vasconcelos says: "So coherent, so simple and vast was the plan contained in the short pages of a law which was sent to Congress shortly afterwards that somebody told me that D'Annunzio had described it, when a friend showed it to him in Italy, as a beautiful opera of social action. And I have always worried about the opinion of poets":

El Departamento de Bellas Artes tomó a su cargo, partiendo de la enseñanza del canto, el dibujo y la gimnasia en las escuelas, todos los institutos de cultura artística superior, tal como la antigua Academia de Bellas Artes, el Museo Nacional y los conservatorios de Música. También desde la escuela primaria operan juntos los tres departamentos, encargados cada uno de su función: las ciencias enseñadas por la escuela propiamente dicha; la gimnasia, el canto y el dibujo a cargo de especialistas y no del mismo maestro normal, y la Biblioteca al servicio de todos, en sus diversos departamentos: infantil,

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[472] Vasconcelos, José, "Discurso en el ofrecimiento que México hace al Brasil de una estatua de Cuauhtémoc", Vasconcelos, José, Cartas y documentos, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, t. II, p. 851. Quoted in Robles, Martha, *Entre el poder y las letras: Vasconcelos en sus memorias*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1991, p. 47.

[473] Paz, Octavio, "Dos mitos", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. I: *El peregrino en su patria, Historia y política de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz y Luis Mario Schneider, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 98.

[474] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 353.

técnico, literario, etc. Tan coherente, tan sencillo y vasto resultaba el plan contenido en las cortas páginas de una ley que en seguida fue al Congreso, que me han contado que D'Annunzio dijo de él, cuando un amigo se lo presentó en Italia, que era una bella ópera de acción social. Y siempre me ha preocupado la opinión de los poetas. [475]

Through art, literature and music, a completely new human being would create a new culture. Vasconcelos held that, "if art is not itself divine, it is, in its own way, a communion with the divinity":

Si el arte no es lo divino, sí es, a su manera, una comunión con la divinidad [476]

José Vasconcelos had foreseen how to incorporate art at different levels of national reality so that its influence could be widespread and cohesive. With this in mind, artists were included in the teaching programs, in the editorial departments, in the cultural missions and in the artistic program responsible for muralism.

Art was to be integrated into everyday life by means of artistic education and cultural missions. In terms of murals and graphics, an enormous quantity of public art was produced, which all Mexicans were supposed to be able to identify themselves with.

It is curious and ironic, for reasons that will be revealed later, to learn that Diego Rivera's first contribution to Vasconcelos's *Cultural Revolution* was not a mural but graphic design and illustrations. On Rivera's return to Mexico in October 1921, Vasconcelos had appointed him as consultant and designer to the Library Department. Rivera's first work for Vasconcelos was printed in the first number of volume 2 (October 1921) of *El Maestro.* Rivera illustrated the cover, and drew headings and *vignettes*, as well as illustrating *The Poem of the Mother* by Gabriela Mistral. [477]

José Clemente Orozco had already worked as an illustrator. In 1906-1907, he had made some illustrations in the *art nouveau* style for an article in *El Mundo Ilustrado*. In 1921**,** he drew *vignettes* for the popular Spanish editions of Euripides, Plato and Plotinus, as part of a cultural project developed by Vasconcelos. Orozco was also employed by the Department of Libraries and Editions. Rivera said much later that Vasconcelos acted "with stupid unconsciousness, lack of taste and discernment; he made the genius of modern American plastic arts an employee of the Department of Libraries and Editions, where he made vignettes for the editions of the classics":

Y cuando "degenerada" en gobierno la Revolución del golpe de Agua Prieta puso de rector de la Universidad Nacional a José Vasconcelos éste, con estúpida inconsciencia, falta de gusto y criterio, nombró al genio de la plástica moderna americana como empleado del Departamento de Bibliotecas y Ediciones para hacer viñetitas destinadas a las ediciones de los clásicos. José Clemente no decía esto, pero se sobrentendía claramente en sus palabras iracundas y amargas: "¡Aquí no se puede hacer nada! [478]

Rivera never mentioned the fact that he himself had done illustrative work on returning to Mexico. He preferred to say that he came back from Europe on a mission which he (and the revolutionary forces) had prepared long in advance: to produce mural painting. In fact, the illustrations he made for Vasconcelos's program were very different from the Marxist themes which he claimed to champion.

Raquel Tibol:

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[475] Ibid, pp. 19-20.
[476] Vasconcelos, José, *El monismo estético: ensayos*, Editorial Cultura, Mexico 1918, p. 80. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 386.
[477] See Vasconcelos and Rivera together in picture 19.
[478] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, p. 145.

> *[...] la primera aportación plástica de Rivera a la Revolución cultural vasconceliana no fue la pintura mural sino el diseño gráfico y el dibujo ilustrativo* [479]

As a subdivision of the Department of Fine Arts, the Directorate of Drawing and Work Manuals was created. The painter Adolfo Best Maugard was put in charge of the Directorate. According to Vasconcelos, the Directorate's task was twofold: on one hand, to encourage graphic and pictorial activities in the primary and secondary schools, under the direction of painters or Fine Arts students; on the other hand, to elaborate a drawing method which would give artistic teaching a relatively uniform and fundamentally nationalist orientation. Adolfo Best Maugard elaborated the method which would take his name and which gave the teaching of drawing a national character.

Best Maugard had been in Paris at the same time as Diego Rivera, and he had also experienced cubism and futurism. On his return to Mexico, he drew his inspiration from Mexican crafts. His painting was based essentially on the stylization of the ornamental elements (flowers, plants, animals, etc.) that appear in the traditional crafts. Together with Montenegro, Best Maugard organized the first exhibition of popular Mexican art, a momentous exhibition that taught visitors to appreciate typically Mexican art and reinforced the nationalism that was on the increase in the arts.

In October 1921, Adolfo Best Maugard organized the ceremonies commemorating Mexican Independence. After the ceremonies, which were considered as the painter's personal triumph, Vasconcelos entrusted Best Maugard with the task of organizing a national artistic education:

> *[...] normalizar la enseñanza del dibujo y trabajos manuales en las escuelas primarias, así como en las normales y técnicas del Distrito Federal.* [480]

Enthusiasm for popular and for indigenous culture was very important to Vasconcelos. Adolfo Best Maugard was most responsive to this idea, and, on Vasconcelos's request, he produced a drawing manual that the Secretariat published and distributed extensively to schools.

Maugard's task was to standardise the teaching of drawing and manual work in the primary schools, as well as in the normal and technical schools in the Federal District. Maugard's method had a patriotic and an educational aim; the starting point was a return to the Mexican artistic tradition that had been forgotten or supplanted by fashions from abroad. The fundamental and unifying principle of the Best Maugard method was the synthesis of the different currents which, according to him, formed the origins of Mexican art: the indigenous current, that of colonial art, and that of oriental art, "imported" by the ships that traded with the distant East and put in at Mexican harbors. In order to discover the formula of Mexican art and to transmit it to his pupils, he decided to write a kind of grammar of drawing. The study of more than two thousand pottery designs, which he had undertaken for the German American anthropologist and ethnologist Franz Boas, provided him with the basic elements. Best Maugard produced the alphabet of Mexican art, that is to say, the fundamental figures starting from which one can develop any drawing according to Mexican principles.

His method ignored the European canons of form, drawing from the model and pictoral harmony in favor of topics taken from the incipient archaeological knowledge about the *Aztecs* and the Mayas, and from handmade artifacts from diverse domestic regions, such as Michoacán, Oaxaca, etc. When asked if his

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[479] Tibol, Raquel, *Diego Rivera Ilustrador*, SEP, Mexico 1986, p. 20. Quoted in Mejorada, Alícia Sánchez, "Un buen libro sobre Rivera", *Artes Plásticas*, Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. 2, nr. 6, December 1987, p. 84.

[480] "Informe que rinde la Dirección de Dibujo y Trabajos Manuales sobre las labores llevadas a cabo durante el año de 1922", *Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública*, I, 3, Mexico, p. 378. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 435.

method was not too restrictive on the students, Best Maugard answered that this was irrelevant; the main thing was that the students painted as Mexicans:

> *Tal vez, pero no importa. No hay que renunciar a las influencias extranjeras: tan sólo se necesita Mexicanizarlas.* [481]

By 1922, there were drawing courses in sixty-six institutions in the Federal District, with seventy-five professors and five thousand nine hundred and forty-eight students. In 1923 the number of teachers had not increased, but the Best Maugard method was being applied in two hundred and forty-eight primary schools, two normal schools and four technical schools in the Federal District. Around seventy-one thousand students were being taught. The Best Maugard method was published in an edition of fifteen thousand and distributed to art teachers throughout the Federal District in a ceremony November 6, 1923. The plan was to train two thousand new teachers, in order to spread the method throughout the whole country, but this objective could not be achieved because of restrictions on the budget. [482]

Vasconcelos contrasts the Best Maugard method favorably with the teaching methods which it replaced, European-orientated methods described critically by Vasconcelos thus: "The children copied noses, ears, eyes, mouths, hands and even the feet of a big and noble race, but it was not ours."

> *Los niños copiaban narices, orejas, ojos, bocas, manos y hasta pies de una raza grande y noble, pero que no era la nuestra.* [483]

The Best Maugard method advocated the construction of ornamental themes based on the fundamental elements and not on the direct observation of the reality. The idea was to form the student's taste starting from "nationalist approaches". Adolfo Best Maugard based his teaching deliberately on aesthetic principles derived from the study of the monuments, of the cloths, of pre-Columbian pottery:

> *Yo creo que la fuente del arte pictórico nacional es el motivo indio, motivo primordial que se fue desenvolviendo poco a poco, marginando más tarde los motivos criollos y coloniales.* [484]

His method is based on "the seven lineal elements of the indigenous and popular Mexican arts". Indigenous meant national. This division into seven elements appears in the Method of Drawing which was part of the regular curriculum in courses on Drawing and Manual Works. These courses were introduced by Vasconcelos in 1922.

Adolfo Best Maugard: "a popular art [is an art] that creates nationality, that creates a homeland."

> *[...] es innegable que fomentar la evolución del arte nacional − y con esto queremos decir arte popular − es hacer nacionalidad, es hacer patria.* [485]

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[481] del Sena, Juan, "Best Maugard y su sistema de enseñanza artística", *El Universal Ilustrado*, July 6 1922, p. 61.
[482] About those "successes" obtained thanks to the Best method, see Vasconcelos, José, *Indología*, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, v. II, pp. 1259-1260.
[483] "Informe que rinde la Dirección de Dibujo y Trabajos Manuales sobre las labores llevadas a cabo durante el año de 1922", *Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública*, II, 5-6, Mexico, p. 456. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 444.
[484] Leblanc, Oscar, "¿Cuál debe ser la fuente del arte pictórico nacional?", *El Universal Ilustrado*, March 8 1923, p. 22.
[485] Best Maugard, Adolfo, *Método de Dibujo, tradición, resurgimiento y evolución del arte Mexicano*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1923, pp. 16-17.

Another important issue for the *obregonist* government was to present a positive image of Mexico through showing Mexican art abroad. Exhibitions of popular art were sent abroad and were very well received. The sceneries and the clothes devised by Montenegro and Best Maugard were particularly successful.

Charlot:

> *Best was the first to parade a distinctive Mexican art through foreign capitals, and to prove the truth of Martí's pithy saying of fifty years before: "Mexican painting has a great future − outside Mexico." The sets and costumes that Best designed for Anna Pavlova's "Mexican Ballet" were endorsed both by Paris and New York. In Mexico the acceptance of his plastic theories dates from the centennial celebrations of 1921, of which Best was appointed master of ceremonies.* [486]

Not everyone agreed with this approach. Some disparaged the educational system of Best Maugard and Jorge Enciso as a way of spreading a touristic *Mexicanism*. A dispute arose between, on one hand, Best Maugard, Enciso, Montenegro and Dr. Atl (who used simple decorations from the minor arts and enlarged them to suit the larger dimensions of mural works) and on the other, Rivera and Siqueiros, who wanted to link their works to the monumental traditions of the pyramids, temples, etc of pre-Hispanic Mexico.

Siqueiros defined the inspiration and aim of Mexican art as a monumental pre-Hispanic art, not as an art (like that of Montenegro and Best Maugard) influenced by the decorations of the minor arts, such as ceramics.

In his speeches at the time, Vasconcelos advocated an art which drew inspiration from the classic heritage, the colonial past, and the old indigenous culture. Adolfo Best Maugard based his teaching deliberately on aesthetic principles derived from the study of the monuments, the fabrics, and the pottery of the pre-Columbian period.

8) The trip to Yucatan, 1921

The cultural program of the *Athenaeum*, which related essentially to European philosophical idealism, did not fully include the cultural potential of Indian reality. To change this, Vasconcelos took a number of intellectuals and artists to visit the "real" Mexico. The aim was to find new sources of inspiration in what was viewed as authentic and genuine.

At the end of November 1921, the newly appointed Secretary of Public Education left for Yucatan. Vasconcelos traveled with Roberto Montenegro, Adolfo Best Maugard, Diego Rivera, Jaime Torres Bodet, Carlos Pellicer and Pedro Henríquez Ureña. The group visited Yucatan and Campeche on a trip lasting until December 11. Vasconcelos's desire to use the trip to find inspiration for Mexican art as a whole clearly reflects his interest in the movement for local culture. Jean Charlot wrote:

> *Following his Medici-like habit, Vasconcelos took Rivera on the trip, along with his usual artist-courtiers, Best and Montenegro. Whatever emotions Rivera felt at the Vera Cruz landing were intensified by contact with a quasi-mythical people, proud of ruins matched only by those of Egypt, and whose social reforms were more extreme even than those of the Mexican plateau.* [487]

The group arrived at Progreso on November 26, 1921 and reached the capital, Mérida, on the following day.Yucatan, which was suffering economically from a disastrous slump in the market for hemp, was in a state of complete political and pedagogic transformation. The minister was greeted by a crowd and a

[486] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 62.
[487] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 134.

delegation of Yucatan teachers, who continuously demonstrated their enthusiasm throughout Vasconcelos's visit.

Vasconcelos: "I didn't know the peninsula and I had a lively desire to visit its Spanish cities."

> *No conocía la península y tenía vivos deseos de visitar sus ciudades españolas: Mérida y Valladolid; sus célebres ruinas de Uxmal y Chichén-ltzá. Y acompañado de un grupo de artistas: Diego de Rivera, Montenegro, Adolfo Best, y de literatos como Torres Bodet, Pellicer, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, tomé el barco de la línea Ward y una tarde luminosa desembarcamos en las arenas de Progreso, ante la curiosidad de inmenso gentío de albos trajes, a la usanza de la tierra caliente, y sombreros de palma.* [488]

Vasconcelos had always been extremely careful concerning local autonomy and had encouraged bilingualism (Mayan and Castilian) in schools. In some primary schools only Mayan dialects were spoken. However, Vasconcelos did not want the inhabitants from Yucatan to become Mayan again. He had nurtured his idea for a long time: he wanted to see a fusion of races, *The Cosmic Race*, which would lead to a new culture and new art forms: neither direct imports from Europe nor direct borrowings from indigenous sources but a synthesis of the Spanish legacy and the indigenous cultures. Vasconcelos did not believe that all forms of artistic life had to bear a European stamp because "the secret of success will be, as always, in a synthesis of human life":

> *[...] el secreto del éxito se encontrará, como siempre, en una síntesis de la vida humana, porque el arte es eso, la expresión profunda y sintética del verdadero sentir humano de cada época.* [489]

In the *El Universal Ilustrado* Roberto Barrios reports what Vasconcelos had to say during the trip to Yucatán: "Literary and artistic life in Yucatan was very dull, as artists there had spent a whole century imitating the French and the English, and imitation can never be a success."

> *La vida literaria y artística es muy mezquina, porque lleva un siglo de estar imitando lo francés y lo inglés, y lo que es imitación no puede ser un éxito. Sólo llegaremos a tener verdadero arte y verdadera literatura cuando se fundan en una cultura nueva y total las distintas razas que forman nuestra Nacionalidad, y los elementos indígenas con los importados.* [490]

The trip to Yucatan confirmed Vasconcelos's view that education and culture were inseparable and should be seen and understood globally in the social-political context of the Mexican reality. He expounded on this theme repeatedly between 1920 and 1924, sketching vast historical frescos that described the main stages of national becoming.

According to Vasconcelos: "The system of influencing indigenous art and of being influenced by it had begun."

> *Se inició el sistema de influir y dejarse influir por el arte indígena.*[491]

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[488] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 88.
[489] Barrios, Roberto "Lo que Vasconcelos opina de Yucatán", *El Universal* Ilustrado, nr. 242, December 22 1921, p. 25.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Vasconcelos, José, *Indología*, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, v. II, p. 1256.

One person who benefited immensely from the trip and the impressions it made on him was Diego Rivera. "Later, in the Secretariat of Public Education in 1923, Diego Rivera would use on the walls the material that had he had collected in Yucatan and the states of the interior of the country from his arrival in 1921."

> *Diego Rivera habría más tarde, en la Secretaria de Educación Pública, en 1923, a emplear en los muros el material que había recogido en Yucatán y los Estados del interior del país desde su llegada en 1921. Ese material se completó con el que recogió en el intertrópico y trópico (Tehuantepec) los meses de abril y mayo de ese 1922, y por todo el país durante 1922.* [492]

9) The project of Mexican mural painting

In this part of my work I consider the mural art produced during the period when José Vasconcelos was still Secretary, attempting to clarify his role in the muralism program and to describe the relationships that he established with the various artists and his attitude toward their works in this first stage of the *Mexican Mural Movement*.

José Vasconcelos endowed muralism with a mission of cultural redemption and a pedagogic task that reflected the humanist credo and the epic poetry of the *Revolution*: to overcome the cultural stagnation which Mexico had sunk into and to rediscover a nobler mission. Muralism would transform the post-revolutionary chaos into a cultural space for reflection. Its program would humiliate barbarism and enable the people to acquire consciousness about themselves and their possibilities. The old order would give place to a new order, through a program of national rediscovery, a program which recognised the country's historical and cultural inheritance, a program which used classical ideals as a point of reference and used revolutionary energy to produce new aesthetic ideas. This was Vasconcelos's main aim. However, his program was frequently criticized as a series of religious digressions, devoid of a proper intellectual framework. I believe that Vasconcelos's program is more coherent than he himself admitted. It is true that Vasconcelos's initial project ended up being depreciated and was later diverted towards "revolutionary" ends, but Vasconcelos built the structure. I believe in fact that he did not impose only disconnected esoteric themes on the painters.

Mexico at this stage had enormous problems. One of the main problems was cultural alienation and the lack of cultural activity. Many Mexicans were illiterate, had only vague ideas about the past, and no ideas whatsoever about the future. It was necessary to give them hope. Muralism had a twofold mission: cultural regeneration and hope. It was necessary to create new myths.

For Vasconcelos, muralism and the new aesthetics were not a product or consequence of the *Revolution* but the end of the *Revolution*, its antithesis. Vasconcelos attempted to create something new. The idea was that art should help people relate to one another, to unite them in the movement towards new structures. The Mexican people has its own sense of beauty, it possesses deep aesthetic feelings; art would give people back their hopes and help them to rebuild a decimated and devastated country. Art would be a means of union among men, of union between the intellectuals and a people that yesterday was in arms and today was already facing increased struggles between the social classes. The bourgeoisie considered that, as it had led the *Revolution*, it was natural that it should be in charge of the postlude. The bourgeoisie was determined to do this despite being under pressure from imperialist forces and the landowning interests associated with them. Vasconcelos saw artistic activities as part of the battle. Muralism was a weapon in this war against barbarism and bourgeois ideas of art.

Essentially, the development of muralist painting was, starting from 1921, parallel to that of the members of the *Youth's Athenaeum*: it was necessary for them to discover a new mysticism. Vasconcelos believed he had

[492] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 276.

found it in the aesthetic emotion. Vasconcelos's maxim: "because man is small, he should be perpetuated in big works":

> *Como el hombre es pequeño debe perpetuarse en obras grandes.* [493]

But the idea that Vasconcelos's program was only esoteric, orientalist and vague is false. The proof is that he accepted and encouraged the mythology of the *Revolution*, of Zapatism, etc., as part of an integrative program of nationalist redemption. It was not developments such as the evolution of *The Machete* (which indeed supported him when he ran for election in Oaxaca), the Union, etc., that caused him to leave the program, but his dismay at the excessive opportunism in Mexican politics. He had engaged Leal (who painted Zapata, etc.) and had allowed him to paint whatever he wanted. He had also employed Siqueiros, who was known to be a revolutionary.

Vasconcelos saw the justification of the existence of art in its own nature; according to him, art allows man to unfold his gifts of spiritual overabundance.

> *[...] permite al hombre desenvolver sus dones de superabundancia espiritual* [494]

For him art was a spiritual exercise and an antechamber to divine knowledge.

> *[...] un ejercicio espiritual y una antesala del conocimiento divino.* [495]

Convinced that art was the road leading Latin America to the height of its development, he devoted all his efforts to diffusing and propagating art. The classic past, and the philosophy originating from *Ariel*, by the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, are the sources that motivated him, during the *Mexican Revolution*, to defend the creation of an autochthonous culture, reinforced by the Greek and Judeo-Christian ideals brought to Mexico by Spain.

For Nicola Coleby, the social, nationalist vision, evidenced in the first murals, corresponded to a nationalism belonging to the spiritual utopia whose roots are in the modernist ideas of Rodó, a vision that can be traced back to certain positions in German Romanticism.

> *La visión social, nacionalista, en los primeros murales, correspondía a un nacionalismo perteneciente a esta utopía espiritual cuyas raíces se hallan en las ideas modernistas de Rodó, una visión que finalmente se relaciona con los planteamientos surgidos del Romanticismo alemán.* [496]

The *Revolution* was a struggle for independence from Mexico's northern neighbor. The humiliation that Mexico had been subject to after independence should end. A cultural nationalism would be the solution. Rubén Darío's *hispanoamericanist* thought is the sign of the acquisition of a national identity, the striving for originality, for a genuinely Mexican artistic achievement. The *Revolution* gave Mexican artists confidence in themselves and gave their projects coherence and direction, virtues that the artists presented on public buildings and portrayed in popular engravings so that all Mexicans could share in them.

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[493] Declarations of José Vasconcelos to Antonio Rodríguez, transcribed in Orozco Valladares, Clemente, *Orozco, verdad cronológica*, México, Universidad de Guadalajara, 1983, pp. 110-111. Quoted in Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera y la creación del arte nacional", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 103.

[494] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinson a Odiseo*, Editorial Constancia, Mexico 1952, p. 39.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Coleby, Nicola J.E., *La construcción de una estética: el Ateneo de la Juventud, Vasconcelos, y la primera etapa de la pintura mural posrevolucionária, 1921-1924*, UNAM, Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras, Mexico 1985, conclusiones.

> *El arte Mexicano, gracias a la Revolución, desde 1910 hasta 1950 floreció casi de manera totalmente independiente del coloniaje europeocentrista de los siglos anteriores.* [497]

Over time *Mexican Muralism* gained a high reputation. It obtained recognition beyond the frontiers of Mexico and ended up influencing artistic movements not only in Latin American countries but also in United States.

The Mexican muralist program

The origins of the Mexican muralist program, and the question of who painted the movement's first mural, are crucial issues in an evaluation of muralism and in understanding the controversies that raged over the origin of muralism. In this section I will analyze Vasconcelos's pioneering role and how Rivera, displaying a good deal of opportunism, disparaged the work of his former friends, who began painting murals before him, and played down the role of Vasconcelos.

Vasconcelos had initiated the fine arts and muralist programs while still Rector of the National University. He invited several painters (including Roberto Montenegro, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Amado de la Cueva, Adolfo Best Maugard and Ignacio Asúnsolo) who were then living in exile to return to work in Mexico. Vasconcelos summoned these painters to participate in his national project, and he put walls at their disposal. Vasconcelos's action was unique. For the first time in the history of modern Mexico, the artists were given surfaces to paint and the opportunity to express themselves. Vasconcelos offered them the walls of public buildings and encouraged them to carry out an ambitious and indeed unparalleled program. Many of these painters had already acquired solid experience in Europe. Roberto Montenegro, Best Maugard, and Diego Rivera took charge of the walls of public buildings, working alongside less well-known yet still significant painters. Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, Fernando Leal and Fermín Revueltas, among others, belonged to the so-called first generation of Mexican muralists.

However, to the question "who started it", the answer of Antonio Rodríguez is:

> *Someone must have started it, but who he was led to much controversy later on. Fernando Leal has one version, Diego Rivera another; José Vasconcelos, the minister, describes events in a certain sequence and Lombardo Toledano, director of the Escuela Preparatoria, in a different one.* [498]

In his book *A History of Mexican Mural Painting* (1969), Rodríguez claims that it would be futile to try to find out whether it was Vasconcelos or somebody else who had summoned the painters and put the walls at their disposal:

> *It would be [...] futile to try and find out whether it was Vasconcelos, the engineer Pani, Lombardo Toledano or President Obregón himself who summoned the painters and put the walls at their disposal. Mural painting was part of the vast cultural programme of the Revolution which, as we have seen, also included building schools and stadiums, starting secondary and technical colleges, publishing 'classic' literature, and organizing performances of operas for the masses. Whoever put all this into practice was carrying out a general policy, not that of one man or of a government, but of a Revolutionary movement, which for two decades had convulsed the country down to its innermost depths. Moreover, it is now established without a doubt that all the politicians had an equal share*

[497] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 306.
[498] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 157.

in carrying out the project. [...] There is no doubt that the president approved of it and that it was put into effect by the Revolutionary government. That is all that matters. [499]

It is natural that the Portuguese born critic Antonio Rodríguez ended up vulgarizing one of the main questions posed by this thesis, that is, who was responsible for the movement and initiated its program, who had the idea of bringing painters to the project. Rodriguez wanted to reveal and to synthesize a Mexican national feeling: that the greatness of Mexican mural paintings, the national pride, is bigger than muralism's origins, disputes, ideologies, controversies, scandals, etc. Rodriguez himself had had disagreements with Rivera (who did not speak to him for a long time) but in the end he covers the subject up. A similar attitude was in evidence when Rivera's detractors attended his funeral.

For the Guatemalan critic Luis Cardoza y Aragón, the question of who painted the first mural is of no great importance:

Se ha discutido quién pintó el primer mural al fresco. La iniciación ha sido atribuida a varios artistas. Para mí no presenta mayor importancia esta discusión. Sin la Revolución, ¿qué muralismo se hubiera pintado? Sin Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco y David Alfaro Siqueiros, ¿qué habría acontecido? [500]

Jean Charlot is one of the few personalities involved in the Mexican muralism whose accounts appear to be trustworthy. Unlike many others, his report seems to be neutral, and he is less inclined to indulge in polemics. He seems to be a more objective observer, despite his direct involvement in the process. Charlot describes Vasconcelos and his role thus: "The mural movement was launched during his term as Secretary of Education under Obregón."

It is to this Creole type, contrasting in dress and customs with Indian and mestizo, who alone are the topics of travelogues, that José Vasconcelos belongs by birth and by choice. He once aptly characterized his physique as that of the petty bureaucrat. He wears black, and instead of the pistol bulge at the loins that mars the politico's jacket, one feels that the void between his arm and hip should be filled by the portfolio of the process server. This unpicturesque gentleman is the deus ex machina of the Mexican Renaissance. The mural movement was launched during his term as Secretary of Education under Obregón (1921-24); walls, material expenses, artists' salaries, and, most important of all, stylistic freedom, all those indispensable ingredients were procured through him personally and were in fact corollaries of his own philosophy applied to the social system. [501]

Contrary to what has sometimes been suggested, Vasconcelos did not get involved in the work of the artists or try to impose his own tastes. The critic José Juan Tablada praised Vasconcelos's action in the arts:

[...] decisiva y salvadora"; por último, aplaude su negativa a "atentar contra la personalidad del artista" e "imponerle sus gustos. [502]

In November 1923, when muralism was being criticized from all sides, Vasconcelos used an interview with a journalist of *El Universal* to define his own aesthetic and 'administrative' position: "as Secretary of Public Education, I am not allowed to have preferences amongst the painters and sculptors. I only try to offer all elements the opportunity to work, without worrying myself much about the work itself [...] There has been a lot painted in the last three years. I was able to attract artists who had been in Europe. These artists had been disenfranchised, but now they paint as they painted abroad, well or badly, but on a large scale":

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[499] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 158.
[500] Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, *Pintura contemporánea de México*, Ediciones Era, Serie Mayor, Mexico 1974, p. 162.
[501] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 82.
[502] Tablada, José Juan, "El arte, los artistas y el público", *Revista de Revistas*, September 16 1923, p. 37.

Como Ministro de la Educación Pública no tengo derecho de tener preferencias entre los pintores y los escultores. Me limito a procurar ofrecer a todos elementos para que trabajen, sin preocuparme mucho del trabajo mismo. [...] Se ha pintado mucho en los últimos tres años. A todos los que estaban en Europa conseguí atraerlos y creo que se han desafrancesado y ahora pintan como se pintaba en la Colonia, bien o mal, pero en grande. Una de las primeras observaciones que les hice fue la que deberíamos liquidar el arte de salón para restablecer la pintura mural y el lienzo en grande. El cuadro de salón, les dije, constituye un arte burgués, un arte servil que el Estado no debe patrocinar, porque está destinado al adorno de la casa rica y no al deleite del público. Un verdadero artista no debe sacrificar su talento a la vanidad de un necio o a la pedantería de un 'connaisseur'. El verdadero artista debe trabajar para el arte y para la religión, y la religión moderna, el moderno fetiche, es el Estado socialista, organizado para el bien común, por eso nosotros no hemos hecho exposiciones para vender cuadritos, sino obras decorativas en escuelas y edificios del Estado. Después les he dicho que toda mi estética pictórica se reduce a dos términos: que pinten pronto y que llenen muchos muros: velocidad y superficie. Como sé que tienen talento, con eso basta. En realidad, estimo a los pintores, y creo que si tuviéramos una generación de músicos comparable a la de los pintores, en producción autóctona y abundante, el nombre de México correría por el mundo. En cuanto obra perdurable, ¿qué cosa es obra perdurable? [503]

The Guatemalan artist Carlos Mérida also attributes the success of Mexican painting to Vasconcelos:

Debo advertir que casi siempre las grandes épocas de todos los pueblos han sido sostenidas por la protección oficial ya sea en forma de un Papa generoso como Julio Segundo o de un democrático Ministro como lo es el gran José Vasconcelos; es gracias a este último que la pintura en México ha tomado ya proporciones definitivas, a tal grado que el movimiento nuevo se tiene como continental. [504]

Later, in his memoirs, when referring to the inauguration of the Ibero-American Library, José Vasconcelos uses the expression "I planned in order to paint":

Inauguramos una biblioteca al costado de la Secretaría, en la antigua y hermosa nave de un templo que de otro modo hubiese ido a dar a manos de los militares. Asistió el cuerpo diplomático; leí un discurso cuyo tema no recuerdo. En el lienzo del ábside, Montenegro había pintado conquistadores, monjas y misioneros. Un gran retrato de Bolívar, pintado por un venezolano que estuvo de paso entre nosotros, decoraba el muro del fondo. Bajo el coro proyectaba yo mandar pintar la entrevista de Guayaquil, en que Bolívar y San Martín sellaron la armonía del Continente. Diego Rivera, que todavía no pintaba monos para los políticos, me había pedido ser él quien se encargase del mural hispanoamericanizante, hispanizante. [505]

According to Vasconcelos the responsibility was in the hands of the *Maecenas*: "it is necessary that the functions of the State devolve on intelligent and very prepared people, because the artist abandoned to his own resources can do nothing and, in the present times, only the Government can be both Maecenas and director, and organize both the superior activities and the smallest."

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[503] Ortega, "José Vasconcelos", *El Universal Ilustrado*, November 23 1923, pp. 35, 88-89.
[504] Mérida, Carlos, "Los Nuevos Valores en la Pintura Mexicana", *Revista de Revistas*, May 18 1924. Also published in Mérida, Carlos, *Escritos sobre arte: el muralismo*. Selección de textos y cronología de Xavier Guzmán, Colección Artes Plásticas, INBA, CENIDIAP, Mexico 1987, p. 17.
[505] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 214.

[...] la necesidad de que las funciones del Estado recaigan en personas inteligentes y bien preparadas, pues no puede hacer nada el artista abandonado a sus propios recursos y es el Gobierno quien únicamente puede, en los tiempos que corren, hacerse Mecenas y director, sistematizador de las actividades superiores, así como de las menores. [506]

There can be no doubt that it was Vasconcelos who "gave the orders." It was Vasconcelos who had the political responsibility, the money and the projects. And it was Vasconcelos who had a vision of the transformation of Mexico through culture and the arts. I believe that Mexican muralism should be seen in this context.

Nevertheless, the role played by Vasconcelos has often been disparaged and minimized. Rivera (and others) always tried to minimize the importance of the work done before he started painting murals. This is not an 'innocent' attitude. By claiming that works that predate his do not "exist" or were unimportant, Rivera tries to increase the importance of his own role:

Aparte del grupo de Coyoacán, sólo había la tendencia decorativa "nacionalista", es decir, se empezaban a enjarrar los muros de San Pedro y San Pablo y Best Maugard trabajaba solo en su casa y "era casi todo". [507]

Throughout his entire artistic career, Rivera underlined the importance of his re-encounter with Mexico on his return from Europe, claiming that he launched the muralism movement in Mexico, fulfilling a directive from the Parallel Congress, a communist organization:

"Y así provisto – dice Rivera − empecé el recorrido de México que me había de dar el material para 38 años de trabajo. " También por esto empecé la pintura mural en México, como un argumento, ante mis colegas del Congreso Paralelo. [508]

In his version of how muralism began and who started it, Rivera denies that Vasconcelos played any important part. On the contrary, according to Rivera, the beginning of the muralist movement was as follows: "There entered as my assistants, because of the interest in the new form of painting, Firmín Revueltas, Fernando Leal, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Carlos Mérida, Jean Charlot, Ernesto García Cahero and [...] Xavier Guerrero, who knew colloquially and thoroughly the technique of the Mexican fresco. [...] These boys then added money, cent by cent, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano's contribution and, with these extremely small resources, began to paint in the cube of the vestibule of the School: Firmin Revueltas: 'La Virgen de Guadalupe en medio de la nacionalidad Mexicana', to the encaustic technique, Ramón Alva de la Canal, 'La llegada de la Santa Cruz, al fresco and Ernesto García Cahero 'Los primeros misioneros' to the encaustic technique." [...] "Vasconcelos realized that the movement was important and – with his typical opportunism – sat down to preside over the table that Lombard Toledano and ourselves had laid."

Comienzo del movimiento muralista

"Entraron de ayudantes mios, por interés por la nueva modalidad de la pintura Firmín Revueltas, Fernando Leal, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Carlos Mérida, Jean Charlot, Ernesto García Cahero y, más que como ayudante, como verdadero asesor técnico, pintor y dorador y, de hecho maestro en técnica de pintura mural − salvo de la encaustica que sólo yo conocía − Xavier Guerrero, quién conocía familiarmente y a fondo la técnica del fresco Mexicano. "Era entonces director de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria y miembro del Grupo Solidario del Movimiento Obrero fundado por mí, Vicente Lombardo Toledano. "Como entonces le daban casa, Vicente − que siempre había sido dotado para el dibujo y muy interesado por las artes plásticas − dió de su sueldo lo que hubiera pagado de renta,

[506] Ibid, p. 17.
[507] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura y otras cosas que no lo son", *La Falange*, México, August 1th 1923, pp. 269-271.
[508] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, pp. 35-36.

para que se pintara y un grupo de muchachos, los "cachuchas", encabezados por Frida, José Gómez Robleda, Gómez Arias, etc., y los "machetero" integrados por Gabriel Ramos Millán, Enrique Parra, Miguel Alemán, Rogelio de la Selva y otros ahora próceres ilustres. "Estos muchachos de entonces, centavo a centavo, agregaron dinero a la parte de Vicente y, con estos recursos exguísimos, empezaron a pintar en el cubo del zaguán, de la Escuela: Firmin Revueltas: La Virgen de Guadalupe en medio de la nacionalidad Mexicana, a la encáustica Ramón Alva de la Canal, "La llegada de la Santa Cruz, al fresco; y Ernesto García Cahero "Los primeros misioneros a la encáustica. "Por entonces, Vasconcelos se dió cuenta de que el movimiento tomaba importancia y con su oportunismo típico se sentó a presidir la mesa que Lombardo Toledano y nosotros habíamos puesto y encargó, siempre a través de Lombardo y de la SEP, a Fernando Leal y a Jean Charlot los muros de la escalera del patio grande. [509]

Murals: A question of technique

Siqueiros writes that both Roberto Montenegro and Xavier Guerrero "were correct in saying that they had begun to paint walls before Rivera," but Rivera was also right when claiming that "what they had done was not mural painting, but the decoration of *bateas*":

Sin duda alguna, Roberto Montenegro y Xavier Guerrero tenían razón al afirmar que ellos habían empezado a pintar en las paredes antes que Rivera, pero también Rivera tenía razón al sostener que lo que habían hecho no era pintura mural, sino decoración de bateas, en este caso, una batea gigantesca quizá de más de mil quinientos metros cúbicos. [510]

Siqueiros wrote that "as a boy [Xavier Guerrero] had begun learning to paint in his father's shop; his father was an artisan who decorated houses [...]. Thus Xavier Guerrero knew the popular recipes employed in the *pulquerías* painting":

Xavier Guerrero, desde niño había iniciado el aprendizaje de la pintura en el taller de su padre, artesano decorador de casas. El taller estaba organizado en forma mutualista bajo el nombre de Isabel Guerrero e hijos. Xavier Guerrero conocía pues recetas populares empleadas en la pintura de pulquerías. [511]

Xavier Guerrero collaborated with Diego Rivera in 1922 on the murals of the National Preparatory School and, later, at the Secretariat of Public Education. He contributed his knowledge of fresco technique, which he had learned from his father. The murals at the Secretariat of Public Education involved many technical problems. Initially, Xavier Guerrero had visited Teotihuacán to study the techniques of pre-Hispanic painting and as a result agave sap was used as a binding agent, but this organic matter decomposed and the work began to crumble. Eventually modern chemicals were used – a technique pioneered by Diego Rivera.

Siqueiros sees Xavier Guerrero as "the mysterious pure Aztec, who became a *Tarahumara* (one of the indigenous peoples in northern Mexico) by means of the influence of geography":

Xavier Guerrero "el misterioso Azteca puro, transformado en tarahumara por obra de la influencia geográfica, Xavier Guerrero [512]

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[509] Ibid.
[510] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 180. Batea in Mexico is a tray or flat-bottomed bowl of different fashions and sizes.
[511] Ibid, p. 204.
[512] Ibid.

Siqueiros describes the encounter with Guerrero and how the muralists, who had until then used encaustic techniques, were dazzled by the knowledge of this "Indian". Although Siqueiros's memoirs do contain many factual errors, his testimony is still valuable: "an Indian of pure race, strangely *chaparro* for one from the North, appeared one day in our childish life of muralists. The new arrival had the name Xavier Guerrero. [...] Our new partner, don Xavier Guerrero, using the doctoral language that is habitual to him, answered in the following way: 'I am a painter of walls, grandson of a painter of walls, and great-grandson of a painter of walls'."

> *Entregados por completo a los brazos de la encáustica, brazos felizmente de mujer, por su obvia feminidad fonética y gramatical, sin que los brazos masculinos del fresco estuvieran a nuestro alcance, sucedió algo positivamente conmocionador: un indio de pura raza, extrañamente chaparro por provenir del Norte, apareció un día en nuestra vida infantil de muralistas. El aparecido se llamaba Xavier Guerrero. [...] Nuestro nuevo socio, don Xavier Guerrero, con el lenguaje doctoral que le es habitual, respondió de la manera siguiente: "Yo soy pintor de paredes, nieto de pintor de paredes y biznieto de pintor de paredes. Y aunque nací en Chihuahua, la tierra de Siqueiros, soy de origen tolteca puro, porque mis padres eran del Valle de México, y de un lugar próximo a las pirámides de Teotihuacán. Por todo lo que antes he dicho, puedo asegurarles que ese procedimiento que ustedes llaman al fresco es el que se usa para pintar todas esas cocinas color de almagre que existen de un extremo a otro de la república, particularmente en los estados del interior. Y además, que todas las iglesias de la región de Cholula, en Puebla [...] Naturalmente, no salimos de aquella región sin localizar a los maestros y oficiales, simplemente albañiles, que decoraban entonces con formas geométricas los templos de la zona. De hecho, los secuestramos, desde luego al más enterado de todos ellos, y pocos días después, José Clemente Orozco, Ramón Alva de la Canal y Jean Charlot empezaron la segunda etapa de sus obras con el nuevo procedimiento, porque en cuanto a Diego, Revueltas, a Leal y a García Cahero, tuvieron que continuar sus trabajos con las pinturas ya iniciadas, con encáustica.* [513]

Charlot painted frescos using the techniques detailed in Pierre Baudoin's book, which Rivera had lent him. He began much later than Leal but was ambitious and persevering. Charlot wrote that his fresco was the first post-colonial mural al fresco. Rivera strongly disagreed and wrote Charlot off as an impudent *francesillo* (little French boy) with a superiority complex:

> *"Leal pintó a la encáustica y Charlot al fresco según la receta del libro de Pierre Baudoin que yo le facilité. Empezó mucho después de Leal, pero ambicioso y tesonero escribió que su fresco es el primero después de la época colonial. [...] "Cuando la insurrección Delahuartista, a mediados de 1923, estaban concluidos los frescos del primer patio y los del vestíbulo y hall de la Escalera de la Escuela de Chapingo en donde fueron mis ayudantes: el mismo Xavier Guerrero, Ramón Alva Guadarrama, habilísimo pintor popular discípulo y ayudante del fresquista Petronilo Monroy. "Justamente las obras de Monroy y de otros, reducen al ridículo la afirmación audaz del francesillo con complejo de superioridad que Charlot colocó en su fresco de la Preparatoria.* [514]

For Octavio Paz "the first real fresco", in the same building, was the work of Jean Charlot, but he used cement and other ingredients that damaged the colors. Actually, the first fresco was that of Ramón Alva de la Canal:

> *El primer fresco de verdad, en el mismo edificio, fue obra de Jean Charlot, pero usó cemento y otros ingredientes que dañaron los colores. En realidad, el primer fresco fue el de Ramón Alva de la Canal. Tuvo el buen sentido de escuchar a uno de los albañiles que*

[513] Ibid, pp. 188-189.
[514] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 36.

trabajaban con él y se sirvió de la técnica popular con que se pintaban las pulquerías. Rivera aprovechó más tarde, con talento, esta técnica. Por desgracia, antes de adoptarla, en varios muros de la Secretaria de Educación Pública usó un compuesto de jugo de nopal y colorantes. Fue idea de Xavier Guerrero, según parece; el resultado fue una pifia: al cabo de poco tiempo las pinturas se cubrieron de ampollas y para salvarlas hubo que cubrirlas con una delgada capa de cera. ¿Por cuánto tiempo? El fresco de Alva de la Canal, terminado en 1922, es excelente. [515]

In his book *Me llamaban el Coronelazo* (*They called me the Coronelazo),* Siqueiros discusses the question of who painted the first mural in Mexico. According to Siqueiros: "I soon discovered that among the painters a poisonous debate had begun about the primacy of the muralist execution. Roberto Montenegro, Xavier Guerrero and Dr. Atl had already begun by the time Rivera came back to Mexico". According to Siqueiros: "Diego Rivera didn't try to deny the facts of this chronology. His reply consisted in claiming that he had begun 'the so-called properly mural painting' in the Amphitheater of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria":

En la práctica, concretamente, ¿cómo había empezado nuestro movimiento muralista? Descubrí desde luego que entre los pintores se había iniciado un emponzoñado debate sobre la primacía de la ejecución muralista. Roberto Montenegro Y Xavier Guerrero sostenían que cuando Diego llegó a México, de regreso de Europa, ellos estaban produciendo la decoración interior del viejo templo de San Pedro y San Pablo. El Doctor Atl, por su parte, afirmaba que "cuando el panzón Rivera retornó a México", él ya había trazado, borrado y vuelto a trazar para trazar de nuevo, la primera parte de un mural en el exconvento del mismo templo. Diego Rivera no intentaba desmentir la verdad de tal cronología. Su réplica consistía en sostener que "pintura mural propiamente dicha", la había iniciado él en el Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, pues "decorar bateas, como lo habían hecho Roberto Montenegro y Xavier Guerrero, en San Pedro y San Pablo, no era hacer eso, pintura mural". "En cuanto a lo intentado por el Dr. Atl, sólo podía decir que era la obra de la momia de Miguel Ángel y esto con quinientos años de retraso." Roberto Montenegro, además, proclamaba por todas partes que el primero en pronunciar la sagrada frase de "En México, pintura Mexicana y sólo pintura Mexicana", había sido él. [516]

This topic led to much acrimony. Later we will see how Rivera, with his customary exaggerations, turned the controversy to his advantage. According to Rivera: "The first of our group to work al fresco, by the way with remarkable success, was Ramón Alva de la Canal, who used the theoretical suggestions that I gave to him in line with my practicing of this technique in Paris, and my learning of it in Italy in 1920; as well as the practical suggestions of Xavier Guerrero, who as a decorative popular Mexican painter knew this technique, and he really taught it to the group. Jean Charlot took advantage of having finished his fresco at the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* a little before Ramón Alva de la Canal, who had already been working for three months before Charlot began, to write in a pompous plate that his fresco was the first one executed in Mexico after the colonial time. This is a lie."

El primero de nuestro grupo que trabajó al fresco, por cierto con éxito notable, fue Ramón Alva de la Canal quien se sirvió de las indicaciones teóricas que le hice de acuerdo con mis ensayos de esta técnica en París y mi aprendizaje de ella en Italia en 1920, y de las indicaciones prácticas de Xavier Guerrero, que como pintor decorador popular Mexicano conocía esta técnica y realmente la enseñó al grupo. Jean Charlot aprovechó el hecho de haber terminado su fresco de la Preparatoria un poco antes que Ramón Alva de la Canal,

[515] Paz, Octavio, "Repaso en forma de preámbulo", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, pp. 21-22.
[516] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 179.

el que ya tenía tres meses de trabajar antes de que Charlot empezara, para escribir en una cartela pomposa que su fresco era el primero ejecutado en México después de la época colonial. Esto es una mentira, no sólo respecto al trabajo de Ramón Alva de la Canal, sino al del pintor Mexicano religioso del siglo XIX, Petronilo Monroy, con el que trabajó como ayudante Ramón Alva Guadarrama, conocedor absoluto de la técnica del fresco, en la realización de las cuatro mujeres fuertes que pintó Monroy al fresco en la iglesia de Tizayuca, así como en otros frescos pintados en Tenancingo. Cientos de frescos fueron pintados en la provincia Mexicana durante el siglo XIX y no había pintor decorador popular, como lo eran Xavier Guerrero y Ramón Alva Guadarrama, que no conociera esta técnica. Así es que, la afirmación de Charlot constituye no sólo una mentira histórica, sino también una acción de carácter discriminatoria para la pintura Mexicana. Cualquiera que sea la estimación o sentimiento profesional que se tenga por el pintor Charlot, hoy plenamente desarrollado, esta falsificación debe ser liquidada oficialmente por la historia del arte Mexicano y por esto hago esta declaración categórica, mientras viven aún Alva de la Canal, Guerrero y otros testigos. [517]

Jean Charlot wrote that Jorge Enciso could justifiably claim to be the first to paint murals.

The claim could be shrugged off by Jorge Enciso, whose two friezes on Mexican themes date from a decade earlier, but it is true that his were an isolated effort, soon destroyed and forgotten, while the commission given to Montenegro ushers in the unbroken cycle of government-sponsored mural painting that is still part of our present after forty years. [518]

Even Antonio Rodríguez ended up saying that there was no doubt that Roberto Montenegro and his assistants were the first in the field.

There seems little doubt that Roberto Montenegro and his assistants Nicolás Guerrero, Hermilo Juárez, Gabriel Fernández Ledezma (sic) and Xavier Guerrero were the first in the field. They decorated the old church of San Pedro y San Pablo − now the press library − with motives taken from popular art. [519]

Mexican Muralism as "Renaissance"

Muralism produced passion. From the very beginning it was customary to speak of a "Renaissance". [520] The term did not refer to the Italian *quattrocento* but rather to the cultural rebirth of Mexico, as Vasconcelos had intended. According to his vision, steeped in Renaissance references, it had been necessary to wait for the *Revolution* until the "cultural and artistic Renaissance" could take place in Mexico. Vasconcelos's ambition was to present the genuine expression of the country together with its possibilities for the future and to give the masses a synthesis of their desires. Muralism would benefit the masses by structuring their consciousness and assisting them in their social and cultural organization. Mexican culture, from the regime of Obregón onwards, looked for its own specific roots; it tried to 'rediscover' Mexico.

El Renacimiento. Al día siguiente de que se hiciera acto la pintura mural Mexicana se empezó a hablar de un "Renacimiento Mexicano", Orozco incluido. De entrada suena a

[517] Rivera, Diego, "Disertación de Diego Rivera sobre la técnica de la encáustica y del fresco, Relatada a Juan O'Gorman", *Diego Rivera, 50 años de su labor artística*, INBA, Mexico 1951, pp. 269-273,
[518] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 99.
[519] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 157.
[520] The critic José Juan Tablada spoke of the concept of an artistic Renaissance in Mexico in an article for *International Studio*, as early as 1923. Even Dr. Atl, Vasconcelos, the historian Ernest Gruening (who is maybe best known for his fight against USA's military involvement in Vietnam), and Anita Brenner (in 1925) used the term "Renaissance".

contrasentido. Pero esa que podríamos calificar de leyenda publicitaria tenía sus puntos de apoyo, por más que suenen extralógicos. [...] No hay duda de que la cultura Mexicana, a partir por lo menos del régimen de Obregón, buscó sus propias raíces, lo específicamente propio; trató de "redescubrir" a México. Había, pues, un "renacer" de México, de un México − según la interpretación de entonces − oculto o agazapado bajo lo importado o impuesto. (El Manifiesto llega a pregonar al arte popular como "el mejor arte del mundo", no se sabe bien por que). [521]

Mexicans were enthusiastic about discovering themselves, about renewal, about creating their own culture.

El entusiasmo de México por descubrirse a sí mismo, por renovarse, por crear una cultura propia, fue llamado "El Renacimiento Mexicano" y, en verdad, que recuerda, a distancia y no obstante las exageraciones, al Renacimiento. [522]

For Carlos Monsiváis, "the Mexican Renaissance", to which the new state lent a triumphant atmosphere, took advantage of ancient impulses and mythological achievements.

Una sociedad insegura y dividida sólo se cohesionará si comparte mística educativa y visiones épicas de la historia. El propósito se obtiene muy insuficientemente, pero da pie al movimiento que inicia Diego Rivera, llamado por algunos "El Renacimiento Mexicano", al que el Estado nuevo le presta su atmósfera triunfalista, aprovechándose retributivamente de sus impulsos y logros mitológicos. [523]

In spite of each artist's personal characteristics a group notion existed, which justifies the use of the term "school". All the artists participated in a first phase of common enthusiasm and shared ideals. This gave the cohesion that makes it possible to refer to the phenomenon as the "Mexican Renaissance".

José Juan Tablada wrote, in January 1923, that "after a long academic sleep, the old Aztec art has inspired a national Renaissance". [524] For Cardoza y Aragón, "the pictorial movement that arose in Mexico for the Revolution is unique, powerful and enlightened in the history of the arts in America":

El movimiento pictórico que surgió en México por la Revolución es único, poderoso y esclarecido en la historia de la plástica de América. Y hablo de un movimiento por lo abierto, y no de una escuela, que me da una idea limitadora y cerrada, aunque algunos tiendan a que sea más una escuela que un movimiento. [525]

In December 1923, Diego Rivera, reviewing his activities of the previous two years, said: "it would be dangerous to exaggerate. People have talked about a Renaissance. One might consider it a Renaissance or not, or, if God permits, it may be the best thing, that is to say birth":

Cierto que, por lo que al arte concierne, lo más interesante en México es en este momento la pintura, pero sería peligroso exagerar, alguien ha hablado de renacimiento [...] No

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[521] Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, et al., *Orozco: una relectura*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1983, p. 175.
[522] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 489.
[523] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Diego Rivera, creador de públicos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 3.
[524] "Mexican Painting Today", *International Studio*, January 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 11.
[525] Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, *Pintura contemporánea de México*, Ediciones Era, Serie Mayor, Mexico 1974, p. 147.

señores; nosotros nada sabemos de si esto, será renacimiento o no, o, si Dios permite que sea lo mejor, es decir, que sea nacimiento; por favor no teoricemos, no pedanticemos ni seamos impacientes; hay pintor que teniendo el encargo de cubrir una superficie de cientos de metros cuadrados y llevando sólo hecho, muy bien hecho, un pequeñito plafón, se impacienta y malhumora porque todos los megáfonos gigantes de la radiotelefonía de la Fama, no proclaman ya su gran valer. [526]

Later, Rivera called "Mexican Renaissance" a presumptuous and inexact term: "The sophistry or bad faith which produces such a term tries to hide the fact that the Mexican artistic tradition has never been interrupted, and even the *al fresco* technique has always been known and used":

Todos admiten que existe con fisonomía particular que ha interesado al mundo entero, un periodo de la pintura Mexicana que comprende los últimos 20 años: 1921-1941. Los escritores sobre cosas de arte designan generalmente ese periodo bajo los siguientes membretes, que usan según convienen a los intereses del crítico o ensayista, del pintor, de los enemigos del pintor, o de los comerciantes en cuadros y objetos de arte, por cuenta, en favor o en contra de cuyos intereses hablen: "Renacimiento Mexicano", designación la más presuntuosa e inexacta, que induce a aceptar el arte de México entre el público que sueña con vírgenes de Rafael, Miguel Ángel o Giotto y en viajes por Italia y el resto de Europa, después de haber seguido cursos con el propósito de comprender el arte y memorizar su historia, público que necesita para ver cuadros, consultar la autoridad de un guía Bedeker. La ligereza o mala fe al dominar tal periodo, trata de ocultar el hecho de que la tradición plástica Mexicana jamás ha sido interrumpida, y aun como técnica nunca ha dejado de saberse pintar y se ha pintado siempre, al fresco. [527]

Rivera always used the term "Mexican Renaissance" in quotation marks and referred to the expression with a certain irony and distance:

[...] ese bello movimiento artístico, al que los críticos de arte europeo y americanos llaman el "Renacimiento Mexicano". [528]

Jean Charlot, in his book *The Mexican Mural Renaissance*, *1920-1925* uses the term without critical or ironic undertones:

This book records the beginnings of the contemporary Mexican mural Renaissance, especially the activities during 1920-25, when Siqueiros, Orozco, Rivera, and the others groped through their first mural tasks, not yet knowing where they would emerge. My desire to tell its story comes in part from a concern for the history of aesthetics, for to have assisted at the birth of a national style is a rare event, as well worth recording as the birth of a volcano. But I have been moved also by a more subjective urge, inasmuch as the story of the making of the Mexican Renaissance encompasses the autobiography of my early twenties. [529]

Some painters spoke of a connection between the Italy of the Renaissance and post-*Revolutionary* Mexico. One such painter was Dr. Atl:

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[526] *Azulejos*, tomo II, nr. 2, December 1923, pp. 26-41. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 53.
[527] Rivera, Diego, "Mi querido Antonio Ruiz, alias 'El Corzo'", Foreword to the book *Antonio M. Ruiz: Su obra plástica*, February 20 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 247.
[528] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 130.
[529] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, preface.

[...] las grandes conmociones sociales originan en los pueblos de carácter pasional grandes transformaciones mentales y una gran intensificación de los sentimientos artísticos [530]

According to Dr. Atl, Mexican national culture before the *Revolution* had frequently been relegated to second place, scorned in favor of anything that came from abroad, whereas after the *Revolution*, Mexican culture experienced a vigorous resurgence, understood by the public and stimulated by the government.

Antes de la Revolución, la cultura nacional Mexicana frecuentemente se había visto relegada a un sitio despreciable, desdeñada por todo lo que venía del extranjero. [...] La Revolución [...] vino a enmendar esta situación, y [...] un vigoroso renacimiento se inicia, comprendido y estimulado por el público y por los hombres del gobierno actual. [531]



Figure 41. Roberto Montenegro: *The Tree of Life*. San Pedro y an Pablo's Assembly Hall, Mexico City [532]

The first mural: *The Tree of Life* in San Pedro y San Pablo's Assembly hall

According to Vasconcelos: "Here, [*San Pedro y San Pablo*'s Assembly hall] was where the mural painting truly began, and to Roberto Montenegro belongs the merit of having executed that work with a Goethian topic that I gave him."

Aquí, [El Salón de Actos de San Pedro y San Pablo] fué verdaderamente en donde se inició la pintura mural y cabe a Roberto Montenegro el mérito de haber realizado esa obra con un tema goethiano que le di. [533]

The artist who executed the first mural in modern time in Mexico was Roberto Montenegro. Montenegro was born in Guadalajara in 1885 and died in Mexico in 1968. He made an outstanding contribution to José Vasconcelos's artistic and cultural projects during the latter's time as Secretary of Public Education. Montenegro, who had worked on the *Modern Magazine*, the main organ of Modernism in Mexico at the beginning of the century, had remained studying and working in Europe from 1906 to 1919, following a course quite similar to that of Diego Rivera. When Montenegro returned to Mexico, Vasconcelos incorporated him in his program of cultural rebirth. Montenegro worked with Vasconcelos on numerous occasions; he illustrated books, designed stained glass windows and painted murals. His constant presence at

[530] Dr. Atl, "¿Renacimiento artístico?", *El Universal*, July 13 1923. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 426.
[531] Doctor Atl, "La importancia y los fines del Congreso de Escritores y Artistas", *El Heraldo*, May 16 1923. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 531.
[532] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 36.
[533] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", Hoy, February 19 1949. Typed copy in the CENIDIAP.

Vasconcelos's side in these years was notorious. As Rivera says in several texts, Montenegro rediscovered the country. He saw the Mexican people, their customs and crafts with 'new eyes', as he reports in his memoirs *Planos en el tiempo*.

Vasconcelos presided over a rediscovery of popular crafts. In 1921, Jorge Enciso and Roberto Montenegro organized a popular "exhibition of retrospective art" with a catalog produced by Gerardo Murillo. This was a significant exhibition insofar as it contributed to the revaluation of a specifically Mexican culture; it taught visitors to enjoy Mexican art and reaffirmed the nationalism that was starting to spread throughout the arts. On the arrival of Diego Rivera in June 1921, Montenegro, Enciso, Guerrero, and Ledesma had begun to paint the paintings in *San Pedro y San Pablo*'s old church using egg tempera, as well as producing the stained glass windows designed by Montenegro. These had a pronounced symbolist and *fin de siècle* flavor; they appeared to be semi-religious hermetic allegories, even when *Mexicanist* topics appeared next to those "signs" copied from the traditional crafts as recommended by Adolfo Best Maugard in his project of artistic education.

Roberto Montenegro, who had already made mural decorations for the Palm Casino in Majorca, Spain in 1919, claimed that the first mural painted in Mexico at this epoch was his own mural at *San Pedro y San Pablo* in 1921. In an interview granted to the critic Antonio Rodríguez he affirms: "I don't claim anything; it doesn't interest me to have or not to have that paternity. But since you ask me that, I should tell you that the first mural that was painted in Mexico, in our time, it was my mural at *San Pedro y San Pablo*":

> *Yo no reclamo nada, no me interesa tener o no tener esa paternidad. Pero ya que me le preguntan, debo decirle el primer mural que se pintó en México, en nuestra época, fue el mío de San Pedro y San Pablo.*
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> *- Durante mis viajes en Italia, yo había visto muchos murales. Y naturalmente, como los otros compañeros míos, sentí el deseo de repetir en México, lo que tanto me emocionara en la patria de Giotto.*
>
> *- Para poder llevarlo a cabo fácilmente, tomé clases con Guido Gadorini, quien me enseñó el procedimiento del fresco.* [534]

And Montenegro continues: "Because I had the luck to arrive in Mexico before the other painters (I arrived in October of 1919 and Diego says that he arrived in the middle of 1921) I received a commission to paint murals before them."

> *- Como tuve la suerte de llegar a México primero que los otros pintores (llegué en octubre de 1919 y Diego dice que llegó en mediados de 1921) recibí un encargo de pintar murales antes que ellos.* [535]

José Vasconcelos, whilst still Rector of the University and Director of the National Preparatory School [536] had commissioned Roberto Montenegro and his assistants to paint the first mural. The future Secretary of Education entrusted them with the decoration of the former Maximum College of *San Pedro y San Pablo*, which was to be transformed into an annex to the National Preparatory School. This fact has been consistently ignored or played down. Not only was the work painted before Rivera painted the *Anfiteatro Bolívar*, but also it was painted on Vasconcelos's initiative, a fact which has hitherto been accorded little importance. It has been claimed that this work had little to do with the following program and even less in common with the program that followed Vasconcelos's resignation as Secretary of Public Education. But to clarify the issue there are the written references in official documents and newspapers, the testimonies of Vasconcelos and others, as well as the words of Montenegro, the artist himself.

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[534] Ibid.
[535] Ibid.
[536] Vasconcelos became Secretary of Public Education first in October 1921.

From the documents and testimonies I had access to I conclude that José Vasconcelos, in May 1921, while Rivera was still in Europe, commissioned the first mural. I have no reason to doubt that it was Vasconcelos who was behind the whole program of muralism and who gave orders and suggestions, whilst still allowing the artists who worked with him plenty of creative freedom. Vasconcelos confirms that the idea of carrying out a monumental public art came from him. He had been familiar with the big mural paintings that decorate the walls of the Italian churches and the big sculptures that adorn the facades of the Gothic cathedrals, and he had wanted to make something similar in Mexico: "Indeed [...] Vasconcelos admits, the idea of carrying out a public monumental art came from me [...]."

> *Efectivamente [...] confiesa Vasconcelos -, la idea de realizar un arte monumental público partió de mí, yo recordaba las grandes pinturas murales que decoraban las paredes de las iglesias Italianas y las grandes esculturas que adornan las fachadas de las catedrales góticas y quise que hiciéramos aquí algo semejante. − A veces solía decir, que como el hombre es pequeño, debe perpetuarse en obras grandes. Otras veces, un tanto en broma, yo decía que deberíamos hacer pinturas en las paredes, para que los gringos, en el caso de invadirnos, otra vez, no pudiesen llevarlas. − Y con estas ideas y estas frases comencé a preparar las bases para el movimiento muralista actual.* [537]

Roberto Montenegro's task was to paint a mural in the apse of the old temple of *San Pedro y San Pablo*.

According to Charlot:

> *The Secretary must have felt fortified in his choice when the one-man show of easel paintings that Montenegro opened at the San Carlos Academy on June 6, 1921, proved an outstanding success.*[538]

Vasconcelos wanted to accomplish a grandiose work, but, as Vasconcelos himself later modestly admitted, neither he nor the painter knew what to represent. In an "unclear sentence" Vasconcelos suggested an ambitious theme: "Action. It defeats fate. Win!" Later, in one of his autobiographical books, Vasconcelos, bitterly self-critical, described the topic that he had proposed to the artist as a "goethian foolishness". But it seems that Vasconcelos's theme was more than a goethian foolishness and not as casual as he later wanted people to believe. This "goethian foolishness" is revealing of the ethical concerns of the then Secretary of Education and his preference for topics with an archaic and mysterious flavor.

Rodríguez says: "In fact there was no silliness in the proposed topic. The aim was to incite the man to defeat the fate by means of the action."

> *En realidad no había nada de tonto en el tema propuesto. Se trataba de incitar al hombre a vencer al destino por medio de la acción. Pero el pintor, en quien los ideales de la sociedad que se estaba gestando no habían encendido la llama de una creación audaz, se limitó a pintar, a todo el tamaño del ábside del antiguo templo, un árbol frondoso (¿árbol de la ciencia?) bajo el cual se cobijaban, en diversas actitudes, doce mujeres y un hombre representando, al parecer, a la ciencia y a las artes.* [539]

Even for Esther Acevedo "This idea agrees with the Vasconcelist watchword of Acting on a large scale.'"

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[537] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", Hoy, February 19 1949. Typed copy in the CENIDIAP.
[538] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 97.
[539] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera y La creación del arte nacional", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 104.

> *Esta idea concuerda con la consigna vasconcelista de Actuar en grande, relacionada con su aspiración a la grandeza y su culto al héroe, cuya audacia y energía le permiten destacar por sobre la indiferencia de la naturaleza e imponerse al tiempo y al destino.* [540]

Roberto Montenegro's painting was monumental. Gabriel Fernández Ledesma assisted with the interior decoration, providing designs on special tiles used for architectural decoration, and Jorge Enciso contributed ornamental topics taken from popular artefacts.

> *En el ábside de esta ex iglesia inició Montenegro el movimiento de pintura mural que después ha trascendido más allá de la nación y es hoy práctica norteamericana. La obra, sin embargo, adolece de pobreza del asunto. No hallábamos qué representar, y di al pintor como tema una tontería goethiana: «¡Acción supera al destino: vence!»* [541]

The Jesuits had founded San Pedro's Maximum College on their arrival in New Spain, and it opened its doors in 1574. During the *Revolution*, it was used as a barracks. José Vasconcelos was determined to recover it for educational purposes. In 1921, he decided to renovate it, and in 1922, he transformed it into an annex to the National Preparatory School.

According to Charlot,

> *Vasconcelos then proceeded "to transform the church into a lecture hall, to repair the vaulted ceiling and cleanse the walls. The job was put in the hands of the artists Roberto Montenegro and Jorge Enciso"* [542]

Vasconcelos: "During the Reformation, the best convents were transformed into barracks. Ships as beautiful as that of *San Pedro y San Pablo* served the troop as their toilets.":

> *Durante la Reforma, los mejores conventos quedaron convertidos en cuarteles. Naves tan hermosas como la de San Pedro y San Pablo servían a la tropa para sus retretes. Y ni siquiera se habían instalado con higiene. [...] En San Pedro y San Pablo instalamos en la iglesia rescatada una sala de conferencias o de discusiones libres; en los viejos patios, que estaban a medio derruir y obstruidos por los escombros, levantamos el actual anexo de la Preparatoria. Fue necesario sacar toneladas de tierra para poner a luz las hermosas columnas de piedra del primer patio; en el segundo patio había una sola línea de arcadas de estilo Italiano, impecable. Inmediatamente construimos las otras tres, según el mismo estilo; quedó así cerrado el patio, que es hoy uno de los más hermosos de la capital.* [543]

Vasconcelos ordered the interior to be decorated with ornamental tiles designed by Roberto Montenegro and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma. Xavier Guerrero, helped by Hermilio Jiménez, painted (in tempera) ornamental borders of birds, flowers and vegetation, in gold, rose, blue and green according to the style of the michoacan *bateas*, the pottery of Tonalá and other examples of popular art. Three figurative stained glass window were made by Roberto Montenegro and Jorge Enciso. Vasconcelos's description of the work is full of nationalist pride.

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[540] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 46.
[541] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 26.
[542] Vasconcelos, José, *Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública*, 1, Mexico 1922, p. 484. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 97.
[543] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 24-25.

Recuerdo la ocasión en que asistimos un grupo de los más íntimos colaboradores a contemplar la vidriera artística que acababa de terminar Montenegro en el Salón de Discusiones del antiguo San Pedro. Anteriormente todas las vidrieras de color, hasta los emplomados más vulgares, se encomendaban a casas francesa o Italianas, productoras de horribles modelos en estilo cromo. Al descubrirse la obra de Montenegro, alguien la comparó con una vidriera que por esos mismos días había estrenado el Palacio de Hierro en su nuevo edificio, encomendado a ingenieros y artesanos traídos de Francia.

- Es muy superior − convinieron todos − , por el colorido del dibujo y aun por la solidez, la obra de Montenegro.

- Ya lo creo − expuse yo -; como que lo del Palacio de Hierro es obra de extranjeros [...] No puede el extranjero competir con nosotros. Estas palabras en un pueblo vigoroso suelen ser arrogancia y «chauvinismo». En un pueblo como el nuestro, enfermo de un justificado complejo de inferioridad, eran parte de la tarea del educador, utilizaban los triunfos de aquel incipiente renacimiento, para despertar los ánimos e infundirles confianza en las propias capacidades. [544]

Montenegro, helped by Fernández Ledesma and Julio Castellano, painted (using tempera) the mural *The Tree of Life* in the old apse. Vasconcelos recognized in Roberto Montenegro an artist who could produce national art. Montenegro combined forms from the popular arts into very rich compositions, heavily esoteric in content, and philosophically and aesthetically faithful to Vasconcelos's precepts. Montenegro fulfilled Vasconcelos's expectations; colonial elements and indigenous elements were united to form a Spanish American work of art.

The tree occupies a large vertical part of the composition. The lower part shows a man dressed in armor flanked symmetrically by a dozen female figures. Five of the women carry diverse objects, such as a celestial globe, a bow with a red arrow pointed at the man in the center of the composition, a cluster of grapes, a golden box; and one of the women, who is brown-skinned and wears Mexican clothing, holds a flower. The heterogeneity of these objects prevents identification with the attributes of well known allegorical figures such as the sciences and the arts, the muses or the virtues. Some critics have suggested that the mural presents a symbolic personification of the hours, so that the basic idea expressed by the mural would be "the man who fights conquers what time wears out". The mural's ornamental exuberance is suggestive of Byzantine splendors and evokes Vasconcelos's beloved East. At the same time, the general forms of the tree and the particular forms of the branches, leaves and flowers and the varied fauna that inhabits the tree are reminiscent of the ornamentation of *bateas*, large chests and other products of popular crafts. The topics painted in arches and vaults of the nave feature a similar ornamentation, thus establishing a general harmony. The typology of these figures, some of Hellenic appearance, others of a different physiognomy, as well as the formal organization of the composition, reappear in Diego Rivera's *The Creation,* which is highly reminiscent of Montenegro's work. The appearance of these elements in two works indicates that Vasconcelos's intentions were not as casual as he later asserted.

Despite being an Indian with a Mexican education, Xavier Guerrero painted the signs of the zodiac in the dome of the former sacristy in the northeastern part of the chapel. Enciso painted some sections of *San Pedro y San Pablo*'s former chapel, such as the decorations of the door and the floor of the entrance which have now been destroyed.

The subject of the date of the beginning of this mural is, as already noted, controversial. On this contentious subject of the date Charlot affirms that the mural was not finished in 1921:

[544] Ibid, p. 81.

Despite the successive unveilings, the decoration was still far from finished. Hopes were expressed in May 1922 that "Don Roberto Montenegro and Jorge Enciso [...] will soon offer to the public the fruit of their labors." [545]

And Charlot continues:

By September 1922 the auditorium "lacks only benches to be open to the public." [546]

Charlot, again:

Though commissioned long before, the panel was painted in 1922. In May Julio Torri reports in Azulejos: "Montenegro is working on the cartoon of the center decoration which promises to be splendid and of unmatched sumptuousness." A photograph of a corner of the artist's studio, with its walls pinned with charcoal studies of the Work was interrupted on July 21, when Vasconcelos left to represent Mexico at Brazil's Centennial Fair, along with Montenegro as the delegate of Mexico City's Cultural Board. The painter was back in Mexico in September, and the panel was finished soon after. News photographs showing the artist standing before the finished wall appear at the end of October. [547]

Octavio Paz affirms that, "In the church Roberto Montenegro finished the first mural of the movement in 1921. Montenegro had painted it in tempera, and the mural soon began to peel off."

En la iglesia Roberto Montenegro terminó, en 1921, el primer mural del movimiento. Lo pintó al temple y pronto empezó a desprenderse. [548]

Jean Charlot claimed, erroneously, that the mural was painted in oil.

The absidial wall was painted in oils with "The Dance of the Hours" as a theme. It was the first mural to be commissioned by Vasconcelos, who proudly stated in his memoirs: "Montenegro started there the movement of Mexican Painting that later transcended national boundaries and is today an accepted United States practice." [549]

Charlot's mistake is possibly due to the fact that the unfortunate restoration of this mural was done in oil.

The Court of Free Discussions, or the Court of Conferences and of Free Discussions, with its "Hindustani inspiration," was inaugurated, with the President in attendance, in October 1922, the month in which Montenegro finished his mural. The official description reads: "[...] the old colonial Mexican style had been adopted and it was commended to the artist don Roberto Montenegro."

[...] se ha adoptado el estilo antiguo colonial Mexicano y quedó encomendada al artista don Roberto Montenegro quien ha inaugurado ya dos hermosos vitrales que representan uno la danza y otro el comercio. Aparte de los vitrales se ha construido un lambrín de azulejos de estilo antiguo, ejecutado en las fábricas de cerámica de Aguascalientes y

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[545] *Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública*, 1 (1921), p. 484. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 99.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 99-100.
[548] Paz, Octavio, "Repaso en forma de preámbulo", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 22.
[549] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 99.

Puebla, conforme a dibujos de Montenegro, de Jorge Enciso y Gabriel Fernández Ledesma. La decoración del muro central y del friso es también obra de Montenegro. [550]

The muralism movement began therefore in the year 1921, in the apse of San Pedro San Pablo's old church and, in the north wall of the church, formerly occupied by the main altarpiece, with *The Dance of the Hour*s, *The Tree of the Life.* [551]

Orlando S. Suárez gave it the name *The Tree of Science* [552] while Diego Rivera called it "*Genealogical Tree":*

Montenegro decoraba San Pedro y San Pablo teniendo como ayudantes a Javier Guerrero y a Hermilo Gómez copiaban éstos, amplificándolos, motivos de bateas de Uruapan, Javier agregó a estos elementos, sobre la cúpula de una capilla, los signos del zodíaco y más o menos un año más tarde cuando el marco ya estaba listo, Roberto engastó en el gran muro central del fondo una dilatada pintura al temple, en que, bajo un gran árbol genealógico, aparecía cerca del proscenio una fila de musas prerafaelistas. [553]

For Esther Acevedo: "It is necessary to consider the importance of the tree in the composition. According to some it represents the Tree of Life, according to others the Tree of Science."

Hay que considerar la importancia del árbol en la composición. Según algunos representa el Árbol de la Vida, según otros el de Árbol de la Ciencia. [554]

Guadalupe Rivera Marín, Rivera's daughter, said that "his (Rivera's) friends, Doctor Atl, Montenegro and Enciso had confused the idea of Vasconcelos; instead of painting in their first murals the defeat of the expired dictatorial régime of Díaz and the victory of the young commanders [...] Montenegro painted a *charro* and a *china poblana* dancing on a hat, the *Jarabe Tapatío*, and Enciso the Mixtec tree of philosophical knowledge":

Rivera, después de vivir diez años en Europa, había vuelto a México lleno de entusiasmo por participar en El Renacimiento de la pintura mural, concebida por Vasconcelos como la forma de difundir, por medio del arte, la ideología revolucionaria del nuevo gobierno y llevarla más allá de un intento puramente nacionalista. Sus amigos, el Doctor Atl, Montenegro y Enciso habían confundido la idea de Vasconcelos; en lugar de pintar en sus primeros murales la derrota del caduco régimen dictatorial de Díaz y el triunfo de los jóvenes caudillos − todavía Zapata y Villa no eran héroes − se dedicaron a representar otras cosas: el Doctor Atl, el volcán Popocatépetl en erupción lanzando una lava bastante peculiar, pues era no de color rojo fuego, sino de colores verde, blanco y colorado, simbolizando la bandera nacional; Montenegro pintó un charro y una china poblana

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[550] *Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública*, Mexico 1922, p. 315. Quoted in Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, pp. 176-177.

[551] Complete name given by Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, (Fig. 15).

[552] Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico 1972, p. 213.

[553] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 274.

[554] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 46.

bailando sobre un sombrero el Jarabe Tapatío, y Enciso, el árbol mixteco del conocimiento filosófico. [555]

Montenegro also designed the stained glass windows *Jarabe Tapatío* and *The Vendor of Parakeets* that were executed by Eduardo Villaseñor. In *The Disaster*, the third part of his memoirs, Vasconcelos relates how Montenegro found the theme of the vendor of parakeets during a trip that Montenegro and Vasconcelos had made to Manzanillo.

Al día siguiente partimos para Manzanillo, a los baños de mar. Hasta la playa llegaban vendedores populares que ofrecen tuba, frutas y dulces. De allí sacó Montenegro el motivo de la vendedora de pericos que decora el vitral de la ex iglesia de San Pedro y San Pablo, titulada de las Discusiones Libres, en recuerdo de mis épocas de afición indostánica. [556]

National Preparatory School

As discussed above, Montenegro's mural was the starting point of Mexican mural painting. The next project, a series of murals for the large patio of the National Preparatory School, commissioned by Vasconcelos in 1922, was more organized and had a more defined programmatic content.

Ramón Alva de la Canal, Emilio García Cahero, Jean Charlot, Fernando Leal and Fermín Revueltas were the first to begin work. All these painters came from the "open air school," a kind of Mexican Barbizon under the direction of Alfredo Ramos Martínez, who had worked together with Vasconcelos since the beginning of his cultural program.

The National Preparatory School has been likened to a laboratory or sketchbook of muralism. Here the painters tried out the typical techniques of mural painting, encaustic and alfresco, and experimented with local raw materials. They practiced mural composition – which differs significantly from composition in easel painting.

Each muralist in his own particular way looked for what he felt necessary to express, and developed such varied topics, expressed in a variety of personal styles, as *The Landing of the Cross*, by Ramón Alva de la Canal; *Spanish Missionaries of the Conquest*, by Emilio García Cahero; *The Massacre of the Templo Mayor*, by Jean Charlot; *The Fiesta of The Lord of Chalma*, by Fernando Leal; *Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe*, by Fermín Revueltas.

In 1946 Fernando Leal wrote:

Vasconcelos stated that I could paint on the walls of the Preparatoria, and invited me to see him at his office at the university the next day. Once there, he told me to chose the walls I wanted and left me free as to theme and technique. He also asked me to invite those among my companions whom I considered ready to face mural problems, adding: "I have already told Diego Rivera to invite young artists interested in mural problems, but Diego has never invited anybody." [557]

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[555] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras: Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 127.
[556] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 18.
[557] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 166-167.

Alva de la Canal, The Planting of the Cross in the New World, 1922/23

Alva de la Canal was born in Mexico City on August 31, 1898. He attended the National School of Fine Arts where he received most of his artistic education. He was one of the group of *Revolutionary* artists organized by Doctor Atl in Orizaba, Veracruz, as well as a member of the Union of Workers Technicians, Painters and Sculptors.

The work he painted has been given different names by different authors. The titles assigned to the work include El Desembarque de los Españoles y la Cruz plantada en Tierras nuevas, La Llegada de la Santa Cruz a la Nueva España, El Descendimiento de la Cruz, El Desembarco de la Cruz, and even El Desembarco de los Españoles. Charlot called it The Planting of the Cross in the New World while Rodríguez referred to it as The Landing of the Cross.

Ramón Alva de la Canal used the *al fresco* technique and chose a historical-religious topic to decorate the entrance to the big patio: the moment of the landing of the Spaniards in Mexico.

Both Alva de la Canal and Jean Charlot wanted to bring forth an authentic culture, based on the past but orientated towards the future.They presented a nationalist vision of Mexico's past in the two murals on the Conquest. Jean Charlot's *Massacre at Templo Mayor* is more critical than Ramón Alva de la Canal's *The Landing of the Cross*. Alva de la Canal's mural *The Arrival of the Cross in New Spain* reflected Vasconcelos's ideas about history and national culture.

Antonio Rodríguez says that the "Cross is a symbolic sign joining the two continents, races or cultures, which until then were foreign to each other":

> *The Landing of the Cross, an incident during the landing of the Spaniards on the coast of Mexico. The diagonally placed cross unites the caravels on the upper part of the fresco with the crowd grouped at its base. There is no question of portraying a historical event, no scene showing costumes of the period in which it occured. There are no natives in loincloths, armed with bows and arrows, awaiting the arrival of the unknown. Without the caravels, there would be no indication of the period when the landing took place. Actually no landing is shown. The Cross is a symbolic sign joining the two continents, races or cultures, which until then were foreign to each other.* [558]

Jean Charlot referred to the mural as *The Erection of the Cross in the New World.* It was dated 1923 and stamped with the hammer and sickle of the Syndicate as signature. [559]

[558] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 181-182.
[559] See Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 125.

Jean Charlot, Massacre at Templo Mayor, 1922-1923



Figure 42. Jean Charlot: *Massacre at Templo Mayor*. National Preparatory School, Mexico City. [560]

Jean Charlot, whose grandfather had been a painter, was born in Paris on February 7, 1898. Charlot served as an artillery officer on the Argonne front in the First World War. In France he decorated churches, and this experience prepared Charlot for his encounter with *Mexican Muralism*. He came to Mexico in 1921 and worked with the outdoor schools. From Xavier Guerrero he learnt traditional fresco techniques which he later used in his mural painting.

Besides his muralist work, Charlot, who had studied the technique thoroughly during his stay in Paris, was an outstanding wood-carver. He worked for the Carnegie Commission from 1927 to 1928 in Yucatan, recording Mayan themes in wood. In 1929, he traveled to the United States and later became a teacher at the University of Hawaii. [561]

Here I take up again the controversial subject of who painted the first mural in Mexico. We have to make here a technical distinction: the first mural (first painting executed on a wall) in modern Mexico was accomplished by Montenegro. He used the technique of tempera. The first to accomplish a painted mural with the al fresco technique was Jean Charlot.

Octavio Paz says that there is a certain tendency to minimize the participation of some people in this subject. He says: "To Charlot we owe, on the other hand, the first fresco of the movement."

> *Se ha intentado velar el sentido del momento inicial y se ha regateado e incluso escamoteado la participación de ciertos artistas, como Jean Charlot [...] A Charlot le debemos, por otra parte, el primer fresco del movimiento.* [562]

The question of who painted the first fresco generated a lot of controversy, especially when Rivera was involved. Rivera claims that Charlot's fresco was not the first made in Mexico since colonial time. According to him the first was by Ramón Alba de la Canal: "Juan Charlot, the second to attempt the al fresco technique, ended up as the first to be able to write a plate commemorating the fact. Unfortunately the foreign ingenuousness of Charlot made him ignore (and our bad faith in not telling him) the fact that his fresco is not 'the first made in Mexico since the colonial time'."

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[560] Retrieved From (httplibweb.hawaii.edulibdeptCharlotcollmuralsgifsmu1p2.gif)

[561] Jean Charlot joined the Art Department of the University of Hawaii, as Professor of Painting and Art History in 1949. In 1966 he retired From University of Hawaii as Senior Professor Emeritus.

[562] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, pp. 37-38.

> *Vicente Lombardo Toledano, entonces director de la Preparatoria, ayudó con los pocos recursos de que disponía la escuela, a que pintara sobre sus muros, Revueltas, Ramón Alba de la Canal (el primero de nosotros al pintar al fresco), Juan Charlot, el segundo que intentó el fresco y acabó primero para poder escribir una placa conmemorativa del hecho. Desgraciadamente la ingenuidad extranjera de Charlot, le hizo ignorar (y nosotros tuvimos la mala fe tomadura de pelo legítimamente nacional, de no decírselo), el fresco de Charlot no es "el primero hecho en México desde la época colonial".* [563]

Jean Charlot painted *The Massacre at the Templo Mayor* in a stairway of the west patio. Thus, the first painting *al fresco* was painted in Mexico by Charlot. However, Charlot had his first experience as a mural painter when he used the encaustic technique, in 1922, when he became part of the pictorial team that carried out the mural *The Creation* in the *Anfiteatro Bolívar*. This group was headed by Diego Rivera.

Charlot says:

> *Less than three weeks remained before the end of 1921 − helpers had to be recruited and scaffolds had to be built. It can be assumed that Rivera did not reach his first wall until early in 1922.* [564]

It is surprising that a foreigner should have been the first to interpret the Spanish Conquest of Mexico critically. In the mural *The Massacre at the Templo Mayor,* or *The Conquest of Tenochtitlán,* Jean Charlot underlined the technological superiority of the invaders which, together with the internal crisis from which the Aztec Empire suffered, determined the final outcome of the Conquest. Armored conquistadores attack Indians, who are wearing the brilliant feathered costumes for ceremonial dances. Two years later, Charlot added a portrait of the last Aztec emperor, Cuauhtémoc, to the stairway landing. The mural was painted *al fresco* in 1922/23. Clearly the two different titles have different connotations. It is not clear what the initial title was or indeed if the work had a title at all. Vasconcelos accepted Charlot's mural showing the massacre of the *Aztecs* at the *Templo Mayor* (the main temple of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán) with its sympathetic attitude toward pre-Hispanic culture and did not prevent him from working on this theme.

Antonio Rodríguez wrote that Diego Rivera and other painters later adopted Charlot's way of showing the Conquest, and Rivera went so far as to represent Cortés as microcephalic, syphilitic and degenerate. But, according to Antonio Rodríguez, "it was Jean Charlot who first presented the Spanish invasion as a brutal act":

> *In Charlot's interpretation, the conquistadors do not conquer because they are superior, because they represent a higher culture or because they are obeying God's command, but because their weapons are more sophisticated. It is a material and not a spiritual victory. Even the Cross appears in the contest. It is subtly indicated in the crossing of spears, not as a symbol of redemption, but as a weapon. The Spaniards arrived enclosed in armour, bringing gunpowder and enormous lances, which treble the reach of their arms, and, above all, with horses, which in those days were terrifying war machines. The heroism of some of the Mexicans, shown in the Emperor Cuauhtémoc's epic defence of his capital Tenochtitlán, was crushed by the superiority of the enemy's arms and made powerless by the internal conflicts of the Aztec empire. On one side lances, coats of mail and gunpowder; on the other magnificent quetzal feathers, beautiful gold pectorals and the lovely flowers of Nahuatl poetry, which the natives hold to their breasts, as if trying to protect their most precious possession – their souls. [...] While the faces of the Mexicans*

[563] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Quoted in Moyssén, Xavier, *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 275.
[564] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 135.

express profound humanity and stunned resignation, those of the Spaniards, through the monstrous grimaces of their visors, show the diabolical fury which drove them on. As one can see, the Frenchman's conception is much bolder than that of his Mexican colleagues. Later on, Diego Rivera and other painters were to adopt this way of showing the Conquest, to the point of representing Cortés as microcephalic, syphilitic and degenerate. [...] But it was Jean Charlot who first presented the Spanish invasion as a brutal act. [565]

According to Rodríguez, Jean Charlot "was the only painter who dared to tackle the theme of the Conquest critically, which even to this day is a burning and painful subject":

It is incredible to find such an audacious mural painted by the hand of a beginner, suddenly transformed into a master, but one can also look on it as a miracle performed by the Revolution, which inspired everyone to carry out the most daring tasks. [...] Jean Charlot, a Frenchman, whom chance brought to Mexico in time to take part in the work at the Preparatoria, was the only painter who dared to tackle critically the theme of the Conquest, which even to this day is a burning and painful subject. Alva de la Canal too went back to that period, but with very different feelings, when he painted natives receiving with love and awe the Cross sent from Spain or from Heaven? [566]

Charlot was criticized for representing the conquerors as brutes, long before Rivera did so in the National Palace. Not all the reception of Charlot's work was positive. According to Charlot, the critic Renato Molina Enríquez, who was "no reactionary critic, this article notwithstanding, but on the contrary a true friend of Rivera," [567], expressed a less friendly opinion and claimed that Charlot's subject matter displayed typical European prejudices.

THE FRESH FRESCO OF CHARLOT IN THE PREPARATORIA SCHOOL [...] As far as the great majority of Europeans are concerned, we Americans still wear loincloths and decorate our heads with varicolored plumes [...] Artistic or intellectual mediocrities who come here for selfish ends affect disdain or stoop to kindness with the haughty condescension of a colonist bent on civilizing [...]The immigrant acts with a nerve and importance born of his assurance that in this land of blind men, even a one-eyed man is king. He carries his work through, thoughtfully thinking [...] that we will all remain in awe, as in fact we do, confronted by the fetching simplicity of his belief. This digression is perfectly suitable as a commentary on the pictorial work of Monsieur Charlot [...] The subject matter displays typical European prejudices. A victorious charge of Spanish conquerors annihilates despicable American Indians who do not even attempt a defense [...] One sees only bestial and degraded features, faces of idiots and morons, hands that the painter pretends in vain to picture taut with cowardly despair but that remain bland and spongy [...] A painter is capable of evolution, may repent later of errors committed once. Sincerely we wish it for Monsieur Charlot [...] and, after all, time will tell which one of us was in the right. [568]

This was 1922. Vasconcelos was obviously aware of these controversies, and yet he consented to the mural. The Indian was a part of the spiritual nationalism of Vasconcelos and his generation.

There seems to be a big contradiction here: if Vasconcelos was as *Hispanist* as he is usually presented, and as he himself claimed to be, how could he possibly have consented to (and financed) Charlot's mural which attacks the Spanish conquest so strongly? There seem to be two answers to this question: on the one hand,

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[565] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 185.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 186.
[568] "El 'Fresco' de Charlot en la Preparatoria," April 26, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 186.

Vasconcelos gave complete freedom to the artists and allowed them to paint whatever they wanted, including themes contrary to *Hispanism*.

For Octavio Paz: "However [...] Vasconcelos bequeathed us an ethical and political lesson: he allowed the artists to work in freedom, knowing that their ideas were very different from his."

> *Sin embargo [...] Vasconcelos nos legó una lección ética y política: dejó en libertad a los artistas a sabiendas de que sus ideas eran muy distintas a las suyas.* [569]

On the other hand, Charlot's mural shows the (necessary) violence in the annihilation of a barbaric culture, which had to be put aside in order to create a new culture. Charlot's mural is important in our discussion for three main reasons: firstly because it shows that Vasconcelos gave freedom to the artists that worked with him, even letting them deal with themes in a way that he condemned; secondly, because Charlot's critical vision of the Conquest anticipated the subsequent rhetoric of Rivera; and finally there is the fact that Rivera did not accept that this was the first mural of the movement.

Fernando Leal, *The Fiesta of The Lord of Chalma*, 1922



Figure 43. Fernando Leal: *Fiesta of the Lord of Chalma*. National Preparatory School, Mexico City. [570]

Fernando Leal was born on February 26, 1900 in Mexico City. He started out as a designer while he was still very young. He illustrated magazines and newspapers with line drawings and *vignettes* reminiscent of Roberto Montenegro's drawings. He was a student of the painter Alfredo Ramos Martínez at the Outdoors School of Coyoacán up to 1920 and later ran the school for seven years. In 1921, Fernando Leal became acquainted with the young Jean Charlot, who was experimenting with wood carving techniques. With Charlot and Díaz de León, Leal rescued this almost forgotten practice which, at the end of the twenties, offered a cheap alternative to painting. Wood-carving was taken up enthusiastically by a group of painters who were trying to spread their *Revolutionary* ideals but had limited funds at their disposal. In 1922, Leal painted his first mural, using encaustic techniques, in the National Preparatory School and, in 1927, he worked al fresco in the Secretariat of Health on two paintings that were destroyed soon afterwards. Fernando Leal's early mural work has perhaps not been granted the recognition it deserved; he was overshadowed by the strong personalities of Rivera and Orozco, the "heavyweights" of muralism.

The painter depicted diverse aspects of the *Fiesta of the Lord of Chalma*; a ritual that exemplifies the synthesis of native and Catholic beliefs. Jean Charlot's mural in the same building shows the Conquest as the imposition of Catholicism. Leal picks up this theme and gives us a vision of Mexican society with its typical characters. The natives are pictured as the conquered race and the priests as charlatans who represent the repressive and manipulative power of the exploiters. Later Rivera devoted himself to this style of painting.

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[569] Paz, Octavio, "Repaso en forma de preámbulo", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 21.

[570] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 46.

Antonio Rodríguez claims that the composition shows "the difference between the spirituality of the Indians and the worldliness of the priests":

> *The Fiesta of the Lord of Chalma by Fernando Leal reflects the state of torpor produced by fanaticism and shows the difference between the spirituality of the Indians and the worldliness of the priests.* [571]

Leal himself states: "I felt no inclination toward historical themes and wanted at all costs to paint something more genuinely Mexican. So I chose a modern scene of a ritual dance inside a church":

> *Jean decided upon a picture of the violent imposition of European culture by the Spaniards upon the Indians. For this purpose he chose the historical episode of the massacre of Indians perpetrated by Pedro de Alvarado in the main Temple of Tenochtitlan. I felt no inclination toward historical themes and wanted at all cost to paint something more genuinely Mexican. So I chose a modern scene of a ritual dance inside a church, assuring myself that such a scene was a symbol of the survival of native modes within the Catholic rites and thus a complement of the theme adopted by my neighbor muralist.* [572]

Leal's vision was very close to the rural atmosphere, and his work did not show the European influences found in the painters such as Montenegro, Rivera and Dr. Atl, who had trained in Europe.

Rodríguez:

> *The encaustic mural by Fernando Leal on the stairs leading to the third floor of the school is also based on a religious motive. It is entitled Fiesta of The Lord of Chalma, which may have been the reason why it was considered a religious painting. In fact, religion here is a mere pretext. The painting relates, or rather recreates, some scenes of the annual fiesta held by the natives in honour of one of the most 'miraculous' saints of Mexico* [573]

An important detail is that Vasconcelos commissioned Fernando Leal to paint murals after having seen an oil painting on canvas of Leal painted in 1921, called *Zapatistas at rest.* [574]

Emilio García Cahero, *Spanish Missionaries of the Conquest*, 1922.

This mural by Cahero is the least known mural of all. It was destroyed shortly after being painted and thus has been seldom analyzed. It seems that the mural dealt with a typically *vasconcelist* theme.

As said by Charlot "The least known of the group is Emilio García Cahero"

> *The least known of the group is Emilio García Cahero. While the four others went on painting murals that add significance to their first ones, Cahero painted only this one. The pioneer panel on a colonial theme had a short existence. It got in the way of José Clemente Orozco in 1926. Having secured written permission from its author to destroy it, Clemente painted in its place the fresco of "The Engineers", still extant.* [575]

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[571] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 482.
[572] Says Fernando Leal. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 167.
[573] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 183.
[574] See **Figure 37**, page 155.
[575] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 157.

According to Charlot,

> *Cahero and Alva, treating the colonial period with respect, prophetically underlined the hiatus in the historical content of the walls that came afterward and that cleared the hurdle of a few centuries to telescope, dogmatically, Conquest into Revolution.* [576]

The completion date of this mural is important for Charlot as it justifies his claim to have been the first to finish a mural *al fresco* in Mexico in modern times. As mentioned previously, this was a subject of vital importance for both Charlot and for Rivera.

> *Cahero chose a smaller panel with scalloped outline at the right of the entrance to the same stairway. At the end of 1922 two panels, Cahero's and mine, were practically finished. Sóstenes Ortega stated in December of that year, using the past tense: "Cahero has nearly finished the mural panel assigned to him at the entrance of one of the stairways [...] The French painter Charlot has decorated one of the walls in the upper corridors in this peculiar style of his that seems so strange to us, and at times extravagant."* [577]

The use of firearms by the Mexican muralists, as in the cases of Rivera and of Siqueiros, has led to a lot of discussion. Charlot claimed that Cahero was one of the first to carry a pistol.

> *He was first among the painters to carry a pistol, and would give his girls firearms etched with his own designs. One day in the Academy of San Carlos, a jealous one shot him with his love gift, a tiny ebony-handled revolver. She let her hair down and screamed: "I have killed him." We whisked her away before Cahero recovered from his faint.* [578]

The anecdotes about the use of weapons contributed further to the myths about the muralists. There is an element of exaggeration here, but the idea that they had to walk about armed in order to protect themselves and their works was commented on by contemporaries.

Fermín Revueltas, *Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1923

The *Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe*, painted using encaustic techniques, was Fermín Revueltas's first monumental work. In the stairway of the main entrance to the enclosure of the old College of San Ildefonso, Fermín Revueltas presented the topic *Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe*. He used popular coloring to present a theme which reflected the ideas of Vasconcelos; the work represents Mexico and the rest of Latin America as a fruit of the union between the indigenous elements and the Hispanic elements.

> *Fermín Revueltas, the youngest of the group, was twenty-one years old at the time that he received his first mural commission.* [579]

The theme of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as a symbol of Mexico, was a Creole creation that, together with pre-Hispanic culture, differentiated the Mexicans from the Spaniards. It was no accident that Hidalgo used her image on the flag of Independence in 1810, since the Virgin was linked with the people and with rebellion.

The form of the mural was a triangle along the base of which typical Mexican characters appeared. The Virgin is also delineated by a triangular structure of smaller dimensions that forms the vertex of the mural. The work is painted using a rich array of colors. The composition is organized around a banner with religious

[576] Ibid, p. 154.
[577] Ortega, "La pintura y escultura en 1922, *El Universal Ilustrado*, December 28 1922. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 153.
[578] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 158.
[579] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 159.

symbolism. Religious themes, as both Vasconcelos and the Union claimed, could be simultaneously religious and *Revolutionary*. In this context there was nothing strange in the fact that Revueltas signed his work with the hammer and the sickle. Charlot says of *The Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe*:

> *It was Revueltas in his "Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe" who first used the hieratic, white-clad Indian and the women wrapped in stylized rebozos that soon became the accepted ciphers of a Mexican mural alphabet.* [580]

Antonio Rodríguez claims that Revueltas's *Allegory of the Virgin of Guadalupe* is "subtly heretical, although it pretends to be a religious painting of the Virgin". The work was described by Renato Molina Enríquez, in an article published in July 1923 and quoted by Charlot.

> *Dominating the composition, a creole Virgin, la Guadalupe, is seen in front view, her tunic between pink and mauve, her mantle of a dark olive green, human in spite of the hieratic subject. On the sides, on a lower level, two angels with adolescent features [...] and at the base of the composition, Indians with peaceful features and relaxed attitudes, holding in their hands the fruits of the earth [...] In the costumes, deep yellow ochres contrast with sepias and cafes, browns with purples and red ochres, and many hues of green – bronze green, olive green, emerald green, and light greens. Also varied are the cobalts, mauves, and pale lilacs.* [581]

It is evident that Vasconcelos did not commission a Hispanic theme, as is often claimed, but a synthesis of Spanish and indigenous elements. Guadalupe is Mexican, she is not Spanish. Rivera also used this theme and established a *Revolutionary* continuum from Hidalgo to Zapata. Rivera also painted the Virgin of Guadalupe with the figure of Cantinflas in a gesture of populist demagogy. Rodríguez:

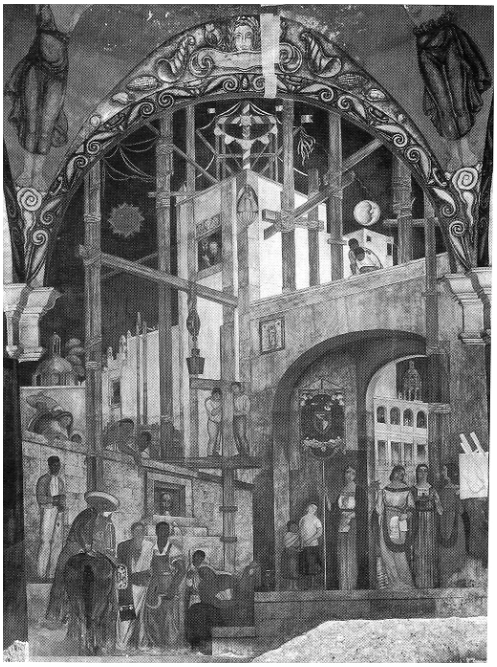
> *One cannot help wondering why painters who started the Revolutionary movement in the Escuela Preparatoria, a school which was pre-eminently secular, should paint Virgins, religious festivals, theological virtues, Landings of the Cross, proletarian women with wings, etc. The contradiction becomes even more obvious when we observe that, next to the woman with wings, Siqueiros painted an enormous Sickle and hammer, and that the encaustic mural of Fermín Revueltas, like Rivera's later ones, displays the Communist emblem. The answer is not as contradictory as might appear at first sight. In a country as deeply religious as Mexico, it is impossible to portray the life of the people without alluding to its spiritual atmosphere. Moreover, religious symbols have had a kind of magic effect on the Mexicans – they are amulets. Hidalgo, the priest, carried out his military campaign for the independence of Mexico under the standard of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which accompanied his troops everywhere. A hundred years later, the soldiers of Emilio Zapata, fighting in the south with true Revolutionary ardour for land and freedom, wore in their sombreros an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patroness of Mexico.* [582]

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[580] Ibid, p. 154.
[581] "Los Nuevos Valores de la pintura Mexicana − Fermín Revueltas," *El Universal Ilustrado*, July 26 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 160.
[582] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 182-183.

Montenegro*: La Fiesta de la Santa Cruz y reconstrucción*, 1923-24 and 1931-33

Figure 44. Roberto Montenegro: *The Santa Cruz Festivity*. San Pedro y San Pablo's Maximum College. [583]



Roberto Montenegro painted more murals during Vasconcelos's time. I will now present those projects but without following an exact chronology, to enable me later to present the so-called "Big Three" together.

The titles and the dates of muralist works were often problematic. The artists rarely gave trustworthy information, and large numbers of historians and critics have not always contributed to enlightenment in these matters. One often finds, especially with Rivera, convenience titles and dates attributed arbitrarily. Montenegro's mural was known by many names, as *The Santa Cruz Party and Reconstruction*, *The Santa Cruz Festivity*, or *The Feast of the Cross*, according to Jean Charlot and to the painter himself**.**

> *En tanto que Hermilo Juárez, de acuerdo con mis proyectos ejecutaba el mural de San Pedro y San Pablo, inicié, hacia 1921, la pintura al fresco, de La fiesta de la cruz, en las escaleras de la escuela Primaria Núm. 6.*
> *– En abril de 1922, después de haber terminado aquella obra partí para Brasil.* [584]

Roberto Montenegro painted *The Santa Cruz Festivity,* in *San Pedro y San Pablo*'s Maximum College, with workers as the main characters.

The murals were painted on the walls of an old stairway, in the northwest angle of the patio on the right, the first patio of the former school, and it was carried out in two different stages: the eastern wall and the vault between August 1923 and January 1924 and the other walls between 1931 and 1933. Although Vasconcelos was no longer the minister responsible during the second phase of this mural project, his initial concept was retained. Thus the composition has a harmonious character in spite of the many years that separated the two phases. The *vasconcelist* idea of the *Revolution* as educational reconstruction was reinvigorated and developed by Montenegro in the mural of the north, painted, with the rest of the stairway, between 1931 and 1933.

The Santa Cruz festivities are the traditional celebrations of the builders held on May 3, when they adorn buildings under construction with pennants and confetti. This is a popular rite in which religious and profane elements intermingle. The painter gave the theme a new turn, using it as a pretext for a celebration of the educational work of the *Revolution*, a common theme in many works made during Vasconcelos's tenure.

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[583] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 37.
[584] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", Hoy, February 19 1949. Typed copy in the CENIDIAP.

On the right-hand side of the picture, a group, located at the doors of a colonial-style building which is still under construction, presides over the ritual. A young Creole woman in a Mexican outfit carries a banner with the shield and Vasconcelos's motto for the National University, "Through my race the Spirit shall speak". In her left hand she holds a book on which the word *Greece* is to be seen and a ring bearing the painter's name. To her right, three allegorical characters symbolize the arts: Literature, with a quillpen and a paper on which are listed the names of distinguished Mexican poets; Architecture, with a scale model; and Sculpture, with a pre-Hispanic statuette. To her left, a blond girl with a protective look on her face gives a book to an indigenous girl. On the left-hand side, one sees workers, peasants, bricklayers, and street vendors. Other elements underline the religious aspect of the rite, such as the square of tiles with the image of the virgin of Guadalupe and a niche containing her image. On the left, the sun and on the right, the moon, both typical religious icons, introduced to confer cosmic resonance to the representations.

The general idea of the mural and many of the details become clear when it is examined in the light of the ideas that inspired the work of Vasconcelos as Secretary of Public Education. The armed, destructive phase of the *Revolution* should be followed by a constructive and regenerating phase, in which intellectuals and artists would contribute with their knowledge and their abilities. Vasconcelos believed that the university should come closer to the people, elevate it to the manifestations of high culture, and give the people back their consciousness of themselves and of their lofty historical and spiritual destiny. The university motto coined by Vasconcelos, "Through my race the Spirit shall speak" summarized these ideas.

Originally, Montenegro painted the minister himself carrying the banner of the university, but later he replaced Vasconcelos with the female figure visible today, although the book with the word *Greece* bears witness to that philosopher's admiration for the Hellenic culture. Charlot says that "Montenegro destroyed the portrait of Vasconcelos featured in *The Feast of the Cross,* replacing it by a politically neutral female in floating drapes":

> *In his fresco "The Feast of the Cross" Montenegro ushered in Vasconcelos as the banner holder of the university. [...] At the end of 1924 dethroned Vasconcelos turned to newspaper writing for a living and did not spare his successor the rod in his political articles. The only two painters who had safely bridged the change of regime were Montenegro and Rivera, and both were now called upon to prove their fealty to their new employer, Dr. Puig. Both readily obliged: Montenegro destroyed the portrait of Vasconcelos featured in "The Feast of the Cross," replacing it by a politically neutral female in floating drapes.* [585]

For Vasconcelos, folk art and the popular religious customs associated with the Catholic liturgy were elements that could be used to arouse interest in superior levels of pleasure, of spirituality, cultural and aesthetical nature, and to integrate the people in the regenerative process of culture which would ultimately enable the Ibero-American race to attain cosmic significance.

Vasconcelos believed that the Renaissance of Mexican culture and its liberation from Anglo-Saxon influences had to utilise the colonial institutions and the Hispanic component in the Mexican race. This explains several details of the composition of the mural. After the armed phase of the *Revolution*, the new homeland is built through education, culture and the arts, with an emphasis on cherishing and preserving national traditions. This is evident in the central emblem of the eagle and the snake and the use of other pre-Hispanic symbols. Vasconcelos uses references to the different indigenous types of Mexico, to the Creoles, and to Mexican popular crafts in order to create a cultural synthesis. The three most important plastic arts are represented in the mural: architecture, sculpture, and painting.

On the southern wall, Montenegro painted an ornamental group with arches and pseudo-niches of varying sizes – a neo-colonial architectural fantasy. At the opposite end there is a second portrait, that of Sergei

[585] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 302-303.

Mikhailovich Eisenstein who had arrived in Mexico at the end of 1930 and spent seventeen months filming for his unfinished movie *Que viva México!* Montenegro had accompanied the Soviet director on some of his trips into the domestic interior. The painting shows him emerging from the niche with a long strip of film in his hands. Behind him, engulfed in flames, some churches in the Russian-Byzantine style, with their bulbous towers, are crashing to the ground: an obvious reference to the Soviet Revolution of 1917.

A *grisaille* on the western side of the mural decoration is inscribed with the words: BUSCA EN LA TIERRA TU ALIMENTO Y EN EL LIBRO TU LIBERTAD. (LOOK FOR FOOD IN THE EARTH AND YOUR FREEDOM IN THE BOOK.) Montenegro expressed another concept with: EL TIEMPO VUELA, LA OBRA QUEDA, (TIME FLIES, WORK REMAINS.)

Montenegro, *Iberoamérica*, 1924

Montenegro painted one more mural, again with a typically *vasconcelist* theme, in the Ibero-American Library. In the former church Montenegro painted an allegory of the historical and cultural unity of Ibero-America in a mural covering around three hundred square meters. The building was the church of a former convent and had been restored on Vasconcelos's orders to provide a headquarters for the Secretariat of Public Education.

The Ibero-American Library was founded by the minister himself as proof of his active Ibero-Americanism. In April 1924 it was inaugurated in the presence of the President, some ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, the artists Roberto Montenegro, Diego Rivera, E. Ramírez Angel, Jorge Enciso, Asúnsolo, and the architect Méndez Rivas. The founding of the library was another means by which Vasconcelos tried to advance the spiritual solidarity of the continent. Vasconcelos also wanted Rivera to paint a mural in the library depicting the liberator Bolívar on a horse. However this project was not carried out.

Montenegro's work consisted of the library and a room decorated with the flags of the Ibero-American countries. The two murals were painted in 1924, and the inauguration took place shortly before Vasconcelos's resignation from the Ministry of Public Education. Montenegro took charge of decorating *al fresco* the wall of the old apse, and also one of the panels of the nave, on the northern side.

The plan of Montenegro's mural can be found in the *Boletín* de la Secretaría de Educación Pública of 1924. According to it, the decoration of the room "consists of a beautiful map of Latin America with its caravelles, its cities, its symbols and its winds, Roberto Montenegro will finish it when he has filled the wall with theories about the people who made Hispanic America, the indigenous peoples and the Spaniards":

> *[...] consiste en un hermoso mapa de América Latina con sus carabelas, sus ciudades, sus símbolos y sus vientos, Roberto Montenegro dejará terminado cuando llene el muro con teorías de personajes indígenas y españoles de las que se han formado la América Hispánica* [586]

The mural shows a map of Latin America, from Rio Bravo to Cape Horn, where the words *La Niña*, *La Pinta*, and *La Santa María*, the names of Christopher Columbus's ships, can be read. Several countries and cities are shown, with their characteristic buildings, their respective flags, geographical features such as mountain ranges, mountains, mighty rivers, human types, regional crafts, animals, vegetables, and minerals from the different countries. All these details combine, in the first instance, to illustrate the proverbial riches of Latin America. Montenegro does not shy away from references to the neuralgic points of Latin American political reality: the oil rigs in the Tampico region evoke the pressures that foreign powers exercised on the

[586] *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 4, Mexico 1924, pp. 378-384. In Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p.200.

Revolutionary governments to maintain oil concessions. It was hardly accidental that the symbol of the hammer and the sickle is clearly shown to the south of Brazil.

This raises a crucial problem. As discussed above, the Ibero-American theme was vitally important for Vasconcelos. Since Vasconcelos was in charge of the muralist program, the inclusion of *Revolutionary* symbols, as the hammer and the sickle, must have been done with his knowledge and consent, which gainsays what is usually said about his muralist ideology. Indeed many artists used that kind of symbolism. At that time Vasconcelos was clearly not opposed to *Revolutionary* symbolism.

During the first post-*Revolutionary* governments, Mexican foreign policy was based on premises which paralleled Vasconcelos's view that Mexico should seek support in South America to counterbalance North American and European hostility.

The mural *Iberoamérica* even referred to the succession of dictators and commanders who have darkened the continent's political history: The President of Venezuela, Juan Vicente Gómez, the most notorious Latin American dictator of the period, against whom Vasconcelos had inveighed on several occasions. Beneath the dictator's portrait, Montenegro painted a skull and crossbones, an owl, and the letters *J.V.G.*

The lower part of *Iberoamérica* is a frieze portraying several historical characters. The group on the left consists of the discoverers and conquerors of the American continent: Christopher Columbus to the center and, from left to right, Hernán Cortés, Americo Vespucci, Vasco Núñez de Balboa and Francisco Pizarro. On the right, we see Simón Bolívar, in the middle Miguel Hidalgo, José Gabriel Tupac Amaru and others. This is the first example in *Mexican Muralism* of the compact portrait galleries of heroic characters, a stylistic device which Rivera adopted a few years later.

Bolívar was the first to proclaim the idea of American unification and Vasconcelos designated the current of Ibero-American solidarity based on equality and reciprocal respect between the Latin American nations as *bolivarismo*. The opposing tendency was *monroísmo*, which envisaged the continent under the hegemony of an expansionist power, the United States, under the pretext of protection. For Vasconcelos in 1924 the message was that the Ibero-American peoples must combat Washington's hegemonic tendency and affirm *Ibero-americanism*. The character of Bolivar is here of vital importance. [587]

Two medallions containing portraits are painted on the base as *grisailles*. The figure on the right is Rubén Darío, a crucial figure in modern Latin American literature, who since 1905 had consistently advocated a Hispanic consciousness within Modernism.

The second mural carried out by Montenegro in the enclosure of the library reproduced the text of the petition that Friar Servando Teresa de Mier submitted to the *Sovereign Congress of the Anáhuac* seeking Mexican citizenship for Simón Bolívar, who was admired throughout Europe as the glory of America. An oval plaque in the lower area of the mural records the commemorative intent of the group: "homenaje al primer esfuerzo realizado en México por la Unión de América Latina", an "homage to the first effort, carried out in Mexico, to create a Union of Latin America".

[587] Ten years later, in 1934, Vasconcelos turns to the subject in the book *Bolivarismo and Monroísmo*, where he brings up Bolivar's ideal again, exhorting the peoples of Spanish and Portuguese cultures to form an Ibero-American federation. Vasconcelos warned that at the root of the crises of the Latin-American countries there was a one-sided struggle between their sovereignty and the regional hegemony of Washington.

El Dr. Atl

Figure 45. Gerardo Murillo or Dr. Atl [588]



The mural work of Dr. Atl is little known, for reasons that we will now present. Dr. Atl participated in Vasconcelos's project, and in 1921 he was summoned along with others to carry out murals; in his case in *San Pedro y San Pablo*'s College. One could say that his old dreams would finally be fulfilled. In August 1923, he presented a series of murals with titles such as *The Sun, the Moon, the Wind, the Rain, the Titan, the Bat (or the Vampire), the Night, the Waves,* and *the Man who left the Sea*. The murals showed nudes influenced by his memories of the Sistine Chapel and of the *Last Judgement*. According to what Atl accounts, Vasconcelos ordered the nudes to be covered up with modest veils over their genitals and later the nudes were later completely erased by order of Narciso Bassols.

> *Una hermosa mañana encontré todos mis desnudos ornados con preciosos taParrabos pintados por un artista oficial. Tal vez Pepito Vasconcelos, iniciador y sostenedor vergonzante al mismo tiempo de la putería capitalina, del comunismo artístico y ahora del catolicismo decadente, quería convertirse en émulo de la señora Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz, sólo que con más inteligencia, pues les mandó tapar las partes nobles del cuerpo, en vez de borrarlos, para no causar escándalo, dejando la moral pública ilesa. Poco tiempo después, el ministro Bassols se sintió saturado de moralidad Porfiriana y mandó raspar todos los muros del exconvento de San Pedro y San Pablo. La verdad que este fue un grave error del inteligente secretario de Hacienda, quien no obstante que hacia años había dejado de ser Ministro de Educación, seguía interesándose por las cuestiones artísticas, aunque sólo fuera para destruirlas.* [589]

That Vasconcelos disliked bacchantes and ordered them to be covered up does not sound very plausible: it is known that Vasconcelos disliked a large number of the muralist works produced during his time as Secretary of Public Education, yet he did not order them to be covered up, and there were nudes in the early works of several muralists.

According to Atl his murals were destroyed because "In those days a totally Muscovite approach reigned and it was only admitted workers in a propaganda function and Marxist symbols."

> *El licenciado José Vasconcelos, en su calidad de Secretario de Educación, encomendó al suscrito la decoración de los muros de lo que se llamó la Preparatoria Chica, en el ex claustro de San Pedro y San Pablo, y de la escalera que ocupa una de las alas del edificio. El suscrito se propuso llevar a cabo un trabajo basado en principios artísticos revolucionarios, empleando técnicas de su invención − el óleo al temple, la petro-resina y los Atl-colors. La decoración de los muros y el patio estaba formada por grandes paneles representando paisajes muy estilizados, encuadrados en figuras simbólicas, totalmente desnudas. Había muchos errores en la disposición general, pero el conjunto del trabajo*

[588] Unknown photography. Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.labottegadelpittore.it/immagini/artesegreta/passato/dr-alt.jpg

[589] Dr. Atl. Quoted in Luna Arroyo, Antonio, *El Dr. Atl: paisajista puro,* Ed. Cultura, Mexico 1952, p. 168.

> *era muy original y podía haber marcado el principio de una verdadera renovación artística, si el señor Vasconcelos, primero, y el señor Bassols después, no hubieran mandado borrar la obra por considerarla, según ellos dijeron, completamente pagana. En aquellos días imperaba un criterio completamente moscovita y no se admitía mas que obreros en función de propaganda y símbolos Marxistas.* [590]

And Atl continues: "If the decoration had not been destroyed [...] Mexican pictorial art might have taken new directions, and to the couple of the artists that were protected at that time by the Government, it might have been possible to propose a renovation of universal interest."

> *Si la decoración no hubiera sido destruida [...] quizá el arte pictórico Mexicano hubiera tomado nuevos rumbos, y al par de los artistas que desde aquella época fueron protegidos por el Gobierno, le hubiera sido posible presentar una renovación de un interés universal.* [591]

Gerardo Murillo had taken the náhuatl word *Atl* for water and prefixed it with the Doctor's title to indicate that he was a Doctor in Philosophy. However, for Vasconcelos, "Dr. Atl after all was nothing but a delicious chatterer":

> *[...] Flaco, pálido y menudo, usaba Atl una barbilla que le daba aspecto de conspirador ruso; en el fondo no era otra cosa que un delicioso charlatán, con rasgos de genio, según se lo afirmaba yo, leyendo unos poemas que al lado de sus dibujos dedicaba a los volcanes, en francés [...]* [592]

Vasconcelos describes Dr. Atl as "in short, predestined to be a *carrancist*, a foreboding of cases such as those of Diego Rivera and his communism". Dr. Atl was someone who had been chosen by and served the regime, like Rivera later.

> *En fin, era un predestinado del carrancismo, y anticipaba casos como el de Diego Rivera y su comunismo, pero por lo pronto, y en mi presencia, se mantenía disciplinado y servicial.* [593]

[590] El Doctor Atl, May 24 1951, reproduced by Díaz y De Ovando, Clementina, *El Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo*, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1951. Quoted in Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, Mexico 1972, p. 75.
[591] Ibid.
[592] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 498.
[593] Ibid, p. 497.

10) The "Big Three"



Figure 46. David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, the so-called "Three Big". [594]

In this part I will present, in an introductory way, the mural work of the so-called "Big Three" during Vasconcelos's time. Rivera's work will be analyzed in the following chapter.

José Vasconcelos believed that classic culture was the principal point of reference for the mural program he developed. The first murals painted by Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros or José Clemente Orozco in the National Preparatory School reflected the ideas of the minister and owed a lot to the Italian painting of the Renaissance and to the statues of classical antiquity. This is even the case with Rivera, however much he later denied it.



Figure 47. José Clemente Orozco [595]

José Clemente Orozco

When one considers that Rivera's personality created many problems, Orozco's personality was no less contradictory, despite the fact that his life was more coherent than that of Rivera. Orozco did not write a lot, unlike Rivera and Siqueiros, but what he wrote is perhaps more credible than the writings of the other two artists.

According to Torres-Michúa:

> *A los escritos de J. C. Orozco se les ha otorgado más crédito que a su propia obra. Es falso que careciera de una profunda conciencia social y lo probarían la temática de sus trabajos: caricaturas políticas, anticlericales y, en especial, el hecho de haber cubierto sus primeros murales en la Escuela Preparatoria (abstracciones simbólicas) con temas que reflejaban los acontecimientos de su momento, al haberse ligado estrechamente con el espíritu de sus colegas.* [596]

Siqueiros: "making comparisons, I would say then that Orozco was the bourgeois Jacobin, Rivera the Renaissance mystic of the first period and I was archaic, with my roots in the most remote civilizations":

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[594] Siqueiros, Orozco and Rivera, 1947. Picture in CENIDIAP. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 45.
[595] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Orozco/Orozco.jpg
[596] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., p. 21.

Y haciendo comparaciones, yo diría que entonces Orozco era burgués jacobino, Rivera místico renacentista del primer período y yo, arcaico de las más remotas civilizaciones. [597]

And he continues, "The mysticism and the *antiriverism* (sic) of Orozco led him into serious ideological deviations":

El misticismo y el antiriverismo de Orozco, lo condujeron a graves desviaciones ideológicas. Jacobino furibundo, exaltó sin embargo en sus últimos frescos de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, la "caridad cristiana" de Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, que los capitanes conquistadores usaron para adormecer a los indios. [598]

For Paz, "Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros were very different. Each one of them was a powerful personality, and it is not possible to judge the anarchical Orozco and the two ideological artists, Rivera and Siqueiros, by the same yardstick":

Orozco, Rivera y Siqueiros fueron muy distintos. Cada uno de ellos fue una poderosa personalidad y no es posible juzgar con el mismo criterio al anárquico Orozco y a dos artistas ideológicos como Rivera y Siqueiros. [599]

Orozco's anarchism led him into a lot of contradictions, both ideological and artistic. For Shifra Goldman, "There are moments when Orozco comes closer to Social Realism [...] but he also showed the workers attacking each other."

Hay momentos en que Orozco se acerca al realismo social. Sus caricaturas para el periódico La Vanguardia (publicado por el Dr. Atl durante la Revolución), y para el del Sindicato, El Machete, son francamente parciales. Caricaturizó a los ricos y a la Iglesia en sus murales de la Preparatoria; pero también mostró a los trabajadores atacándose entre sí. Su descripción de los revolucionarios de la primera época con frecuencia muestra simpatía, pero con igual frecuencia no. [600]

And she continues: "many of the artistic ideas of Orozco are personal and mystic, characteristic of a kind of anticlerical Christian Existentialism":

Muchas de las ideas artísticas de Orozco son personales y místicas, propias de una suerte de Existencialismo cristiano anticlerical. [601]

But Wolfe's assessment corresponds closely to Vasconcelos's vision.

[...] no one has illustrated the tragedy of the Mexican Revolution as Orozco has. His murals are the pictorial analogue of Mariano Azuela's Los de Abajo (Bottom Dogs). If Rivera has painted what the Revolution should be, what it should have become if it were to realize the visions of its Flores Magóns and Zapatas, Orozco has painted what the Revolution had been, its brutality, its senseless pattern of demagogy and betrayal. Negative criticism of the Mexican Revolution is contained in Rivera's work too, but

[597] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 216.
[598] Ibid, p. 228.
[599] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 36.
[600] Goldman, Shifra M., *Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, p. 24.
[601] Ibid, p. 22.

subordinated to an emphasis on dreams of fulfillment. Orozco's outlook was pessimistic and skeptical; he lacked Rivera's confidence in life; his embittered satire is directed no less against the poor than the rich; in all his Mexican Revolution series there is no sign of recognition in its unhappy present of any seeds of a better future. [602]

Orozco himself states, "I didn't participate in the Revolution, I never experienced anything bad and was not in any kind of danger. The Revolution was for me the most cheerful and amusing of carnivals, that is to say, how people tell me carnivals are, because I myself have never seen them":

Yo no tomé parte alguna en la Revolución, nunca me pasó nada malo y no corrí peligro de alguna especie. La Revolución fué para mí el más alegre y divertido de los carnavales, es decir, como dicen que son los carnavales pues nunca los he visto. [603]

A large number of myths about the muralists and their political and artistic activities were created by the North-American press, which mystified many aspects of the reality of that time. D. H. Lawrence also played a big role here. [604] The muralists, in their turn, especially Diego Rivera, encouraged this mystification, partly because they enjoyed making fun of the Americans and partly to take advantage of it.

For instance, a myth grew up around Orozco, who when young had lost his left hand and the hearing in one ear in an accident with gunpowder, leaving him also partially blind. In his *Autobiografía*, Orozco says of an article that was published in the USA: "The [article in a San Francisco newspaper] went on to dramatize the loss of my left hand, [picturing me] throwing bombs in a terrible combat between *villists* and *zapatists*, while the truth is that I lost it when I was very young, playing with gunpowder; an accident like any other. "

El [artículo de un diario de San Francisco] de más allá dramatizaba la pérdida de mi mano izquierda, arrojando bombas en un terrible combate entre villistas y zapatistas, siendo que verdaderamente lo perdí cuando era muy joven, jugando con pólvora; un accidente como otro cualquiera. [605]

Orozco says that "there was several [articles in American newspapers] that made me appear like one of those bandits of the indigenous cause and portraying me as if I were a Tarahumara. I never worried about the indigenous cause, neither had I thrown bombs, nor had I been shot three times, as another newspaper claimed":

Hubo varios [artículos en periódicos americanos] que me hicieron aparecer como uno de los abanderados de la causa indígena y hacían un retrato de mi persona en el cual podía reconocerse a un tarahumara. Yo jamás me preocupé por la causa indígena, ni arrojé bombas, ni me fusilaron tres veces, como asegurara otro diario. [606]

No less contradictory is Orozco's attitude toward Zapata. According to Antonio Rodríguez:

Orozco's caricatures in 1911 and 1912 satirize Zapata. His oil paintings in 1930 show Zapata as both sinister and Messianic. Finally, he views him with such sympathy in Dartmouth College that he ends by identifying himself with him. How could one avoid being contradictory in a country and in a period full of contradictions? In 1912-13

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[602] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 160.
[603] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 41.
[604] D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) wrote the novel *The Plumed Serpent* in 1926. *The Plumed Serpent* centres on a Revolutionary movement to revive the religion of the ancient Aztecs. With this novel Lawrence created a new myth with elements from Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican mythology and elements of his own invention.
[605] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 41-42.
[606] Ibid.

everyone was attacking Madero: the reactionaries hated him for fighting against Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship; Zapata and the southern agrarians attacked him for his timidity, which prevented him from taking the Revolution to its logical conclusion; the US Embassy abhorred his nationalist attitude to oil. The general opinion of Zapata was at that time unanimous. Everyone called him 'the Attila of the South'. Posada himself, always on the side of the people, portrayed him sometimes as a hero and at others as a villain. I share the opinion of Cardoza y Aragón that the ideological rehabilitation of Zapata will have to be left to future generations. [607]

Rodríguez sees similarities between Orozco and Zapata.

Both Zapata and Orozco were rebels, each in his own way. [608]

It was the poet José Juan Tablada, one of Orozco's first supporters, who suggested to Vasconcelos the idea of adding Orozco to the muralist group. He called Orozco "the greatest of our Mexican painters". [609]

Charlot:

Orozco was widely known as a lethal political cartoonist, and some friends did remember or own some of his delicate water colors, damp with pity and tenderness. It was on the strength of this work that Walter Pach pronounced him great, and that Tablada dubbed him another Goya. [610]

Octavio Paz, like Fausto Ramírez, views Vasconcelos's influence on Orozco as significant.

[...] en el segundo semestre de 1983, el libro Orozco: una relectura (Universidad Nacional de México). Contiene varios ensayos recogidos por el crítico Xavier Moyssén. Entre ellos, me impresionaron uno de Fausto Ramírez sobre el esoterismo en la obra de Orozco y otro de Jacqueline Barnitz acerca de sus años "délficos". Fausto Ramírez señala la más que probable influencia de las ideas estéticas de Antonio Caso y, sobre todo, de José Vasconcelos. La influencia de este último es indudable; es el autor de dos libros que fueron muy leídos en su tiempo: Pitágoras, una teoría del ritmo (1917) y El monismo estético (1918). [611]

It is possible that Orozco was familiar with the texts by Plato and other classic authors which also influenced Vasconcelos. As we know, Orozco drew *vignettes* for popular Spanish editions of Plato, Euripides and Plotinus, as part of a cultural project developed by Vasconcelos. [612] Apart from this, there seems to have been little interaction between Orozco and Vasconcelos during the painting of the murals at the National Preparatory School. [613]

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[607] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 356
[608] Ibid, pp. 212-213.
[609] José Juan Tablada in *El Universal* and *Excelsior*, Feb. 25, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 224. Concerning Orozco's early work see for instance the article by Juan Tablada, José, "Un pintor de la mujer: José Clemente Orozco." *El mundo Ilustrado*, November 9 1913.
[610] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 225.
[611] Paz, Octavio, "Ocultación y descubrimiento de Orozco", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 83.
[612] See page 180.
[613] See Alma Reed's comments on this in Reed, Alma, *Orozco*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1955, p. 14.

Vasconcelos:

> *Al edificio principal de la Preparatoria me presentaba rara vez; Orozco me hacía mala cara cada vez que me asomaba a ver sus frescos.* [614]

The painter and the minister seem to have had similar points of view, which came to the fore in the ground floor frescos of San Ildefonso, where Orozco represented philosophical themes and religious allegories.

Paz points out the similarities between Orozco and Vasconcelos: "In his ideas as much as in his temperament Orozco resembled Vasconcelos. Both began as revolutionaries and both finished as admirers of Cortés."

> *Por sus ideas tanto como por su temperamento Orozco tiene más de una semejanza con Vasconcelos. Los dos comenzaron como revolucionarios y los dos terminaron en admiradores de Cortés, el coco de los liberales y revolucionarios. La Reacción Mexicana (así, con mayúsculas) tiene en Vasconcelos y en Orozco a sus dos expresiones más altas y auténticas en este siglo. Ambos fueron profundamente religiosos, aunque Orozco no cayó jamás en la beatería de Vasconcelos ni en sus extravíos políticos.* [615]

In 1922, when he began his murals in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* in the building of San Ildefonso, José Clemente Orozco was thirty-nine years old. He used fresco technique in the north corridor of the building of the National Preparatory School and portrayed philosophical themes. Later, when the mural ideology changed after the departure of Vasconcelos, he painted over these murals with other themes. Despite his frequent attacks on Rivera as an opportunist, Orozco himself revealed a similar opportunism and contradictoriness in this matter.

Much later in his *Autobiography* (1943), Orozco says that in 1922 mural painting was like a table already set and that "the idea of painting walls and all the ideas that will constitute the new artistic stage, those that will give life, already existed in Mexico and had already been developed and defined in the twenty year period from 1900 to 1920":

> *La pintura mural se encontró en 1922 con la mesa puesta. La idea misma de pintar muros y todas las ideas que iban a constituir la nueva etapa artística, las que iban a dar vida, ya existían en México y se desarrollaron y definieron de 1900 a 1920, o sea veinte años. Por supuesto que tales ideas tuvieron su origen en los siglos anteriores, pero adquirieron su forma definitiva durante esas dos décadas.* [616]

This was in 1943, when Vasconcelos was very unpopular.

> *When he was summoned by Vasconcelos to paint the walls of the big patio of the old College of San Ildefonso, Orozco conceived an iconographical program with the general topic of "Los dones que recibe el hombre de la naturaleza", "The gifts that man receives from nature."* [617]

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[614] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 148-149.
[615] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, pp. 71-72.
[616] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 79.
[617] The text of the iconographic program is reproduced in Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, *José Clemente Orozco: El artista en Nueva York* (Cartas a Jean Charlot y textos inéditos, 1925-1929), Siglo XXI, Mexico 1971, pp. 133-134. Quoted in Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, et al., *Orozco: una relectura*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1983, p. 90.

According to Charlot,

> *Decoration of the north wall of the courts respectively called "Colegio Grande" and "Pasantes" in the National Preparatoria School. General Theme: The Gifts of Nature to Man.*
>
> *It includes seven secondary themes as follows:*
>
> *1. Decoration of the door of the hall known as "El Generalito" and of the left wing of the corridor: "VIRGINITY," physical integrity and spiritual integrity. Cool harmony, with horizontal and vertical lines predominant; tranquility, calm. Minor composition: "Adolescence."*
>
> *2. Decoration of the central area: "YOUTH," allegory of the Sun and a group of schoolgirls; in very warm harmony; lines of movement; large masses very dynamic and ascendant.*
>
> *3. Decoration of the main door and of the left wall panel: "GRACE." Warm harmony; feminine predominance.*
>
> *4. Decoration of both sides of the corridor called "Pasillo": "BEAUTY." Warm harmony; masculine predominance.*
>
> *5. Decoration of the library door: INTELLIGENCE. Cold and deep harmony.*
>
> *6. Decoration of the central area of "Pasantes": "GENIUS." Very warm harmony, lines of movement ascending and very dynamic.*
>
> *7. Decoration of the right wing: "FORCE." Warm harmony. Great dynamic masses. Predominance of horizontal and vertical lines.* [618]



Figure 48. José Clemente Orozco: *The Trench*. [619]

In the National Preparatory School (1922-1924 and 1926-1927), Orozco decided to destroy the cosmological frescos which he had painted earlier, in order to paint his own interpretation of the *Revolutionary* process. On the ground floor of the main *patio*, he painted four continuous boards which represented, from left to right (according to Justino Fernández's nomenclature): *Christ destroying his Cross* (or *The new Redemption*, as Jean Charlot calls it), *The Elements* (or *Spring*, according to Charlot), *Man's Fight with Nature* (or *Man strangling a Gorilla*, according to Charlot) and *Maternity*.



Figure 49. José Clemente Orozco: *Maternity*.

The other frescos painted in this first phase (1923-1924) were:

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[618] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 228.
[619] The Trench is reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, n.p. and *Maternity* is reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 37.

The Banquet of the Rich (*The Rich Sup While the Workers Fight*, according to Charlot), on the extreme left on the ground floor, and the caricatural murals on the first floor, and in the tracts that surround the well of the stairway.

Charlot:

> *Two end panels completed the decoration of the north wall and, to this day, remain close to their original state. At the left end, "The Rich Sup While the Workers Fight" [...] At the right end was painted "Maternity," the last of the ground floor panels.* [620]

In 1926, Orozco decided to preserve only *Maternity* and to replace the three remaining panels with paintings depicting more *Revolutionary* themes (*The Strike*, *The Trench* and *The old Order*). [621]

For Rodríguez,

> *The second group consists of subjects dealing with the Revolution and the subsequent reconstruction: The Trinity, The strike, The trench, The Old Order (on the ground floor); Women, Gravedigger, Benediction, Workmen, The farewell, The family on the second floor and thirty men and Engineers on the east wall, as well as the hands of workmen and peasants holding hammers and Sickles in the corridor arches painted between 1923-4 and 1926.* [622]

Charlot gives slightly different titles,

> *Trench, Strike, Rear Guard, Gravedigger. These were painted later, in 1926, to replace the earlier murals, mutilated by rioting students in 1924.* [623]

Even if Orozco, unlike his friends Rivera, Siqueiros and others, tried to deny being interested in historical topics such as the Conquest, the *Revolution*, etc., his murals portrayed these events in general terms. He is part of the movement despite his denials.

In general, Orozco's work in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* seems to show the origin of *mestizo* Mexico in the stairway, according to *vasconcelist* ideas, the inspiration provided by Renaissance ideals on the ground floor, criticism of negative forces on the first floor and on the second floor the human tragedy of the *Revolution*. Vasconcelos saw the *Revolution* as destruction and believed that a new world had to be created. Orozco interrupted these works in 1925 to paint *Omniscience*, a mural in the *Casa de los Azulejos*; and in 1926, to carry out another, an interpretation of the post-*Revolutionary* period, at the Industrial School of Orizaba.

For Siqueiros, "Around this time, Orozco finished his decoration of the National Preparatory School of Mexico, where he exalted miscegenation in symbolic forms. It is a completely philosophical painting, full of Masonic symbology. Orozco painted over his initial impulses towards magnificence, in favor of an impulsive plastic form. He had already covered his work with an enormous quantity of metaphysical earth":

> *Por entonces Orozco terminó su decoración de la Preparatoria de México, exaltando en un símbolo la mezcla etnológica. En plena pintura filosófica, acentuando su simbología masónica había matado todo lo que en su primer impulso hubo de inicialmente magnífico*

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620 Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 234.
621 Fernández, Justino, *Orozco: Forma e idea*, Editorial Porrúa, Mexico 1975 and Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 230.
622 Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 190.
623 Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 229.

en favor de una forma plástica impulsadora. Había tapado ya su obra con una enorme cantidad de tierra metafísica. [624]

Orozco. Malinche-Cortés − 1926

Orozco was the first to use Hernán Cortés' image in mural painting. In the first tract of the stairway of the National Preparatory School, Malinche, seated, appears next to Cortés who has his foot planted on a conquered figure, lying on the ground. Both Cortés and Malinche are naked. Malinche's eyes are closed, her whole attitude is submissive. It was one of the last paintings painted by Orozco in the National Preparatory School, and in it he also expresses the way he conceived of Meso-American miscegenation. [625]

It is difficult to believe that the trampled figure is not a native. The triumphant conquerors trampled on the indigenous peoples; that is a fact. But in a letter of protest adressed to Frances Toor, Director of the magazine *Mexican Folkways*, Orozco denies this and gives his own explanation of what he had painted. According to Orozco: "Any fairly intelligent person, anyone that has the use of reason, even a young boy, can realize that this painting represents only a rigorously historical fact and rigorously current: that is to say, the union of the European races and cultures with the indigenous American races and cultures."

"Con lo que yo no estoy conforme es con el pie o leyenda que aparece bajo el grabado que reproduce el fresco de la bóveda grande, es decir, de la pintura llamada Cortés y Malintzin, y que dice "The Indian race under their feet", puesto indudablemente por su 'art editor' (entonces era Diego Rivera, contra quien Orozco había acumulado una antipatía sin límites), pues no es esta vez la primera que pretende hacerme aparecer como un enemigo de la raza indígena, asunto bastante grave bajo las presentes circunstancias en México y más grave aún por ser la revista Mexican Folkways un periódico oficial o semioficial, patrocinado por [...] la Secretaría de Educación. "Cualquier persona medianamente inteligente, cualquiera que tenga uso de razón, hasta un niño de corta edad, puede darse cuenta de que la citada pintura representa solamente un hecho rigurosamente histórico y rigurosamente actual, es decir, la unión de las razas y culturas europeas con las razas y culturas indígenas americanas [...]" [626]

Like other participants, Orozco was neither coherent nor absolutely honest in his accounts. This led him to give different versions of the same events on different occasions. I believe that the program of *Mexican Muralism* saw the submission of the indigenous peoples as a prerequisite for the formation of a new and superior race. This is further evidence of Vasconcelos's pragmatic realism, although Vasconcelos was no longer the minister responsible in 1926 when Orozco painted the topic.

But Orozco distanced himself from this problem and from this theme.

For Xavier Moyssén: "for the artist both were the cause of the miscegenation that gave origin to the nation that is Mexico, for that reason there is the cadaver of a native at their feet, meaning the end of a historical past."

Orozco fue el primero en llevar la imagen de Hernán Cortés a la pintura mural, lo hizo en 1926 en la escalera de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, allí está en plan monumental en compañía de la Malinche, mostrando sus cuerpos desnudos de diferente color; para el artista ambos fueron los causantes del mestizaje que dio origen a la nación que es México,

[624] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 228.
[625] See pp. 170, 179-80, 191.
[626] Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *José Clemente Orozco: una vida para el arte*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1984, pp. 79-80.

por ello aparece a sus pies el cadáver de un indígena, significando el final de un pasado histórico; aunque conviene agregar que Orozco no fue del todo original en tal concepto, estaba en esa época en la conciencia de muchos hombres preocupados por definir la esencia del ser nacional, recuérdese aquí a los ateneístas y el ejemplo de Saturnino Herrán con sus proyectos murales con el tema de "Nuestros Dioses". [627]

The various members of the muralist movement held different viewpoints. For Orozco, the pre-Hispanic existed to the extent that it had been transformed by the Conquest. At the Preparatory School, the Indian is a subhuman rescued by the missionary's piety, or Malinche dominated by a stony Cortés, who accentuates his role as conquistador by trampling on the Indian in a gesture of annihilation.

Yet Rodríguez said that "Orozco painted Cortés [...] as protector of the Indian race":

Orozco painted Cortés − symbol of Spain and of Christianity − as protector of the Indian race, shown in the form of a woman − his native mistress, La Malinche, the symbol of surrender to the foreigner. However, Orozco points to the cruelty of the Conquest with a symbolic dagger and gimlet. [628]

Torres-Michúa says that "in the stairway [Orozco] represented The Origin of the Spanish American World (or, rather, the birth of *Mexicanidad* understood as Spanish-Indian miscegenation). Cortés and Malinche presided amongst allegories of that simplistic 'fusion of two races', of 'two cultures', which has always been used to try to explain the complexity of our peculiarities. Nevertheless, they are convincing pictorially":

En la escalera [Orozco] representó El Origen del Mundo Hispanoamericano (que es más bien, el nacimiento de la Mexicanidad entendida como el mestizaje español-indio). Cortés y La Malinche lo presiden entre alegorías de esa simplista "fusión de dos razas", de "dos culturas", con la que siempre se ha pretendido explicar la complejidad de nuestras peculiaridades, que no obstante, resultan convincentes pictóricamente. [629]

Charlot praises Orozco's "masterly fusion of ancient and present plastics and emotions":

Paradoxically, Orozco realized another masterly fusion of ancient and present plastics and emotions in the Indian squatting before a blood-soaked Teocalli, frescoed in 1926, in the main staircase of the Preparatoria. It was in the same year and in the same place that he blasted Indianism. The assumption proved popular that here was the resurrection of Indian culture, with its literary and romantic implications. [630]

The picture seems to show how a new homeland develops out of the mixture of Cortés and Malinche, a homeland that, suffering and worthy, almost a caricature of itself, walks on the cactus thorns that are its history, while the snake succumbs to the eagle of the national shield.

Keen describes Orozco's picture as a "ferocious satire".

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[627] Moyssén, Xavier, "El mundo prehispánico y la conquista española en los murales de Rivera y Orozco", *Historia, leyendas y mitos de México: su expresión en el arte* (XI Coloquio Internacional, en México, D.F.), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de Arte y Estética 30, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1988, pp. 340-341.
[628] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 185.
[629] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., p. 22.
[630] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 12.

This ferocious satire prepares us for the treatment of the Aztecs and the Conquest in Orozco's paintings. His early Cortés and Malinche, over the staircase of the Escuela Preparatoria, already defines his attitude toward the Conquest. The conqueror, a superb figure of a man, extends a protective hand toward a thoroughly Indian Malinche, and their union clearly represents the union of Spanish and Indian elements in a new Mexican synthesis. [631]

In 1929 Orozco published an important text entitled *New World, New Races and New Art*. In it he writes: "To base oneself on the art of the aboriginal, whether of antiquity or of the present, is a sure indication of impotence and cowardice, in fact, a fraud. If new races have appeared on the lands of the New World, those races have the unavoidable duty of producing a new art in a new physical and spiritual medium. Any other road is plain cowardice."

[...] Apoyarse sobre el arte de los aborígenes, sea de la antigüedad o del presente, es seguro indicio de impotencia y cobardía, de hecho, un fraude. Si nuevas razas han aparecido sobre las tierras del Nuevo Mundo, esas razas tienen el deber inevitable de producir un nuevo arte en un nuevo medio físico y espiritual. Cualquier otro camino es simple cobardía. [632]

And further: "The highest, the most logical, the purest and the strongest form of painting is the mural. Only in this form is painting one with the other arts - with all the others. It is also the most disinterested form, because it cannot be made a matter of private gain; it cannot be hidden for the benefit of some privileged persons. It is for the people. It is for ALL."

La más alta, la más lógica, la más pura y la más fuerte forma de pintura es la mural. Sólo en esta forma, es una con las otras artes − con todas las otras. También es la forma más desinteresada, porque no puede hacerse de ella asunto de ganancia privada; no puede ser ocultada para beneficio de unos cuantos privilegiados. Es para el pueblo. Es para TODOS. [633]

According to Xavier Moyssén "If Rivera ennobled the past and exaggerated tremendously, Orozco erred towards the opposite extreme: that of negation":

Si Rivera enalteció ese pasado hasta la exageración, Orozco incurrió en el otro extremo: el de la negación. Para él no hubo héroe alguno en el momento del enfrentamiento con los españoles. Aunque en ningún momento pretendió glorificar a Cortés, si fue capaz de rescatarlo como elemento ineludible en compañía de la Malinche, al otorgarle el significado de creador de la nación mestiza Mexicana. La Conquista según él, incorporó a los pueblos mesoamericanos a la civilización occidental a través del hierro, de la rueda y la mecánica. [634]

Octavio Paz sees neither Cuauhtémoc nor Cortés as heroes in Orozco's mythology, but as "tools, instruments of the cosmic justice"

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[631] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 531.
[632] Orozco, José Clemente, "New World, New Races and New Art", *Creative Art, Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, vol. 4, no 1, New York 1929. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *José Clemente Orozco: una vida para el arte*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1984, pp. 102-103.
[633] Ibid
[634] Moyssén, Xavier, "El mundo prehispánico y la conquista española en los murales de Rivera y Orozco", *Historia, leyendas y mitos de México: su expresión en el arte* (XI Coloquio Internacional, en México, D.F.), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de Arte y Estética 30, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1988, p. 343.

En la mitología de Orozco − otra gran diferencia con Rivera y Siqueiros − Cuauhtémoc no es un héroe. Tampoco Cortés. No son reformadores ni víctimas transfiguradas por su sacrificio: son herramientas, instrumentos de la justicia cósmica. [635]

David Alfaro Siqueiros

Even David Alfaro Siqueiros is a controversial character in the panorama of Mexican arts and politics. Despite presenting greater ideological and, possibly, aesthetic coherence than Rivera, Siqueiros created his own myths, just like all the other muralists. The fact that Siqueiros actively participated in an attempt to murder Trotsky marked his career for ever. [636]

Figure 50. David Alfaro Siqueiros in jail in 1960. [637]



Siqueiros never denied that he attempted to murder Trotsky: "I never denied and I don't deny now that my participation in the assault on the house of Trotsky on May 24 1940, objectively, and according to the prevailing law, constituted a crime, and that for that crime I spent long periods in jail, more than 3 years in exile, and suffered the loss of large quantities of money deposited as bail, as well as an infamous attack on my character on an international scale."

Nunca negué y no niego ahora que mi participación en el asalto a la casa de Trotsky el día 24 de mayo de 1940, objetivamente, conforme a la ley imperante, constituyó un delito y que por ese delito he pasado largos periodos de cárcel, más de 3 años de exilio, la pérdida de fuertes cantidades depositadas por concepto de caución y una ofensiva infamante de carácter de escala internacional. [638]

And further: "Concerning my personal participation in that act, I should say only that my task was to immobilize the external defense of the house of Trotsky, consisting of 35 Mexican policemen armed with Mausers, and that I carried out that task appropriately."

En lo que respecta a mi participación personal en ese acto, sólo debo decir que mi cometido fue el de inmovilizar a la defensa exterior de la casa de Trotsky, constituida por 35 policías Mexicanos armados de máuseres y que cumplí adecuadamente con ese objetivo. [639]

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[635] Paz, Octavio, "Ocultación y descubrimiento de Orozco", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 89.

[636] In almost all works on Mexican muralism there exists a reference to the attempt to murder Trotsky by Siqueiros, in the same way that in practically all those works there appear references to Lenin's representation in Rockefeller Center, the sentence "God doesn't exist", etc., etc..

[637] Retrieved 2003-09-03 from http://www.zonezero.com/editorial/agosto01/photo2.html

[638] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 369.

[639] Ibid.

According to Wolfe there are clear contradictions regarding Siqueiros and his political activities:

> *And it tells much concerning Mexican politics that Siqueiros was never jailed as the pintor a pistola (an artist who paints with a pistol instead of a brush) who tried to murder the old Revolutionary exile whom the government had given asylum, but is in jail for trying to foment social disorder, while the same government carefully, and quite properly, protects and preserves his unfinished masterpiece, and permits him to paint in his cell.* [640]

Raquel Tibol warns that Siqueiros'memoirs contain many errors in dates, people, places and feelings.

> *[...] los muchos errores de fechas, personas, lugares y sentidos que comete Siqueiros en sus memorias publicadas póstumamente (Me llamaban el Coronelazo)* [641]

For Antonio Rodríguez,

> *Por tres rasgos fundamentales se distingue Siqueiros de los demás pintores Mexicanos de su época: lº. Por la militancia política y participación activa en las luchas revolucionarias que absorbió una parte considerable de su vida. 2º. Por el afán de reducir a formulaciones teóricas su pensamiento, sus intuiciones y sus experiencias. 3º Por la preocupación, que respondió a sus permanentes inquietudes, de aportar elementos nuevos a la práctica de la pintura y de la plástica en general.* [642]

I will focus on the relationship between Vasconcelos's and Siqueiros's ideas in order to understand the minister's influence on the artist.

There is a certain justification in stating that it was David Alfaro Siqueiros who began the *Mexican Mural Movement* with his polemic *Tres Llamamientos de Orientación actual a los Pintores y Escultores de la nueva Generación de América*, [643] written in 1921 and published in *Vida Americana*. It was also Siqueiros who brought the movement to a close, with his work *La Marcha de la Humanidad* in the Polyforum, Mexico City, inaugurated in 1971, fifty years after this manifesto. Alternatively, one can date the end of the movement with Siqueiros's death three years later, in 1974.

According to most biographies of David Alfaro Siqueiros, he was born on December 29, 1896 in Santa Rosalía de Camargo, Chihuahua. [644] In 1911, while studying at the Preparatory School, he attended the *National School of Fine Arts* (Academy of San Carlos) as an extramural student. There he participated in a student strike protesting against the antiquated system of artistic education, obstinately defended by the director, the architect Antonio Rivas Mercado, who was removed from his position when the student movement prevailed. In 1913 Siqueiros joined the outdoor School of Santa Anita, directed by Alfredo Ramos Martínez. He also collaborated with Dr. Atl on the *Revolutionary* newspaper *La Vanguardia* in Orizaba, Veracruz.

In 1918 he was one amongst a group of avantgarde artists who formed the collective shop at the *Bohemian Center* in the city of Guadalajara. Important discussions took place about the form and function of art in the *Revolution*, and about the necessity of a thorough knowledge of the people and of the old autochthonous cultures. Siqueiros, who had participated in the first discussions, later referred to them as the *Congreso de Artistas-Soldados de Guadalajara.*

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[640] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 156-157.
[641] Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 20.
[642] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Siqueiros, teórico e innovador". In de Micheli, Mario, *Siqueiros*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1985, p. 17.
[643] See Appendix VII.
[644] According to David Alfaro Siqueiros he was born in 1896 in Santa Rosalia (today Camargo). Recent investigations questions this date, since Siqueiros's passports give birth dates of 1895, 1896, and even 1899.

According to Rodríguez: "He called these discussions the 'Congress of artist-soldiers'which naturally was an exaggeration. There was never such a congress."

> *La primera manifestación de Siqueiros como artista teórico se produce en las discusiones que en 1918 sostiene en Guadalajara con otros pintores revolucionarios. El llamó a estas discusiones Congreso de artistas soldados lo que naturalmente constituye una exageración. No hubo nunca tal congreso. José Guadalupe Zuno, en su Historia de la plástica en Jalisco, no se refiere a él. Ningún documento ni testimonio de lo que sólo fueron discusiones estético-políticas entre artistas. Tampoco se puede comprobar que las "enunciaciones teóricas" ahí presentadas, hayan constituido "la base ideológica" del futuro movimiento muralista.* [645]

In 1919 Siqueiros and Rivera met in Paris, a meeting that Siqueiros later described as decisive. Raquel Tibol describes Rivera as "for that time a prominent character in the *montparnasian* cosmopolitan avantgarde," a claim which will be questioned later as it seems that he was little more than a marginal character in that *milieu*. In any case for Tibol, "That encounter was decisive in the life of both artists and in the development of [Mexican] national art":

> *Conoce a Diego Rivera, por aquel entonces figura prominente en la cosmopolita vanguardia montparnasiana. Aquel encuentro fue decisivo en la vida de ambos artistas y en el desarrollo del arte nacional. Siqueiros fue para Rivera el mejor mensajero de la Revolución Mexicana; Rivera fue para Siqueiros El Maestro de muchas revelaciones; su profundísimo conocimiento del arte europeo de todos los tiempos ayudó a Siqueiros a dar el primero salto desde un punto de vista provinciano a una concepción estética universal* [646]

With his customary exaggeration, Siqueiros writes: "In 1919, some other painters and I went to Europe. In Paris I met Diego Rivera. The encounter thus took place between the new fervor and the new ideas of young Mexican painters who had participated directly in the armed fights of the Mexican Revolution, represented by me, and an important period of the formal Revolution in the plastic arts of Europe, represented by Rivera":

> *En 1919, otros pintores y yo, fuimos a Europa. En París encontré a Diego Rivera. Así se produjo el encuentro entre el nuevo fervor y el nuevo ideario, de los jóvenes pintores Mexicanos que habíamos participado de una manera directa en las luchas armadas de la Revolución Mexicana, representados por mí, y un período importantísimo de la Revolución formal en las artes plásticas de Europa, representado por Rivera.* [647]

In 1921 Siqueiros published the magazine *Vida Americana*, American Life, in Barcelona. A text published in the magazine – *Tres Llamamientos de Orientación actual a los Pintores y Escultores de la nueva Generación americana* – has been described as the opening manifesto of the Mexican artistic Renaissance and reveals a close affinity to Vasconcelos's ideas whilst he was Rector of the University. This well-known text was an aesthetic manifesto that represented, according to Siqueiros himself, the synthesis of his thought and that of Rivera.

Siqueiros:

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[645] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Siqueiros, teórico e innovador". In de Micheli, Mario, *Siqueiros*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1985, p. 19.
[646] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, pp. 17-18.
[647] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Cómo se pinta un mural*, Ediciones Mexicanas, Mexico 1951, pp. 23-24.

> *Nuestro manifiesto A los Plásticos de América, publicado en Vida Americana, de Barcelona, había producido una intensa conmoción en el campo intelectual, entonces en extremo reducido, de mi país. De hecho, nuestra proclama estética había interpretado bien la conciencia artística y los anhelos de un grupo de plásticos y escritores.* [648]

Vida Americana included illustrations by the Mexican painters Diego Rivera, Mario de Zayas and Siqueiros and by the Uruguayan José Torres García and Rafael P. Barradas.

> *En 1921, resumiendo mis ideas, que eran las de los compañeros estudiantes de pintura que habíamos participado en la lucha armada y las ideas de Diego Rivera, que eran las ideas del movimiento renovador del París de entonces, di expresión en la revista "Vida Americana", de Barcelona, a mi conocido "Manifiesto a los Plásticos de América": Constituir un arte monumental y heroico, un arte humano, un arte público, con el ejemplo directo y vivo de nuestras grandes y extraordinarias culturas prehispánicas de América.* [649]

The cover read:

> *NO HAREMOS LITERATURA HISPANO-AMERICANISTA*
> *VIDA AMERICANA*
> *REVISTA NORTE CENTRO Y SUDAMERICANA DE VANGUARDIA.*
> *PRECIO: 40 C DE DOLLAR 2 PESETAS 4 FRANCS* [650]

Siqueiros called on American artists to rethink their positions in the face of the advances in European art. He exhorted artists to "to put up a monumental and heroic art, a human art, a public art", to produce an integrated and "upwardly superior" art. These words reveal the beginnings of the muralist tendency which would develop in subsequent years.

Tibol calls Siqueiros's Tres Llamamientos de Orientación actual a los Pintores y Escultores de la nueva Generación americana a product of "contradictory enthusiasm":

> *Sus contradictorios entusiasmos se precipitan en "Tres llamamientos de orientación actual a los pintores y escultores de la nueva generación americana", para cuya publicación edita una revista (Vida Americana), de la que logra sacar un solo número durante un fugaz regreso a Barcelona a mediados de 1921. Ya ha cambiado el nombre de José, que le desagradaba, por el de David, que adopta definitivamente.* [651]

Siqueiros later describes the manifest as a "kind of a summary, not only of my ideas, but of those resulting from my exchange of views with Rivera":

> *En fin, con todo ese "bagaje teórico", una mezcla de nacionalismo exaltado y los elementos básicos que habíamos tomado de lo que yo he dado en llamar siempre el constructivismo cezaniano, pude yo redactar los tres famosos Llamamientos a los Plásticos de América, que he presentado siempre como una especie de resumen, no*

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[648] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 178-179.
[649] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Cómo se pinta un mural*, Ediciones Mexicanas, Mexico 1951, p. 24.
[650] Cover of *Vida Americana*, May 1921, reproduced in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 198.
[651] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 19.

solamente de mis ideas, sino de aquellas que eran las resultantes de mis cambios de impresiones con Rivera. [652]

And he continues: "I consider that my contact with Diego Rivera, independently of the particular utility it may have had for me or for him, constitutes a fact of fundamental importance for our later movement."

Considero que mi contacto con Diego Rivera, independientemente de la utilidad particular que pudo haber tenido para mí o para él, constituye un hecho de importancia fundamental para nuestro movimiento posterior. [...] Diego Rivera representaba un período europeo de saludables rectificaciones, de redescubrimiento de valores inmutables de las artes plásticas que se habían perdido durante varios siglos de academismo. Yo, por mi parte, representaba sólo el lirismo de la juventud Mexicana de entonces que balbuceantemente hablaba de un arte "más grande". [653]

In the first thesis (concerning "harmful influence and new tendencies") Siqueiros writes:

Cubramos lo humano-invulnerable con ropajes modernos: "sujetos nuevos", "aspectos nuevos". ¡Debemos, ante todo, tener el firme convencimiento de que el arte del futuro tiene que ser, a pesar de sus naturales decadencias transitorias, ascendentemente superior! [654]

In the second ("Dominance of the constructive Spirit over the ornamental or analytic Spirit"):

[...] acerquémonos por nuestra parte a las obras de los antiguos pobladores de nuestros valles, los pintores y escultores indios (mayas, Aztecas, incas, etc.); nuestra proximidad climatológica con ellos nos dará la asimilación del vigor constructivo de sus obras, en las que existe un claro conocimiento elemental de la naturaleza, que nos puede servir de punto de partida. Adoptemos su energía sintética, sin llegar, naturalmente, a las lamentables reconstrucciones arqueológicas ("Indianismo ", "primitivismo", "americanismo"), tan de moda entre nosotros y que nos están llevando a estilizaciones de vida efímera. [655]

In the third ("we abandon literary ideas, let us make pure painting"):

Desechemos las teorías basadas en la relatividad del "arte nacional"; ¡universalicémonos!, que nuestra natural fisonomía racial y local aparecerá en nuestra obra, inevitablemente. [656]

The timing of this manifesto was perfect – May 1921, the month José Vasconcelos awarded the first mural commission for work at the former chapel of San Pedro y San Pablo. Siqueiros's ideas corresponded closely to the ideas of Vasconcelos. One possibility, which cannot be proven, is that it was Vasconcelos's theories and plans for mural art which led Siqueiros to write his manifesto. This would mean a change of perspective on everything which has ever been written about *Mexican Muralism*.

Contemporary newspapers reported on the manifesto. Although Charlot mentions a newspaper article of 1920, Siqueiros's manifesto actually only appeared in 1921.

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[652] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 161.
[653] Ibid, p. 162.
[654] See Appendix VII
[655] See Appendix VII
[656] See Appendix VII

On the day that Mexican newspapers headlined the surrender of Villa to Federal troops, El Universal also printed the following: "Yesterday news reached us that the well-known Mexican artist Alfaro Siqueiros has taken over the artistic direction of the important magazine Vida Americana, published in Barcelona [...] His promotion to the directorship of the magazine Vida Americana constitutes a substantial personal triumph [...] The first and last number of this publication headlined Siqueiros' "Three Appeals of Timely Orientation to Painters and Sculptors of the New American Generation." It was of such importance that the start of the Mexican Renaissance is usually dated from its appearance. **657**

Paz comments: "The action of Siqueiros was decisive. His ideas on the function of art in the modern world were, at the same time, messianic and Revolutionary. [...] Communism would be the synthesis of embryonic Christian collectivism and Renaissance humanism. The beliefs of Siqueiros were primary and chimerical; however, they move us. These beliefs are daughters of the faith - something more than any aesthetics."

La acción de Siqueiros fue determinante. Sus ideas sobre la función del arte en el mundo moderno eran, a un tiempo, mesiánicas y revolucionarias. [...] El comunismo sería la síntesis del embrionario colectivismo cristiano y del humanismo renacentista. Las creencias de Siqueiros eran primarias y quiméricas; sin embargo, nos conmueven. Son hijas de la fe − algo más que una estética cualquiera. **658**

According to Orozco: "All the artists and the intellectuals were called to collaborate, and painters were presented with an opportunity that they had not had in centuries. I don't know how or why Rivera returned from Europe. Siqueiros was called from Rome by Vasconcelos and the two artists met with their resident partners in Mexico and Jean Charlot joined them."

Fueron llamados todos los artistas y los intelectuales a colaborar y los pintores se encontraron con una oportunidad que no se les había presentado en siglos. Yo no sé cómo ni por qué Rivera volvió de Europa. Siqueiros fué llamado de Roma por Vasconcelos y los dos artistas se reunieron con sus compañeros residentes en México y a ellos se unió Jean Charlot. **659**

And for Orozco, there was no doubt that when Siqueiros "came to Mexico, in 1921, summoned by Vasconcelos, he already had a complete plan for Revolutionary art, a plan which was the same as that proposed to us by Vasconcelos":

[Siqueiros] cuando vino a México, en 1921, llamado por Vasconcelos, ya traía todo un plan de arte revolucionario que fué el mismo que nos propuso. **660**

As regards Vasconcelos's program of support for Mexican artists in Europe, such as Rivera and Siqueiros, Charlot cites the following exchange of correspondence:

At the beginning of 1922 Vasconcelos wrote Siqueiros a crucial letter, now missing from the file. In it he elaborated his theme that Europe was a tired continent, and forcefully stated his vision of a coming Mexican plastic Renaissance. At least that much is implicit from the painter's reply: Answering yours of January 5, in which you find my plans for an

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657 "The Painter Siqueiros in Barcelona," *El Universal*, July 30 1920. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925,* Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 197.
658 Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 59.
659 Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 82.
660 Ibid, p. 90.

exhibition untimely. Before all, I must sincerely confess that the enthusiasm that your letter breathes intensified my own great desire to return to my patria, there to share in the common work with all my strength. I find myself in total agreement with your basic idea: "To create a new civilization extracted from the very bowels of Mexico," and I firmly believe that our youth will rally to this banner [...] To know Europe's actual labor is to touch the very wound of its decadence and to acquire faith in our future [...] When I asked you for a prolongation of my pension for one year, I meant to study part of the time in Italy and part in Spain before coming back to Mexico, but A DESIRE TO RETURN SOONER TO MY PATRIA TO WORK THERE (a desire that I owe specifically to your intelligent initiative concerning art) led me to modify this program [...] return to Mexico in May, using the remaining time to know my country better, which is what we all should begin with, and have an exhibition ready at year's end. [661]

And Charlot again:

On April 27 Vasconcelos forwarded a thousand pesos to Siqueiros, specifically "to return to Mexico." July sixth found Siqueiros in Rome. That day he wrote to the Secretary saying that he had used the travel money to buy art materials which, in Italy, are "four times cheaper than in the rest of Europe [...] You see how I am facing a grave defalcation [...] I beg you most urgently to wire an order to the Paris Consul to pay me the amount due for July, and also advance me that for August, which will serve as travel expenses at the time of sailing." Fearing a second postponement, Vasconcelos hit on a drastic scheme to detach Siqueiros from Europe. On July l0 the Secretary wrote to the Chief Accountant that monthly remittances due to Siqueiros for July and August should be paid at once, that Siqueiros' pension was to cease in Europe on the first of september, to be resumed only when the artist reached Mexico. Promptly, then, and as planned, Siqueiros arrived in the Mexican capital. On August 31 the payment of his allowance was resumed on national soil, and to it was added another salary, for a job as nominal as those assigned to most muralists. He became on paper the "eighth teacher of drawing and manual crafts, at 3.30 pesos daily." [662]

Tibol writes: "All Siqueiros had to do was to return to Mexico and join the heterogeneous team of painters and sculptors who had begun to put into practice the hypotheses of the philosopher and educator José Vasconcelos":

[Siqueiros] sólo debe regresar a México y unirse al equipo heterogéneo de pintores y escultores que han comenzado a demostrar con hechos la hipótesis del filósofo y educador José Vasconcelos, que consideraba las obras solemnes como el mejor reconfortante para una sociedad desarreglada. El peculiar idealismo socializante de Vasconcelos le indicaba que a un pueblo lacerado por la guerra civil, ruinoso, pobre, enfermo, en su gran mayoría analfabeto, había que darle la oportunidad de familiarizarse con los grandes asuntos, con los grandes problemas, poniendo en sus manos libros clásicos y ante sus ojos pinturas heroicas. [663]

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[661] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 199-200.
[662] Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 199-201. These informations are in the Archives of the Ministry of Education: Correspondence in folder l-21-6-lo; assignment in folder l-28-S-32.
[663] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 20.

In Siqueiros's version, he had to fight with Vasconcelos in order to have his own wall. According to Siqueiros Vasconcelos told the painters to, "make it as ugly or uglier than anything you already began to do, but make it soon and in the largest possible number of square meters."

> *Durante largas semanas peleé con Vasconcelos para tener también yo "mi pared". El licenciado José Vasconcelos, entonces Secretario de Educación Pública y el autor burocrático de la determinación de encargarnos a los pintores la realización de pinturas murales, tuvo por lema: "Superficie y rapidez." Nos decía: "Hágalo tanto o más feo de lo que lo han empezado a hacer, pero háganlo pronto y en el mayor número de metros cuadrados que sea posible". Autor de la filosofía del cosmos, filosofía cosmogónica, una especie de panteísmo de origen hindú que le había servido de base para elaborar su literatura, más que sus principios, pues éstos, careciendo totalmente de todo método, no pueden considerarse como tales, decía, fundamentando su lema, más o menos lo siguiente: "Somos, no obstante nuestra atroz mezcla de una raza vital con una raza decrépita, no obstante ese mestizaje atroz, una raza bárbara, por nueva y la cual no podrá encontrarse sino a través de largos siglos de la más estúpida noche que pueden haber conocido todos los pueblos. Entonces lo que vale es hacer, hacer mucho, porque no tenemos posibilidad de algo que norme y compruebe nuestra acción y el valor de la misma".* [664]

The newspapers of the time are revealing: "Hired by Vasconcelos to work at the Preparatory School, Siqueiros [is working on] the first project, a monumental work, a 'wall of truth' where he will paint the occidental Spirit":

> *Contratado por Vasconcelos para que trabaje en la Preparatoria el primer proyecto de Siqueiros, una obra monumental, es un "muro de verdad" donde pintará el Espíritu de occidente"* [665]

Siqueiros acknowledges (which Rivera does not) that the murals executed by him had a religious character. It was clearly Vasconcelos's decision to have Siqueiros paint the meeting between these two worlds, between the old and the new, the Indians and the Spaniards, the old religions and the Catholicism and Siqueiros agreed to paint these programmatic ideas. Siqueiros: "I found appropriate to symbolize that meeting between our 'two worlds' with San Cristóbal's great figure."

> *[...] me pareció adecuado simbolizar ese contacto entre nuestros "dos mundos" con una gran figura de San Cristóbal. ¿No había sido este gigante el vehículo usado por el cristianismo para trasladarse de una tierra a otra, precisamente por en medio de las aguas del mar? San Cristóbal, pues, fue mi símbolo, y ahí está todavía tan oscuro, y en un lugar tan oscuro, que yo no sé si alguien lo ha podido ver alguna vez o simplemente se lo han imaginado, porque bastante se ha escrito al respecto. Faltaba el muro que está frente a frente del ya operante San Cristóbal. San Cristóbal era un hombre de la raza blanca, de la raza caucásica, como lo era también JesuCristo.* [666]

Siqueiros was the first to realise the importance of the pre-Hispanic legacy. This is already evident in the *Tres Llamamientos*. For Paz, the function of Siqueiros's *indigenismo* was to "rescue the forms of pre-Columbian art":

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[664] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 183-184.
[665] *El Demócrata*, September 20 1922. Quoted in Ignacio Paco II, Taibo, "Rivera y los fundadores, La vida como personajes de mural (1922-1925)", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1991, p. 10.
[666] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 196-197.

Su indigenismo (Madres Proletaria y Campesina, Entierro de un Obrero) no fue una mistificación paternalista, sino un rescate de formas del arte precolombino. Entiéndase recreación y no copia de un pasado que le pertenecía; un acto no de asimilar exóticos principios de artes lejanos revalorados; aunque también utilizó lo mejor de la tradición de la pintura europea (claramente el futurismo, el naturalismo) y el aprovechamiento del realismo social Mexicano − del que fue uno de los creadores − no consistió en una adopción servil de la figura, tampoco en una simple moda de adoptar el realismo. Fue producto de una necesidad de comunicación al servicio de un ideal. [667]

Keen writes:

For Siqueiros, a socialist Revolutionary artist, obsessed with the violence and injustice of the modern world, Aztec society has little contemporary relevance, perhaps no civic lesson except the lesson it offered in its death struggle of heroic resistance to foreign domination. 668

Torres-Michúa sees "Siqueiros's *indigenismo* [as] historical and not simply anecdotal":

El indigenismo de Siqueiros es histórico y no simplemente anecdótico. [669]

It thus fitted in neatly with Rivera's archeological approach.

Con fina percepción comprendió él que deberíamos tomar del mundo antiguo de México lo que había en él de vigente; pero sin llegar al "arqueologismo", que acabaría por matar la fuerza creadora de muchos artistas de la Escuela Mexicana para quienes el pasado debería sobreponerse al presente y al futuro. [670]

According to Paz, Siqueiros was already in 1921 inveighing against the fashion for those "lamentable archaeological reconstructions *Indianismo* and *Americanism*":

Como pintor, Siqueiros no tuvo el savoir-faire ni el color, el dibujo y la sensualidad de Rivera; tampoco la visión dramática de Orozco. En cambio, fue más inventivo y osado. En su primer manifiesto, en 1921, exaltó a la "plástica pura"; pues bien, algunos de sus murales y de sus telas merecen ser llamados así: son admirables composiciones en las que triunfan las formas en movimiento y en las que la materia posee una suerte de vivacidad extraordinaria. ¿Qué más puedo decir? [671]

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[667] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 25-26.
[668] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 533.
[669] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 27-28.
[670] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Siqueiros, teórico e innovador". In de Micheli, Mario, *Siqueiros*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1985, p. 19.
[671] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 63.

Siqueiros's first murals

On his return from Europe, Siqueiros joined the muralism movement with a work executed in encaustic in the stairway of the *Colegio Chico* of the National Preparatory School. According to Siqueiros: "Our ideas then hardly touched an imprecise idea that we might describe as nationalist-populist. We had only begun to feel within us the need to express ourselves as race and nation."

> *Nuestras ideas de entonces tocaban apenas una imprecisa idea que pudiéramos calificar de nacionalista-populista. Apenas si habíamos empezado a sentir en nosotros la necesidad de expresarnos como raza y nación.* [672]

The mural was entitled *The Elements*. A winged woman symbolized the western spirit that hung over America. Abstract symbols of fire, earth, air, and water surrounded the figure – the last two elements being represented by two snails (**Figure 51**). [673]

The Elements

Figure 51. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *The Elements*.



According to Rodríguez it is difficult to understand what Siqueiros means at that time:

> *On the ceiling of a staircase he painted a winged woman surrounded by semi-abstract decorative motifs (sea-snails, windmill sails, stylized flames), which he called The Elements. On the principal wall, another woman is floating in space, and on the same level, horizontally, a man with a halo; between the two there is the strange and rather grotesque figure of a 'popular' angel, stylized like a codex sign. Siqueiros called this part of the mural The Myths, but his language is still so poor and so inexpressive that it is difficult to understand what he means. The muscular body of the man suggests a workman, but the halo round his head suggests a saint. Moreover, there is something grotesque and jocose in his attitude. He is gazing, unmoved, at the next wall which shows the burial of a workman. His hands are crossed and indicate no attempt to right the injustice. The winged woman in The Elements also suggests a working woman.* [674]

Siqueiros: "Without finishing the painting of the referred wall totally, I rushed to the one in front, executing 'The Dead Worker's Funeral'."

> *Sin terminar totalmente la pintura del muro referido, me lancé al de enfrente, ejecutando el Entierro del obrero muerto. Cuatro hombres de rasgos indígenas puros conducen un féretro pintado de azul ultramar, que es el color que se usa en México para pintar los*

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[672] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 155.
[673] Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 35.
[674] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 186.

féretros en los lugares alejados de las urbes, y en cuya parte alta, de la manera más infantil imaginable, están pintados una hoz y un martillo. [675]

It is interesting to note that Siqueiros used the proletarian symbols of the hammer and sickle in 1924**,** still during Vasconcelos's time and well before their use by Rivera. Liberation symbols such as these, or the figure of the worker, appeared very early on in his work, e.g., in Siqueiros's *Entierro de un Obrero* in the Colegio Chico of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. Rivera then included the worker and communist symbols repeatedly at the Secretariat of Public Education.

The Funeral of the sacrificed Worker [676]

Another mural by Siqueiros, *The Funeral of the sacrificed Worker,* is also in the Colegio Chico of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. The mural shows a blue coffin being carried by the dead worker's colleagues. In *The Funeral of the sacrificed Worker*, Siqueiros exhibits an early maturity of style and a new more political content: three workers are carrying a bright blue coffin with a discreet hammer and sickle on the lid.

According to Charlot:

Siqueiros was working on his third fresco, "The Burial of a Worker," when the news of the shooting of Carrillo Puerto reached him in January 1924. He wrote the name of the murdered man on a paper which he sealed in a bottle and walled n the mortar behind the painted coffin, dedicating this plebeian memorial to him who claimed descent from the Mayan king Nachi-Cocom [...] [677]

The Myths

On the main wall Siqueiros painted *The Myths*. This composition is formed by a woman floating in space and a man with a halo in horizontal position. There is a strange angel figure drawn with great expressive force between the woman and the man. According to Siqueiros, the title of the mural was *The Fallen Myths*.

Después que hube pintado parte de los muros este y oeste del segundo cuerpo del cubo de "mi" escalera, empecé a ejecutar lo correspondiente al muro norte del mismo lugar, con el tema de Los Mitos Caídos. [678]

The Call of Freedom

In the upper part of the walls of the stairway, Siqueiros painted his first *Revolutionary* mural. The vast mural represents the *Revolution* breaking the chains of oppression. Indigenous images depict the continuing struggle. This mural was entitled *El Llamado de la libertad*, *The Call of Freedom*.

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[675] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 199.
[676] Or *The dead worker's Funeral*, as Siqueiros calls it. See note 634.
[677] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 205-206.
[678] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 190.

Diego Rivera

Rivera is the artist with whom the muralist movement is most readily identified. In the next chapter his contribution will be examined more thoroughly; here I just want to supply some introductory notes.

Vasconcelos saw the artists as the elite who should dedicate themselves to the task of educating the broad masses. To accomplish his plans he asked for the cooperation of painters in Mexico and abroad. Among the latter were Roberto Montenegro, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Amado de la Cueva.

Antonio Rodríguez:

> *The painters who were living abroad – Roberto Montenegro, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Amado de la Cueva – suddenly returned to Mexico, as if in answer to a general summons. Others, who were hiding in the open-air school or in some government office, where they were illustrating pamphlets, like Orozco, emerged from the shadows of anonymity.* [679]

Rivera, who had been friendly with Best, Montenegro, and Enciso since their student years in San Carlos, and had shared accommodation with them for long periods in Paris and in Spain, integrated himself readily in the group of writers and of intellectuals who collaborated with the Rector of the University.

It has been often said that Vasconcelos had a special preference for Diego Rivera, an artist who was already relatively prestigious and who had had an education which had a great deal to offer for the national art that Vasconcelos wanted to create. In fact, Vasconcelos neither had a special predilection for Rivera, whom he considered to be too "French" (which is why he invited Rivera to accompany him to Yucatan) nor did Vasconcelos trust him completely.

According to Charlot:

> *Vasconcelos hesitated to back Rivera's "certain projects." "On arrival he asked me for a job. I was prejudiced because he painted cubism and, in my opinion that was not compatible with works of State − his head was full of Picasso." As a test, he let Rivera illustrate the October number of his pet review, El Maestro. The vignettes are indeed in the cubist manner [...].* [680]

At about the time when Alberto Pani gave Rivera an invitation from José Vasconcelos to participate in the cultural campaign that the Secretary of Public Education had started, Siqueiros met Rivera in Paris and spoke about the opportunities for the creation of a socially responsible art that post-*Revolutionary* Mexico seemed to offer.

According to Guadalupe Rivera Marín: "Rivera was then in Europe and Siqueiros was looking for him, with the support of Vasconcelos."

> *Rivera estaba entonces en Europa y Siqueiros estaba en busca de él, bajo el apoyo de Vasconcelos.* [681]

For Olivier Debroise:

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[679] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 157.
[680] "Vasconcelos, in a manuscript written especially for this book." In Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 131. The number of El Maestro [Revista de Cultura Nacional], is Tomo 2, núm.l, October 1921.
[681] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, "Politica y Arte de la Revolucion Mexicana", *La Guirnalda Polar*, Neoclassic E-Press, 1997, September 1th 1997.

> *El ideal humanista de Vasconcelos coincidió con los proyectos de los pintores de Paris. Cuando Diego se enteró del plan de Vasconcelos por medio del embajador de México, el arquitecto Alberto J. Pani, pidió inmediatamente audiencia con él. Pero Diego no dejaría Europa sin antes viajar a Italia.* [682]

Indeed, it may have been Vasconcelos who sent Siqueiros to give Rivera Vasconcelos's message about the mural program.

According to Paz: "[...] in 1920 [Rivera] meets Alberto J. Pani, Mexico's Secretary in Paris. [...] Soon after, [Pani] fixed him a trip to Italy, commissioned by the University of Mexico, that is to say, by José Vasconcelos who was then the rector."

> *[...] en 1920 [Rivera] conoce a Alberto J. Pani, Ministro de México en París. [...] Poco después, [Pani] le arregló un viaje a Italia, comisionado por la Universidad de México, es decir, por José Vasconcelos, que era entonces el rector. En Italia Diego se enfrenta con los mosaicos bizantinos de Ravena, medita en la lección del Quattrocento y estudia a los maestros de Siena. Al año siguiente, llamado por el gobierno, regresa a México [...].Creo que esta atropellada relación da una idea de su compleja evolución.* [683]

Before returning to Mexico, Rivera received a subsidy from the Mexican government to study different forms of public art in Italy.

> *Persuaded by Alberto Pani, the Mexican Ambassador to Paris, and Jose Vasconcelos, Rector of the University of Mexico, to study the frescoes of the Renaissance, Rivera travelled to Italy in 1920. Like Siqueiros' own pilgrimage in the same year, the visit formed a final and most significant stage in Rivera's development in the years preceding the birth of Mexican muralism.* [684]

His stay in Italy had a huge impact on his work. The Renaissance paintings and frescos, the mosaics of Ravenna and Pompeii, and the Roman commemorative columns revealed entirely new ways to manage form and space and to use them to create a realistic, didactic art of the type favored by Vasconcelos.

According to Monsiváis:

> *Unos cuantos leen. Todos son capaces de ver. Vasconcelos sabe lo que hace al encomiar las facilidades didácticas de la pintura. Si él contrata artistas, pide a Diego Rivera que abandone Europa, y cede los muros de antiguos conventos, no es con tal de prodigar Botticellis y Fra Angélicos, sino en obediencia a una estrategia educativa.* [685]

Rivera was in Italy at the end of 1920 and in the early months of 1921, thanks to financial support from Alberto J. Pani, Mexican Ambassador in Paris and a personal friend of Obregón and Vasconcelos. [686]

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[682] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 104.
[683] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 35.
[684] Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 25.
[685] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Diego Rivera, creador de públicos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 3.
[686] According to Rivera himself he traveled for almost a year and a half in Italy!

According to Charlot, Rivera's trip to Italy was planned and financed by Vasconcelos. This was part of the project which Vasconcelos, as Rector of the University and future Secretary of the Education and Culture, had already planned:

> *The latter style, the last blinding lightning to unhorse the Mexican in Europe, flashed as he came face to face with Italian painting in situ. Rivera's trip, which proved a decisive prelude to the future muralist's career, was engineered from faraway Mexico by the president of the National University, Licenciado José Vasconcelos. When art historians express surprise at the sight of Mexican expatriate artists who, in the early 1920s, return simultaneously to roost in the Mexican capital, they forget or ignore the patient moves with which the future Secretary of Education had set his snares long before. In the case of Rivera, some of the evidence is preserved in the Archives of Education:*
>
> *Department of University and Fine Arts. Mexico. November 24, 1920. To the Treasurer of the Nation:*
>
> *Wire authorization to the Citizen Consul General of Mexico in Paris, France.*
>
> *To pay to Citizen Diego M. Rivera.*
>
> *The sum of two thousand pesos (2,000.00) national gold.*
>
> *As follows: In one payment.*
>
> *For the following reason, "As remuneration accorded by special decree of the Citizen President Constitutional Substitute of the Republic, for fulfilling a mission aimed at relating our National School of Fine Arts with similar Institutions in that country, and with its best artists."* [687]

On October 5, 1920, Vasconcelos wrote to Reyes that he had arranged for Rivera to receive a thousand dollars.

> *[...] para que se le entreguen en partidas mensuales durante seis meses y pueda trabajar* [688]

This money enabled Rivera to make the trip to Italy. At the end of the trip he wrote to Reyes.

> *Le diré que el viaje marca un nuevo periodo de vida; me encuentro gracias a él con material para algunos años de trabajo.* [689]

When Rivera travelled to Italy, despite his later assertions to the contrary, the muralism program had already started – with Montenegro's work in San Pedro y San Pablo. Vasconcelos's project was already underway. According to Jean Charlot, Rivera's trip to Italy had been proposed and financed by the University of Mexico (whose rector at that time was José Vasconcelos). Rivera's mission was to establish cultural relationships between Mexico and Italy.

> *Gracias a usted y a los amigos de México he hecho un viaje estupendo por Italia.* [690]

In a letter to Alfonso Reyes dated May 1921, Rivera revealed a lesson which his trip to Italy had taught him and which proved significant for the evolution of Mexican art: in Italy the problem of the relationship between art and daily life had not been resolved.

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[687] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p.127.
[688] Letter dated May 13 1921. *Archivos de Alfonso Reyes*. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 407.
[689] Ibid.
[690] Quoted in Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 105.

Rivera: "There is no difference between the life of people and a work of art. The frescos don't finish outside the doors of the churches, they live in the street, in the houses, everywhere one's eyes wander everything is family, popular, and the most highborn painters are painters of pulquería."

> *Allí no hay diferencia entre la vida de las gentes y la obra de arte. Los frescos no se acaban fuera de las puertas de las iglesias, viven en la calle, en las Casas, por dondequiera que uno vuelva los ojos todo es familiar, popular, los pintores más linajudos son pintores de pulquería. Todo es llano, casero, popular y aristócrata, nada es viejo, nada, aparte El Renacimiento y el "art nouveau" 1900. Las acerías, minas, arsenales van a maravilla con templos, campaniles y palacios. Los frontones en Sicilia son el retrato de las colinas y las Casas aldeanas se levantan por los simples albañiles bajo la misma armonía.* [691]



Figure 52. Diego Rivera: The Creation. Anfiteatro Bolívar, Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, Mexico City.



Figure 53. Giotto: The Baptism of Christ, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua.

The first fresco executed by Diego Rivera on the walls of the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* of the National Preparatory School is an allegory entitled *The Creation* (**Figure 52**) [692], in which the influence of Italian painting is still clearly visible. *The Creation* shows a formal austerity and simplicity in the composition. Rivera's sense of pictorial space reminds of Giotto's, using a light color scheme, with strong contrasts, which gives stability and harmony to the subjects. **Figure 53** shows Giotto's *The Baptism of Christ*, Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. [693]

[691] Unpublished letter from Diego Rivera to Alfonso Reyes of May 13 1921. In this letter, written in Paris, Rivera announces his return to Mexico in June 7. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 392.

[692] Rivera, *The Creation*. Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 34.

[693] Image retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://perso.wanadoo.fr/maurice.lamouroux/image/lc03a/images/GIOTTO,15,ITA,THE%20BAPTISM%20OF%20CHRIST,SCROVEGNI%20CHAPEL.jpg

Rivera claimed, and his reasons for this claim will become apparent later, that the advent of Vasconcelos did not spark a Renaissance in Mexican art, since the murals of the 1920s were only a continuation of an ongoing process. Rivera claimed that "in fact, the production of mural painting has never ceased in Mexico":

> *Se ha fantaseado mucho sobre el origen de la pintura mural en México, la hecha entre 1921 y nuestros días. En realidad, la producción de pintura mural no se ha detenido en México nunca, ni aun en los más difíciles y peores momentos de su historia, durante el tiempo a que podemos referirnos a ella como tal, y que son más de 23 siglos.* [694]

Vasconcelos described Diego Rivera as "the one who docilely and submissively painted whatever I ordered":

> *Cuando yo fui Ministro, Diego Rivera pintó ahí [en el Anfiteatro Bolívar, La Creación] las Tres Virtudes Teologales. Y estoy seguro que si mañana tuviéramos un gobierno católico él pintaría la Santísima Trinidad [...] Y las pintó porque yo, el mecenas de entonces, se le ordené [...] Y no crea usted − aclaró el antiguo Ministro de Obregón -, que pintó a regañadientes. Nada de eso. Diego Rivera fue el que más dócil y sumisamente pintó lo que le mandé. Y no sólo aceptó el tema que le di, sino que, tuvo la docilidad de presentar sus proyectos a mi aprobación.* [695]

Charlot writes that Vasconcelos had problems with Rivera's strong personality. I believe that tensions existed between these two personalities and that they are important for the understanding of the controversies and of the myths linked to the muralism.

> *His first doubts lifted by this daily intercourse with Diego's potent personality, Vasconcelos yielded. "I put him to work on a mural with a universal theme for the Preparatoria – in the auditorium. This was in December."* [696]

Anfiteatro Bolívar

In the *Anfiteatro Bolívar*, Diego Rivera painted his first mural in encaustic, a Christian allegory in a mixture of styles ranging from Italian Renaissance to symbolism. Working with him on this project were Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, Amado de la Cueva, Fernando Leal, Jean Charlot, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Carlos Mérida, and Emilio García Cahero.

Vasconcelos wanted Rivera to portray the creation of the *Cosmic Race*, the race destined to bring forth the fifth race out of the scattered and imperfect existing races. This fifth race would incorporate all races.

According to Alicia Azuela de la Cueva: "Vasconcelos wants Diego Rivera to represent in this mural [The Creation] the creation of the Cosmic Race, whose predestination obeyed the design of building the fifth race in which would blend all the peoples that until then had gone forging history in a scattered and incomplete form."

> *Vasconcelos pretende que a través de este mural [La Creación] Diego Rivera representara La Creación de La raza cósmica, cuya predestinación obedecía al designio de construir la raza quinta en la que se fundirían todos los pueblos que hasta entonces habían ido fraguando la historia aisladamente y en forma incompleta. Debía ser este mural una oda a*

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[694] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 130.
[695] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", *Hoy*, February 19 1949. Typewritten original in CENIDIAP.
[696] Unpublished manuscript. Quoted by Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 135.

> *América Latina en donde finalmente llegaría a su fin la dispersión y se consumaría la unidad por el triunfo del amor. En el mural habían de estar representados los distintos tipos raciales que se han dado en México gracias al mestizaje. Tipos que al mismo tiempo encarnarían a las virtudes y a las artes, camino para fundar La raza cósmica.* [697]

The pictorial language of *The Creation* places it within the intellectual project of the members of the *Athenaeum*, with which Vasconcelos was identified: the work sought to redeem the people by means of "high culture":

> *Por su discurso pictórico, La Creación se ubica en el proyecto intelectual de los ateneístas, con el que Vasconcelos se identificaba: redimir al pueblo por medio de la "alta cultura".* [698]

Because it is an important element in the polemic regarding who accomplished the first mural in Mexico in modern times the theme of the mural and the date of its completion is important for Charlot, who says:

> *Started early in 1922, "Creation" was officially completed by March 1923. In December 1922 Ortega spoke of "Creation" as finished, while Molina referred to it in January 1923 as in the making. The statements are not incompatible. The main wall was completed at that time, while the central recess and the dado remained unfinished. Stylistically as well as physically, the execution of the work splits into two parts, Rivera's trip to Tehuantepec marking the point of cleavage. The Byzantine hue of the mural in the making had left Vasconcelos unconvinced [...]. Says Vasconcelos: "Diego heard Best lecture on Mexican art. This perhaps inclined him toward national themes. To strengthen this tendency, I suggested and financed a trip to Tehuantepec [...]* [699]

Vasconcelos: Painting, architecture and sculpture

Mural painting, as I have pointed out several times, was Vasconcelos's project. But mural painting itself was part of a larger project of aesthetic and cultural renewal which also included the popular arts, architecture, sculpture and music. Vasconcelos saw painting, architecture and sculpture as complementary activities. Significantly, sculpture was not treated separately in the public buildings which Vasconcelos commissioned whilst Secretary of Public Education. Sculpture did not organize its own space but, on the contrary, was placed against a wall or in the entablature of a building and became a kind of bas-relief or sometimes even high relief. Sculpture had the same civic stature as mural painting. Architecture and sculpture gave Vasconcelos an ideal means to express his philosophical and aesthetic system.

The combination of painting, architecture, and sculpture constituted an essential part of Vasconcelos's personal vision. He saw architecture as "the perfect art," because it can combine an obvious aesthetic potential with a clear social function. For Vasconcelos, architecture's indispensable complement was painting, the essential ornamental element of a genuinely national architecture.

His idea was not only to symbolize an ideal, but also to prove the creativity and the efficiency of Mexican architects and artisans. He wanted the people to feel comfortable in 'their' buildings and strove to make

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[697] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, pp. 67-68.
[698] For this period see the work that Nicola Coleby presented in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UNAM to obtain her master's degree in History of Art, Coleby, Nicola J.E., *La construcción de una estética: el Ateneo de la Juventud, Vasconcelos, y la primera etapa de la pintura mural posrevolucionária, 1921-1924*, UNAM, Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras, Mexico 1985.
[699] Unpublished manuscript. In Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 142-143.

public and school buildings accessible to the people. These were the multiple and complex objectives of the architecture and sculpture which Vasconcelos brought into being between 1921 and 1924. Architects were to build not only administrative buildings but also schools, libraries, stadiums, pools. They were expected to respect and adapt the architectural heritage of eighteenth century Mexico. The architecture of the great Spanish tradition should constitute the cultural skeleton, and the paintings should glorify the past and the present, depicting *inter alia* the authentic Indians of Mexico, their lives and costumes. This was the "crossbreed" art that Vasconcelos dreamt of for Latin America. In architecture nothing could be better than the colonial style. The building that housed the Secretariat of Public Education is a good example of this.

The Secretariat of Public Education [700]

On April 3, 1923, *El Universal* published a proposal, written by Vasconcelos, for the sculptural ornamentation of the Secretariat. However, the program which was developed on the scaffolds and completed after his resignation from the Secretariat in July 1924 was very different from the one he conceived. Only a small part of his program was realised.

The Secretariat of Public Education was not simply functional; it was to be an apparatus that offered services, produced ideas and developed programs. Vasconcelos believed it should create a new nation: cultured, autonomous and democratic. The saloons and offices were entrusted to Adolfo Best Maugard, at that time Head of the Department of Drawing and Manuals Works. Roberto Montenegro was commissioned to design stained glass windows in the same style as those which he had just completed at *San Pedro y San Pablo*'s Maximum College. However, Best Maugard did not paint a single mural, and Montenegro altered his project and painted allegories of the four religions – inspired by José Vasconcelos's *Estudios indostánicos.*

The architectural plans that Vasconcelos developed also included restoring and reconditioning a number of colonial-style buildings. New buildings were expected to fit into their surroundings. Vasconcelos chose the engineer Federico Méndez Rivas to carry out the construction. Méndez Rivas designed a neoclassical construction that fitted well into the style of the central area of Mexico City. Four wings of three floors contained a wide open patio surrounded by a cloister that united the various ancillary buildings.

Vasconcelos wanted the building built by Mexican contractors and not by foreigners – as had been usual in the past. He was very particular about this: "The services of a single foreign worker were not accepted, because we wanted this house to be, as was the spiritual work that it was to shelter, a genuinely national company in the widest sense in the term."

> *"No se aceptaron los servicios de un solo operario extranjero, porque quisimos que esta casa fuese, a semejanza de la obra espiritual que ella debe abrigar, una empresa genuinamente nacional en el sentido más amplio del término; nacional no por encerrarse obcecadamente dentro de nuestras fronteras geográficas, sino porque se propone crear los caracteres de una cultura autóctona hispanoamericana.* [701]

Federico Méndez Rivas's architectural project fulfilled many of Vasconcelos's requirements: the building was not only functional, but designed to reflect the magnitude of the educational system that Vasconcelos was seeking to establish throughout the whole country. Vasconcelos wanted "a work in stone," solid as "the moral, vast and complex organization" that he was striving to establish.

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[700] This project, which is Vasconcelos's main project, will be analyzed in the next chapter. However, I present here some ideas about it.

[701] Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública, I, 2, September 1922, p. 7. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 412.

[...] estos pensamientos de erigir una obra en piedra coincidían con los otros de construir una organización moral, vasta y compleja: la Secretaría Federal de Educación Pública. [702]

At the inauguration Vasconcelos declared that very wide rooms were required to enable free discussions and very high ceilings so that ideas could expand without impediments. Only the races that do not think have low ceilings!

Necesitábamos salas muy amplias para discutir libremente, y techos muy altos para que las ideas puedan expandirse sin estorbo. ¡Sólo las razas que no piensan ponen los techos a la altura de la cabeza! [703]

Vasconcelos frequently modified the plans that were presented to him, as the architects had not understood how he wanted certain areas such as the libraries, music rooms or the gyms to be used. He also tried to achieve a symbiosis between architecture and sculpture, requesting Ignacio Asúnsolo (for whom he had arranged a scholarship in 1920-1921 to allow him to study in Europe) and Manuel Centurión to create sculptures in order to personalize the architecture, to give it an imaginary dimension, and to make the general significance of the building understandable to all. The sculptures were positioned in the manner of the sculptures in Greek temples and Roman churches. The statuary is representative of the cultural syncretism that Vasconcelos and his collaborators favored. In the patio of the Secretariat of Public Education, the sculptor Manuel Centurion's high reliefs organized ornamental elements around the names of Plato, Las Casas, Quetzalcóatl and Buddha.

However, Vasconcelos insisted that "national" did not mean being blind to anything outside of Mexico's geographical borders, but, on the contrary, the aim was to seek out and create "characters of a Spanish American autochthonous culture".

The representation of the "four races" showed that Latin America could boast of possessing all four human types, which, when combined together, could lead to the true universal type.

[...] la América Latina se ufana de poseer el aporte de los cuatro tipos humanos, para constituir con todos ellos, y arrasando con todos los prejuicios, el verdadero tipo universal. Recordarán también, estas cuatro estatuas, el proceso entero de la humanidad: las eras desconocidas que han adivinado los videntes y que, en parte, comprueba la ciencia. [704]

The spirit of Spanish America was represented by the four poets who had been most influential in Mexico: Sor Juana, Amado Nervo, Justo Sierra and Rubén Darío and by four writers and educators: Sarmiento, Montalvo, Bello and Rodó. This evocation of the literary glories of the Spanish American continent was clearly meant to be didactic − and also prescriptive.

Vasconcelos: "We have wanted to invent and we have wanted to believe, but only he who knows the past and knows how to relate it to the present can forge the future":

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[702] Vasconcelos, José, "Discurso pronunciado en el acto de la inauguración del nuevo edificio de la secretaría", in Discursos, p. 37. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 458.
[703] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 131.
[704] Vasconcelos, José, "Las esculturas del ministerio", *El Universal*, April 3 1924. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 459.

> *Nosotros hemos querido inventar y hemos querido creer, pero sólo tiene derecho a su invención y a su creación el que conoce todo su pasado y sabe coordinarlo con el presente, para forjar el porvenir.* [705]

The sculptor Manuel Centurion carried out the bas-reliefs that decorate the four corners of the first patio. In his inaugural speech, [706] Vasconcelos relates how he himself chose the themes Vasconcelos relates how he himself chose the themes: "Greece, the illustrious mother of the European civilization of which we are the offspring, is represented by a youth that dances and by Plato's name that contains all her dawn. Spain appears in the caravel that unites this continent with the rest of the world, the cross of its Christian mission and the name of Las Casas, the civilizer (sic). The Aztec figure remembers the refined art of the natives and the myth of Quetzalcóatl, the first educator of this part of the world."

> *Algo de esto quise expresar en las figuras que decoran los tableros [esculpidos por Manuel Centurión] del patio nuevo, en ellas: Grecia, madre ilustre de la civilización europea de la que somos vástagos, está representada por una joven que danza y por el nombre de Platón que encierra toda su alba. España aparece en la carabela que unió este continente con el resto del mundo, la cruz de su misión cristiana y el nombre Las Casas, el civilizador. La figura Azteca recuerda el arte refinado de los indígenas y el mito de Quetzalcóatl, el primer educador de esta zona del mundo. Finalmente en el cuarto tablero aparece el Buda envuelto en su flor de loto, como una sugestión de que en esta tierra y en esta estirpe indoibérica se han de juntar el oriente y el occidente, el norte y el sur, no para chocar y destruirse, sino para combinarse y confundirse en una nueva cultura amorosa y estética [...] una empresa [...] que se propone crear los caracteres de una cultura autóctona hispanoamericana [...] Una verdadera cultura que sea el florecimiento de lo nativo dentro de un ambiente universal, la unión de nuestra alma con todas las vibraciones del universo en ritmo de júbilo semejante al de la música, y con fusión tan alegre como la que vamos a experimentar dentro de breves instantes, cuando se liguen en nuestra conciencia los sones ingenuos del canto popular entonado por millares de voces de los coros infantiles, y las profundas melodías de la música clásica revividas al conjuro de nuestra Orquesta Sinfónica. [Que tocó la Marcha heroica de Berlioz.]* [707]

Vasconcelos wanted the corridors of the Secretariat to be decorated with big canvases. He had asked Rivera to "draw women wearing the typical clothing of each state of the republic," similar to the women included in *The Creation*.

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[705] Quoted by Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 201.

[706] The Secretariat of Public Education was solemnly inaugurated on July 9, 1922.

[707] Vasconcelos, José, *Discursos 1920-1950*, Ediciones Botas, México, 1950, pp. 39-40. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos*: *Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, pp. 94-95.

Para la DECORACIÓN de los LIENZOS del corredor nuestro artista Diego Rivera, tiene ya dibujadas figuras de mujeres con trajes típicos de cada estado de la República y para la escalera ha ideado un FRISO ascendente que parte del nivel del mar con su vegetación tropical, se transforma después en el paisaje del altiplano y termina en los volcanes. Remata el conjunto un vitral de Roberto Montenegro en el que la flecha del medio se lanza a las estrellas. Los salones del interior serán DECORADOS con dibujos fantásticos de Adolfo Best y así sucesivamente cada uno de nuestros artistas contribuirá con algo para hermosear este palacio del saber y el arte. [708]

Speaking of the building's decoration, Vasconcelos said that he commissioned Asúnsolo to produce a group of four statues: "each one dedicated to one of the races that have contributed to or should contribute to the formation of the New World: the white, the Indian, the black and the yellow race, all gathered in an ideal synthesis that I began to call 'The Cosmic Race or Total Definitive Race." [709]

Y le encomendé a Asúnsolo el grupo que hoy está en el remate de la fachada del Ministerio de Educación. Una Minerva cuyas proporciones pusieron en aprietos al ingeniero, que tuvo que reforzar sus cimientos, y de un lado un Apolo, del otro Dionisos, que debían representar, según el sentido Nietzscheano, que después he adoptado en mi Estética: el arte apolíneo y el arte dionisíaco. En el centro, Minerva, la Sabiduría antigua, significaba para nosotros la aspiración hacia el Espíritu, el anhelo que más tarde vino a colmar el cristianismo. Es claro que poner detrás y más alta una cruz hubiera sido lo indicado y lo obvio; pero la jacobinería hubiese echado abajo el edificio antes de que quedase terminado. En los extremos o esquinas de la fachada debieron ir estatuas de la aviación que no se concluyeron, como no se concluyó el edificio por causa de mi separación de la tarea. En el antepatio debió ir una escalera monumental, y en las esquirlas del primer patio, cuatro estatuas dedicadas a cada una de las razas que han contribuido a la formación del Nuevo Mundo o deben contribuir a ella: la blanca, la India, la negra y la amarilla, reunidas todas en un ideal de síntesis que comencé a titular: de La raza cósmica o raza definitiva total. [710]

According to Charlot the responsibility of the work is totally taken by Vasconcelos:

Vasconcelos achieved the creation of his ministry almost singlehandedly. Such was his faith in his star that even before the ministry had legal existence, he started constructing the palace that was to house it. He personally brought the handsome building into being by begging from President and Treasury the means for construction while still president of the university. He began nearly from scratch, as he proudly reminded his listeners on inauguration day: The inhabitants of Mexico City will remember the mound of debris that filled the lot bound by the streets previously called Del Reloj, now 4th of the Argentine

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[708] "Fue inaugurado ayer, el edificio de la Secretaria de Educación Pública", *El Universal*, July 10 1922. Quoted in Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 184.

[709] These four statues, sculpted by Ignacio Asúnsolo, were unveiled in April 1924. Enthusiastic speeches were made by Julio Jiménez Rueda on Sor Juana, Carlos Pellicer (Rubén Darío), Jaime Torres Bodet (Amado Nervo) and Alfonso Teja Zabre (Justo Sierra). Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública, 11, 5-6, pp. 495-503. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 459.

[710] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 44.

Republic, the ex-9th of Perpetua, now Republic of Venezuela, and part of the street of San Ildefonso. [711]

Vasconcelos entrusted the most prominent walls of public buildings to the artists. Libraries, schools and the interior walls of the Secretariat itself were decorated by the muralists. When he was criticized for involving artists in the planning of his extensive construction program, he defended the artists' role: "I am convinced that many of our current modest architectural efforts will be remembered thanks to the painters who have decorated them."

Estoy convencido de que muchos de nuestros modestos esfuerzos arquitectónicos actuales serán recordados gracias a los pintores que los han decorado. Los arquitectos deberían sentirse felices por tener la suerte de trabajar en medio de un renacimiento artístico. [712]

He favored a nationalistic architecture and sculpture for the public buildings that his Secretariat renovated or built. The opportunities for mural painting increased with each new building that the Secretariat built.

A medida que se levantaba cada edificio, surgían las oportunidades de la pintura mural. Cuando se inauguró el de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, anuncié que sus corredores serían decorados con las faenas del pueblo Mexicano, en el antepatio; sus fiestas, en el patio mayor. En la escalera debería reproducirse el panorama de la nación desde la costa selvática hasta el altiplano, de refinada arquitectura. Obtuvo la obra, porque presentó los primeros cartones, Diego Rivera. Abandonando la técnica usada en el paraninfo, pintó al fresco según el viejo método Italiano. Y han quedado en los primeros pisos del primer patio del ministerio las obras que le dieron fama: El registro del minero, La molienda de la caña de azúcar, Los tejedores, la maestra que enseña a leer. En cambio, al intentar la representación de los festejos, y a pesar del color rico del escenario Mexicano, fracasó Rivera y fracasaron todos. Al salir yo de la Secretaría se desistió del plan primitivo y comenzaron a llenarse los muros con Apologías descaradas de los tipos políticos en boga y con caricaturas soeces de quienes abandonábamos el poder. [713]

The painters not only helped the Secretary to plan the architecture but also painted the buildings *alfresco*. It became common to see the muralist's scaffold erected next to the bricklayer's scaffold.

Vasconcelos did not normaly intervened directly in the execution of the frescos at the Secretariat of Public Education. He allowed the painters that he sponsored complete and total freedom of inspiration, although some topics tackled by Rivera and his partners directly reflected Vasconcelos's work in the field of popular education.

"Rivera, Montenegro, Enciso, the sculptors and other people that have intervened in the works of the Secretariat have not done so as intruders, but at my request and on my insistence":

Rivera, Montenegro, Enciso, los escultores y demás personas que han intervenido en las obras de la Secretaría, no lo han hecho como intrusos, sino por ruego e insistencia mías. Soy yo quien los ha impuesto a los ingenieros y a los arquitectos. A estos últimos muy justamente se les ha pagado en las obras por contrato muy buenos honorarios; en cambio, los pintores, que han dado las mejores luces, lo han hecho gratuitamente. Han servido en

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[711] "Discurso del día de inauguración", Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1, 1922, 5. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925,* Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 252.
[712] "Los pintores y la arquitectura", *El Universal*, May 3 1924; reimpreso en *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Departamento Editorial, nr. 2, Mexico 1924.
[713] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinsón a Odiseo: pedagogía estructurativa*, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, v. II, p. 1676. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 100.

la generalidad de los casos por amor a la belleza y por devoción a las empresas de la Secretaría. Muchas veces me he sentido yo humillado por no poder pagarles lo que merecen. Sin embargo, los ocupo constantemente; los halago y les ruego de suerte que en cada caso he sido yo el adulador, y ellos los adulados. Por otra parte, no tengo inconveniente en agregar que es mi convicción que muchas de las actuales modestas obras nuestras serán recordadas por los pintores que las han decorado. Deben sentirse orgullosos determinados arquitectos porque les tocó trabajar en medio de un renacimiento artístico. Además, y como yo también he sido critico de Diego Rivera, creo conveniente agregar que en mi concepto Diego Rivera tiene genio. [714]

On March 18, 1922, the painters ascended the scaffolds to start decorating José Vasconcelos's "palace". The original plan was for Diego Rivera to paint the walls of the cloister on the ground floor with female figures in regional costumes of the states, and the landing of the main stairway with an allegory of the Mexican landscape, from the humid tropics to the highlands. Accompanied in the scaffolds by Amado de la Cueva and Jean Charlot, Diego Rivera had begun to paint the second patio, when, in June of 1924, José Vasconcelos resigned as Secretary of Education, because of his disagreements with Álvaro Obregón in the matter of the election of Plutarco Elías Calles to the presidency. The main department heads, faithful followers of Vasconcelos, also resigned.

Following a decision of the Technical Union of Workers, Painters and Sculptors, some boards of the Secretariat of Public Education were granted to Jean Charlot, Amado de la Cueva and Xavier Guerrero. Diego Rivera was opposed to the decision; he argued that the multiplicity of styles and conceptions harmed the coherence of the group. However, four of the panels which the Union had granted were painted: two by Jean Charlot (*Laundrymen* and *Loaders*) and two by Amado de la Cueva (*The bull* and *The Santiago*). The overwhelming majority of the murals at the Secretariat of Public Education were painted by one artist, Diego Rivera, and the difference between the panels by Charlot and de la Cueva and those by Diego Rivera is notorious.

Diego, que ya se había puesto a pintar en los muros de la Secretaría, arriba de las decoraciones por mí sugeridas, y rompiendo el plan general de la obra, unas alegorías en honor de Zapata y e Felipe Carrillo, el mártir callista, se puso a injuriar bajamente al ya casi anciano don Ezequiel Chávez. El antiguo pensionado de la dictadura porfirista comenzaba a hablar de comunismo y adulaba a los nuevos, temeroso de que lo echasen a la calle, ya que uno de los cargos que se esgrimían en mi contra era el haberlo apoyado. Le dio resultado la maniobra; pronto fue el pintor oficial del nuevo régimen, y un año o dos más tarde, cuando empezó a ladrarme el callismo por lo que escribía desde mi destierro, el gran Diego Rivera me retrató, en el patio posterior del edificio que había yo levantado, en posición infame, mojando la pluma en estiércol. [715]

[714] "Los pintores y la arquitectura", *El Universal*, May 3 1924.
[715] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 260-261.

On July 9, 1922, José Vasconcelos, whilst inaugurating the new building of the Secretariat of Public Education, had delivered a speech, published in *El Universal* on 10 July, 1922. In his speech he had announced several of the principles he wanted to promote. In succinct but clear terms, he had delineated his historical and cultural project.

Later, Vasconcelos describes, with bitterness and disdain, how his project was usurped and perverted some years later by Rivera and by those who protected him.

> *[...] el gran Diego Rivera me retrató, en el patio posterior del edificio que había yo levantado, en posición infame, mojando la pluma en estiércol.* [716]

It was not only Vasconcelos whom Rivera ridiculed.

> *[...] en el segundo patio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, en El corrido zapatista, pintó grotescamente a "Los sabios" con una pila de libros con títulos de Compte, Spencer, Stuart Mill y Gladstone, pero también de Churchill, y María de Jorge Isaac. Romanticismo, imperialismo y positivismo componen así el saber burgués.* [717]

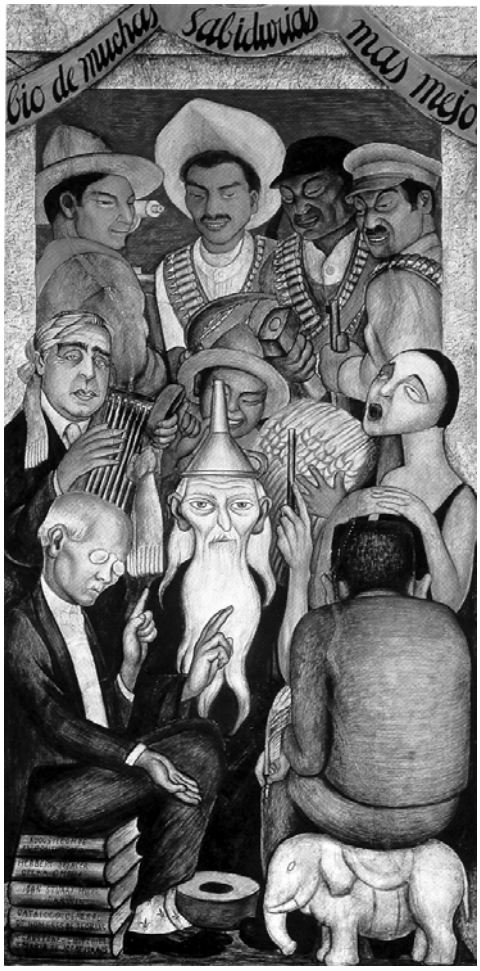


Figure 54. Diego Rivera: *Los sabios*, 1928. North wall, *Patio de las Fiestas*, Secretariat of Public Education, Mexico City. [718]

According to Rivera's painting, Vasconcelos, sitting on the white elephant of his extraordinary projects, turned his back on the essential heart of the country's culture.

> *Vasconcelos, sentado sobre el elefante blanco de sus extraordinarios proyectos, daba la espalda − según la pintura − a las esencias culturales del país.* [719]

Wolfe says that "without Vasconcelos, Rivera would never have had the opportunity to paint frescoes on public walls":

> *What infuriated Vasconcelos was that the inkwell into which he appeared to be dipping his pen looked suspiciously like a cuspidor. A sad ending for an alliance which had begun so hopefully. Without Vasconcelos Rivera would never have had the opportunity to paint frescoes on public walls; without the great fresco Renaissance, Vasconcelos would have won less renown.* [720]

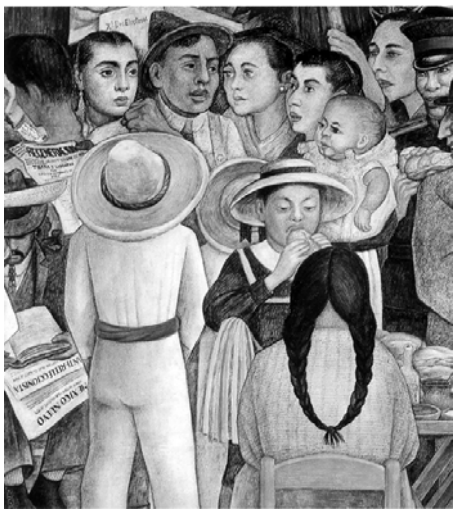
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716 Ibid.
717 Híjar Serrano, Alberto, "Diego Rivera: contribución política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 62.
718 Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 63.
719 Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 118.
720 Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 210-211.

It was Orozco who said that "when Mr. Vasconcelos left his position of Secretary, it was no longer possible to continue working". According to Orozco, the Union proved incapable of defending its members' interests. That was perhaps not its primary object, since it established, consciously and for the first time, the need to create mural painting, and thus a truly popular art.

> *Al dejar el señor Vasconcelos su puesto de Secretario ya no fué posible seguir trabajando. Siqueiros y yo fuimos arrojados a la calle por los estudiantes y nuestros murales fueron gravemente dañados a palos, pedradas y navajazos. El Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores no sirvió para nada, pues los compañeros se negaron a apoyar nuestra protesta. Todavía no aprendíamos la técnica de la publicidad; de haberla conocido hubiéramos seguido trabajando a pesar de la oposición [...].De haberlo sabido, ni a Siqueiros ni a mí nos arrojan a la calle como perros rabiosos. Estos escándalos dieron fin al Sindicato.* [721]

Figure 55. Diego Rivera: Detail from *Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alameda. Hotel del Prado, Mexico City 1948.*



One conclusion to be drawn is that Rivera was the link who provided continuity in the process of *Mexican Muralism*. If there had only been Vasconcelos's bitter, defeatist attitude after his resignation, muralism might have faded out and been a small parenthesis in history. It was because Rivera made compromises that muralism was allowed to continue. Vasconcelos rejected this type of compromise and distanced himself from the whole muralist movement.

Rivera would make one last attack on Vasconcelos in the mural in the *Hotel del Prado*, *Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alameda*, in 1948. [722] According to the description Vasconcelos is an "Intellectual reading the secret newspapers of the time: *México Nuevo* and *The Antirreeleccionista*. The action happens October 15 1909, while the youth (José Vasconcelos) dreams of the laurel crown, a moneybag of pesos and a beautiful lover". **Figure 55** shows a detail from *Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alameda*, where we can see Vasconcelos represented to the left in the picture, reading a paper. [723]

Mexican painters can at that moment be divided according to three main tendencies: one group characterised by folklore and ornament (Adolfo Best Maugard, Montenegro and Fernández Ledesma); the group Rivera-Orozco-Charlot-Siqueiros, and their assistants and pupils; and, lastly, the neo-academic tendency of Ramos Martínez. In a curious twist, it was the tendency which appeared strongest and most innovative – muralism – which was frequently in the weakest position.

One danger, that the pictorial "nationalism" praised by the muralists presented, was that the painters would be tempted to chose the "easiest road" and would simply copy Mexican realities, which would lead to a shallow nationalism, mere decoration or folklore. This would appeal to the tourists, but such art would be devoid of *Revolutionary* content. Siqueiros was particularly wary of this trap. Some muralist painters (Adolfo Best Maugard, Fernández Ledesma and, to some extent, Roberto Montenegro) wanted to follow this easy way. Siqueiros later also accused Rivera of doing the same.

Artists like Best Maugard tended towards an ornamental nationalism, eccentric and orientated to the tourists, portraying subjects which the foreigners considered to be "exotic". Such artists portrayed the superficial and

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[721] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 113-114.
[722] See Appendix XX for the complete program of this mural.
[723] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 174.

more frivolous aspects of the tradition and often found their inspiration and their ornamental topics in pottery and popular ceramics. The other muralists sharply criticised this decorative practice.

In fact, Roberto Montenegro devoted himself to reproducing, stylizing and reducing to their "picturesque" aspects, certain representative scenes of Mexican life and "customs" in which Vasconcelos had seen, some years before, one of the primordial sources of inspiration for Latin American art.

A show of folk crafts opened, on Montenegro's initiative, on September 19, 1921, and, according to Charlot, it was the turning point in public appreciation of the reappraisal of folk art. [724]

Charlot;

> *After its close in Mexico City, the show was sent to Los Angeles with Best Maugard and Xavier Guerrero as its impresarios. In a radio talk on October 2, 1922, sponsored by the Los Angeles Examiner, Best Maugard boasted: "I am proud to be the first to state that the art of the Mexican people is the precise realization of what are still tendencies among European artists."* [725]

In July 1923, Dr. Atl writes:

> *It appears that today the strength of the pre-Cortesian races is surging again, especially where painting is concerned.* [726]

Even the technique was supposed to be pre-Hispanic. *El Universal* stated: "The artist-painter Diego Rivera has rediscovered the process used by ancient Mexicans to produce their splendid frescoes, such as those we admire today in the monuments of San Juan Teotihuacán". [727]

> *It was not Rivera, however, who pioneered in the pictorial rediscovery of ancient Mexico, or even of contemporary Mexico, for that matter. His first murals on the walls of the Escuela Preparatoria were painted in conformity with the mystical Pythagorean concepts and precepts of the Maecenas of the youthful Mexican artists, José Vasconcelos, Secretary of Education, who believed that "a heroic art could fortify the will to reconstruction." Accordingly Rivera painted a "great neo-classical composition on the theme of The Creation, an allegorical potpourri that purported to portray the formation of the Mexican race, but turned out to be a rationalist hymn to the origin of man and his intellectual powers, intoned in metaphors of all the religions. . ."* [728]

The Union of Workers, Technicians, Painters and Sculptors

At the end of 1923, Vasconcelos's dream ended with the disintegration of his team. This process had started in August with the rebellion of de la Huerta and the resulting split amongst Mexican students between those who supported him and those who opposed him.

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[724] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 64-65.
[725] In *La Falange*, Dec. 1, 1921. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 65.
[726] "Renacimiento artístico?" *El Universal*, July 13, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925,* Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 11.
[727] "Diego Rivera descubre un secreto de los Mexicanos," *El Universal*, June 19, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925,* Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 11.
[728] Vasconcelos is cited in Gruening, *Mexico and Its Heritage*, p. 81. Quoted in Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 526.

In November 1923 the further development of the muralist movement had still not been defined, neither for its patron, nor for the artists nor for the critics.

At the 1923 convention of the Mexican Communist Party, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Xavier Guerrero were elected to the Executive Committee. They had founded in already in 1922 the *Unión Revolucionaria de Obreros, Técnicos, Pintores, Escultores y Gremios Similares*, the Revolutionary Union of Workers, Technicians, Painters, Sculptors and Similar Unions. The union was also sometimes referred to as the *Sindicato de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios de México*, the Union of Revolutionary Painters, Sculptors and Engravers. Among the most prominent members were David Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Diego Rivera, Fermín Revueltas, José Clemente Orozco, Ramón Alva Guadarrama, Germán Cueto and Carlos Mérida.

Ortega, the art critic of *El Universal Ilustrado*, lists the creation of the Union among the most important events in 1922 in the world of painting and sculpture. [729]

The Union decided to create its own newspaper, and the first number of *The Machete* appeared in 1923. It contained articles by Siqueiros on the politics of art and on art in relation to various political issues, as well as satirical verses written in a popular style by him and his wife of the time, Graciela Amador. These were signed *D. and G. Alfaro Siqueiros*.

The *Manifesto*

Siqueiros was named Secretary-General of the Union, and it was he who wrote the *Manifesto* [730] that defined the *Revolutionary* ideology of the group of painters who began the *Mexican Mural Movement*. He continued working in the stairway of the small College, where he painted *The Funeral of the Sacrificed Worker* in the *al fresco* technique. In the *Manifesto*, addressed, significantly, to the peasants, the workers and soldiers of the *Revolution*, and the intellectuals who had not sided with the bourgeoisie, Siqueiros discusses the humiliation suffered by the indigenous peoples:

> *[...] tramas las telas y creas con tus manos las comodidades para rufianes y prostitutas, mientras tu cuerpo se arrastra y se congela, dentro del cual tú, soldado indio, abandonas heroicamente la tierra que trabajas y das tu vida interminablemente para destruir la miseria que se abate hace siglos sobre tu raza.* [731]

The *Manifesto* defines well the political-social position of the group. [732] It was published at the end of 1923, during the rebellion led by Adolfo de la Huerta. Politically, the union opposed Adolfo de la Huerta and favored the candidacy of Calles, the candidate supported by Obregón; artistically, the union was against easel painting and in favour of monumental art in the service of the people.

The *Manifesto* proposed a public art, which should be accessible for the whole population. This meant monumental art. Easel painting was dismissed as useless, and the *Manifesto* recognized popular Mexican art, which it proclaimed to be "the best in the world," as the ideal source of inspiration. The *Manifesto* advocated an art for the *Revolution*, an art that would spur the people on in its efforts to further the *Revolutionary* process. Although the ideals of the *Manifesto* were contradicted by the activities of the contemporary painters who had signed, it still served as a touchstone for them all. It was the great programmatic document that somehow sustained the *Mexican Mural Movement*.

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[729] Ortega, "La pintura y escultura en 1922, *El Universal Ilustrado*, 28 December 1922, p. 29.
[730] See Appendix VIII.
731 Manifiesto del Sindicato de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios de México. See Appendix VIII.
[732] See Appendix VIII.

One of the points in the *Manifesto*, or *Social, Political and Aesthetic Declaration*, stated: "until the minimum expression of the spiritual and physical life of our race, it springs from the native thing (and particularly the Indian thing)"

> *[...] hasta la mínima expresión de la vida espiritual y física de nuestra raza, brota de lo nativo (y particularmente lo indio).* [733]

In spite of the high aspirations contained in the *Manifesto*, in particular the idea of constituting a fraternity of artists who rejected various manifestations of individualism, such as easel painting, the habit of signing works, etc., the debates around muralism were often dominated by the personalities of the "Big Three": Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros.

> *The main public manifestations of the Syndicate, outside of mural painting, were the manifestoes that stand today as trustworthy, if garrulous, witnesses of this story. In June 1923 a first fluttering rash of pamphlets defended both Vasconcelos and Rivera from rumors of money squandering, which were spread in order to stop the fresco work just begun at the ministry. In December of that year the Syndicate sided in print with the Federal forces against the armed insurrection of Adolfo de la Huerta, abetted by Generals Sánchez and Estrada.* [734]

The *Manifesto* was addressed to:

> *A las razas nativas humilladas a través de los siglos; a los soldados convertidos en verdugos por sus jefes; a los trabajadores y campesinos azotados por los ricos, a los intelectuales que no adulan a la burguesía.* [735]

It proclaimed the Union's admiration for the unquestionable capacity of the Mexican people to create beauty; it described the art of the Mexican people as the world's healthiest spiritual expression and its tradition as the world's most profound.

The *Manifesto* praises the workers on the land and in the factories and calls for the socialisation of artistic expression:

> *[...] socializar la expresión artística que tiende a borrar totalmente el individualismo que es burgués.* [736]

The *Manifesto* also rejects easel painting:

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[733] THREE CALLS OF CURRENT ORIENTATION TO THE PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS OF THE NEW GENERATION AMERICA. They were written and published by Siqueiros in the only number (May 1921, in Barcelona, Spain) of the *Vida Americana*, "a monthly periodical for the intellectuals, the tradespeople and the working people." Siqueiros was the editor and artistic director. Illustrations by the Mexicans Diego M. Rivera, Mario of Zayas and Siqueiros, and by the Uruguayans, José Torres-García and Rafael P. Barradas, appeared. The text is often referred to as "The Manifesto to the Plastic Artists of America". Reproduced in Tibol, Raquel, *Textos de David Alfaro Siqueiros*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Archivo del Fondo 22-23, Mexico 1974, pp. 19-23.

[734] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925,* Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 244.

[735] Reproduced in Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 230.

[736] *Manifiesto del Sindicato de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios de México*. Reproduced in Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 12-13.

[...] la llamada pintura de caballete y todo el arte de los círculos ultraintelectuales, porque es aristocrático, y glorificamos la expresión del Arte Monumental, porque es propiedad pública. [737]

The *Manifesto* condemns "individualistic masturbation," and calls for an art of the people, an educative and combative art.

Although the *Manifesto* was supported by the whole team, it was written by Siqueiros. As Orozco points out in his autobiography, Siqueiros brought the plan of *Revolutionary* art from Europe. His plan reveals the influence of the dominant social ideas which he had come into contact with in Europe.

Siqueiros redactó y todos nosotros aceptamos y firmamos, un "manifiesto" del Sindicato dirigido a "Los soldados, obreros, campesinos e intelectuales que no estuvieran al servicio de la burguesía". [738]

According to Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, the text of the painters' pamphlet, written with Siqueiros'customary Revolutionary vehemence, not only contains some posturing and demagogic wordiness, but also a series of novel ideas concerning the application of the social theories of the time to the sphere of artistic creation.

El texto del panfleto de los pintores, redactado con la vehemencia revolucionaria que siempre ha caracterizado al pintor Alfaro Siqueiros, encierra unido a la postura y palabrería demagógica, una serie de ideas novedosas por contener las teorías sociales del tiempo, transmutadas al plano de la creación artística. [739]

The political militancy of Siqueiros, Rivera and Xavier Guerrero, who were active members of the Mexican Communist Party, gave the Union a strongly Marxist orientation. The other painters were communists, socialists, anarcho-syndicalists or others who sympathised with the *Revolutionary* ideals of the time.

Aunque la actitud de los artistas va cambiando con el tiempo, queda este documento, en un principio como representante de las ideas del grupo, para volverse luego una máscara tras de la que se oculta la fracción muralista que se pone al servicio del Estado. [740]

It was the first theoretical document issued by the movement. Having announced the end of a cruel and anachronistic system, based on injustice, the *Manifesto* went on to speak of "socializing artistic expression" and "completely abolishing individualism, which is bourgeois"

[...] socializar la expresión artística que tiende a borrar totalmente el individualismo que es burgués. [741]

In the *Manifesto*, which was signed by David Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, Rivera, Orozco and Carlos Mérida, messianic, nationalist and populist optimism reached great heights:

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[737] Ibid.
[738] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 89.
[739] Rodríguez Prampolini, Ida, *El arte contemporáneo, esplendor y agonía*, Editorial Pormaca, Mexico 1964, p. 105.
[740] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 42.
[741] *Manifiesto del Sindicato de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios de México*. Reproduced in Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 12-13.

"The art of the people of Mexico is the biggest and healthiest spiritual manifestation in the world and its indigenous tradition is the best of everything":

> *El arte del pueblo de México es la manifestación espiritual más grande y más sana del mundo y su tradición indígena es la mejor de todas [...] Repudiamos la pintura llamada de caballete y todo el arte de cenáculo ultra-intelectual por aristocrático y exaltamos las manifestaciones de arte monumental por ser de utilidad pública. Proclamamos que toda manifestación estética ajena o contraria al sentimiento popular es burguesa y debe desaparecer porque contribuye a pervertir el gusto de nuestra raza, ya casi completamente pervertido en las ciudades.* [742]

Charlot says:

> *The end of 1923 was weighty with political matters. The de la Huerta rebellion broke out on December 5. According to my diary I was asked on December 12 to give an artillery course to new federal recruits.* [743]

In 1924 Orozco and Rivera were evicted from San Ildefonso due to problems with conservative students of that institution. That year Xavier Guerrero, Rivera, and Siqueiros formed the Executive Committee of the newspaper *The Machete*, the official organ of the Union. A page of *El Machete*, March 1924, shows a Xavier Guerrero woodcut, *The Parceling of the Land*. *The Machete*, first published in the first fortnight of March 1924, became the official organ of the Mexican Communist Party in November of the same year. The articles were signed with a stamp of the Union's hammer and sickle! [744]

> *In the entrance hall of the Preparatoria School the apotheosis of the Virgin of Guadalupe by Revueltas faces "The Erection of the Cross in the New World" by Alva de la Canal, both dated 1923 and stamped with the hammer and Sickle of the Syndicate for signature! That same year (1923) Siqueiros planted in the small staircase of the same school a Saint Christopher as a reminder of the Conquest, and in the main staircase Orozco spread his magnificent series on Saint Francis of Assisi.* [745]

And according to Charlot:

> *In June 1923 a first fluttering rash of pamphlets defended both Vasconcelos and Rivera from rumors of money squandering, which were spread in order to stop the fresco work just begun at the ministry.* [746]

For Siqueiros, referring obviously to Rivera: "These new political conditions induced an opportunist metamorphosis in important members of our Union."

> *Estas nuevas condiciones políticas trajeron consigo metamorfosis oportunistas en miembros importantes de nuestro Sindicato. A la vez que se acentuaba la ofensiva gubernamental contra éste, Xavier Guerrero y yo fuimos expulsados del trabajo mural por*

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[742] Quoted in Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudos Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1423.
[743] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 105-106.
[744] The logotype for the periodical's masthead was a wood engraving by Xavier Guerrero depicting a machete.
[745] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 25-27.
[746] Released on June 22, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 244.

ser miembros del Comité Ejecutivo de El Machete, que atacaba violentamente la claudicación del oficialismo. [747]

Siqueiros writes with sourness in *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*: "Later Rivera painted in the stairway of Mexico's National Palace patriotic scenes and symbolic glorifications of the strong men of the new bourgeoisie. As usual, he tried to hide his attitude with confusionist (sic) symbols. All his work of that period was unwrapped in such a sense."

Más tarde Rivera pintó en el cubo de la escalera del Palacio Nacional de México escenas patrióticas y glorificaciones simbólicas de los hombres fuertes de la nueva burguesía. Como de costumbre, trató de encubrir su actitud con símbolos confusionistas. Toda su obra de ese periodo se desenvolvió en tal sentido. No se conformaba con argumentar en el sentido de que estaba obrando estratégicamente y buscaba nuevos sofismas. "Yo soy un zapatero − decía − y en la sociedad actual no me queda más recurso que fabricar zapatos para quienes los usan. Yo soy un pintor mural y mientras ustedes, los militantes, no creen una nueva sociedad, tendré que seguir sufriendo la presión del amo de hoy. Nosotros, los disidentes, los herejes, Xavier Guerrero, Reyes Pérez, Amado de la Cueva, etcétera, estábamos organizando y dirigiendo las grandes huelgas mineras del país, muchas de los obreros textiles y bastantes de los centros urbanos. [748]

Twenty years later in his autobiography, José Clemente Orozco returns to this text of 1922, also signed by him, and criticizes its content violently. Orozco attributes the "ideological" paternity of this declaration to Siqueiros.

As Orozco said: "The Union itself didn't have any importance, because it was not a grouping of workers that had to defend themselves against an employer."

El Sindicato en sí mismo no tenía ninguna importancia, pues no era una agrupación de obreros, que tuviera que defenderse de un patrón, pero el nombre sirvió de bandera a ideas que venían gestándose, basadas en las teorías socialistas contemporáneas, de las cuales los más enterados eran Siqueiros, Rivera y Javier Guerrero. [749]

The Union's intentions, according to Orozco, were as follows: "To socialize art; to destroy bourgeois individualism; to reject easel painting and any other artistic outcome of the ultra-intellectual (sic) and aristocratic circles; to produce only monumental works that were in the public domain."

[747] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 226.
[748] Ibid, p. 228.
[749] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, p. 89.

"Socializar el arte.

"Destruir el individualismo burgués.

"Repudiar la pintura de caballete y cualquier otro arte salido de los círculos ultraintelectuales y aristocráticos.

"Producir solamente obras monumentales que fueran del dominio público.

"Siendo este momento histórico, de transición de un orden decrépito a un nuevo, materializar un arte valioso para el pueblo en lugar de ser una expresión de placer individual.

"Producir belleza que sugiera la lucha e impulse a ella".

Posteriormente estas proposiciones fueron muy modificadas en su forma, pero no en su significado fundamental. [750]

Rivera left the union in July 1924, because he disagreed with the majority concerning the protests called against the destruction of mural paintings in the National Preparatory School.
On April 26, 1925, having already resigned from the Union, Rivera tendered his resignation from the PCM, because he believed that he could be more useful to the communist cause as a painter than as a party militant. He asked to be treated as a sympathizer and no longer as an activist.

Wolfe:

The leading spirts of the organization were the three editors, Guerrero, Siqueiros, and Rivera. Diego was regarded by the other two, each more than ten years his junior, as the maestro. But he was soon engaged in the first of the great works, the enormous series of murals in the Secretariat of Education, and was far too busy painting day and night, weekdays, Sundays, and holidays included, to give more than his name and cash to the Sindicato and the paper. The real driving force, people's tribune, manifesto-maker, agitator of the organization, was David Alfaro Siqueiros, who had but recently returned from Europe, where he had been sent to study art on a pension from the government of Carranza. Curly-haired, gray-green-eyed, pallid-skinned, aggressively virile, Alfaro's cheeks seemed to be permanently puffed out by the constant stream of his voluble enthusiasm. Not yet twenty-five years of age, mercurial, high strung, eloquent, bombastic, eager to exhibit himself, trembling with excitement at each of his new enthusiasms, driven by inner turbulence from one uncompleted enterprise to another, Siqueiros was the General Secretary and chief mouthpiece of the Union. [751]

The search for the aesthetic character of the muralist movement reached a crisis with the de la Huerta rebellion. The *Revolutionary* ideals of the SOTPE were never put into practice in the complicated political context of the Calles period, in which the centralizing tendencies within the political apparatus forced the painters to define clearly their ideology and political practice. Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Amado de la Cueva and a number of other painters, sided with Zuno, the state governor, in the labor struggles at the Jalisco mines. Zuno was a fervent opponent of the Calles government, of Morones, and of the government's organizational arm, the CROM (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana), the Regional Mexican Worker Confederation. As a result, none of these painters were allowed to paint on walls again, at least not for the rest of the 1920s. Similarly, artists who refused to play the political game were also denied opportunities to paint: Leal, Charlot, Alva de la Canal, and, to a certain extent, Orozco.

Vasconcelos was not opposed to the activities of the Syndicate. He writes that, during his time at the Secretariat, the intellectuals in the Union had hailed him as a great *Revolutionary* and praised him for his exemplary attitude towards power.

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[750] Ibid, pp. 89-90.
[751] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 154-155.

Mientras estuve en la Secretaría, todos estos intelectuales de Sindicato me proclamaban un gran revolucionario, el modelo casi de la acción desde el poder [...]. Entretanto, los diarios me abrumaban con la acusación de que mantenía zánganos con pretexto de murales que no se terminaban nunca o eran un adefesio cuando se concluían. Resistí todas las críticas mientras creía contar con la lealtad de los favorecidos, y a todos les exigía labor. En cierta ocasión, por los diarios, definí mi estética: Superficie y velocidad es lo que exijo, les dije exagerando; y expliqué:

- Deseo que se pinte bien y de prisa, porque el día que yo me vaya no pintarán los artistas o pintarán arte de propaganda [...]. Conviene declarar en este punto que cada uno de los artistas ganaba sueldos casi mezquinos, con cargo de escribientes, porque no me había atrevido a inscribir en el presupuesto una partida para pintores, porque seguramente me la echan abajo en la Cámara. No se había habituado aún la opinión a considerar el fomento del arte como obligación del Estado. En los días en que Diego me pintaba de corruptor de la verdad, por causa de mis escritos contra el callismo, los del Sindicato, convertidos ya al comunismo, me llamaban en sus escritos «el ministro burgués». Vivía yo en aquellos días de mis colaboraciones en los diarios de América, y los comunistas, del presupuesto callista. [752]

The emphasis that Vasconcelos had put on muralism and the freedom of expression permitted during his time at the Ministry no longer corresponded to the requirements of a government bent on centralizing power at every level.

A partir de junio, a un año dos meses después de inaugurada la obra de Rivera en la Preparatoria, se desató en la prensa una polémica sobre la obra pictórica de Diego y las decoraciones: "¡Abajo los monotes de Diego!". "¡Muera el árbitro feo!" "¡Ya nos cansamos de mistificaciones!". A pesar que el discurso se dirigía en contra de Diego, los frescos del artista no fueron dañados. [753]

The reaction against Muralism

The first conflicts concerning the murals took place during the final stage of the Obregón regime (June 1924) in the National Preparatory School soon after the strong reaction of conservative groups against murals by Orozco *(The Banquet of the Rich*, *Law and Justice*, *Political Garbage*, *The reactionary Forces)* and by David Alfaro Siqueiros *(The Funeral of the sacrificed Worker).*

The attack began in the press when a group of angry Catholic women described the works as immoral and inappropriate, and it culminated in physical aggression and the mutilation of some of the frescos of Orozco and Siqueiros. The government appeared to condone the aggression, did not send the police when requested, and never punished the vandals.

According to Orozco's autobiography, these "Catholic Ladies", who were indignant at seeing a naked mother and who complained that the representation lacked the decency which the subject of the Virgin demands, were only half-wrong. "I had not the intention of painting a virgin, but a mother," said Orozco. Of course, but it is clear that the artist did not paint a purely biological and worldly mother. (Surprisingly, Rivera had a similar problem many years later in the United States, when one of his characters in the Detroit

[752] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 261-263.

[753] Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 202.

mural was denounced as blasphemous, because a child that was to be vaccinated had the appearance of Jesus.)

Rodríguez,

> *Possessed by volcanic fits of anger, which shook the very walls he was painting, Orozco passed almost without transition from the Botticelli-like Motherhood (1923) – which had offended many people, who saw in it a naked Madonna – to heartrending Revolutionary scenes and merciless satires. The painters criticized on their walls the social system under which they were living, portrayed Marx and Lenin, made fun of justice in its sanctuary, used the hammer and Sickle as their own symbols, and represented socialism as an aim worth striving for. Diego Rivera in the Secretariat of Public Education and Fermín Revueltas in the Preparatoria went as far as signing some of their murals with a hammer and Sickle.* [754]

Orozco writes that "One morning Ignacio Asúnsolo presented himself at the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* to the sixty stonemasons who were at his disposal and, seizing his 45 gun, he began a shooting spree during which he emptied all three of his cartridge belts. He and his brigade began to shout 'you die' to the students who rejected beauty".

> *La pintura invadía los muros. Composiciones heroicas, experimentos, entusiasmo, envidias, intrigas, aprendizaje. A los preparatorianos no les caía bien la pintura. Puede decirse que a nadie le gustaba y eran frecuentes las quejas y protestas que los estudiantes llevaban a la Secretaría de Educación, y sabido esto por Ignacio Asúnsolo se presentó una mañana en la Preparatoria al frente de los sesenta canteros que tenía a su servicio y empuñando su pistola 45 comenzó una balacera que agotó los tiros de sus tres cananas, y él y su brigada lanzaron mueras a los estudiantes reacios a la belleza. Asúnsolo trabajaba en las esculturas que decorarían la fachada y los patios de la Secretaría de Educación y a punta de bala tenía que defenderse de los envidiosillos que eran nuestro común enemigo.* [755]

Indeed, the students' anger increased considerably, and the myths about muralists defending their works with guns almost corresponded to reality.

> *En otra ocasión se presentaron las damas de la Cruz Roja o Verde, no recuerdo bien, que necesitaban el patio mayor de la Preparatoria para hacer una kermesse de caridad; pero en lugar de pedirme Cortésmente que suspendiera el trabajo por unos días, me ordenaron con altanería que me retirara, mandaron deshacer en el acto mis andamios y sobre las mismas pinturas en ejecución clavaron los adornos para la fiesta. Expresaban en voz alta su disgusto y desprecio por mi trabajo. Les desagradaba especialmente la figura desnuda de una mujer con un niño, creyéndola una virgen; pero yo no había tenido la intención de pintar una virgen, sino una madre.* [756]

In 1924 the reaction against *Revolutionary* muralism led to the scaffolds of Orozco, Siqueiros and others being dismantled and work being suspended at *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. The affair of the Preparatory *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* affected Vasconcelos deeply. Already in November 1923 he had announced that he wanted to resign in early 1924. However, he resigned from the Secretariat in July 1924.

Vasconcelos: "I will leave the position of Secretary this coming year, because I feel the necessity to write, and what I have to say cannot be said in an official position."

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[754] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 196.
[755] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 111-113.
[756] Ibid.

> *Dejaré la Secretaría al año entrante porque siento necesidad de escribir, y lo que yo tengo que decir no puede decirse en un puesto oficial; escribiré notas sobre mi último viaje a la América del Sur; memorias sobre la Revolución Mexicana, y después continuaré la serie de ensayos que se inicia con El monismo estético, terminando con la Estética fundamental que desde muy joven tengo ideada, y finalmente una síntesis de las religiones.* [757]

He was replaced by José Puig Casauranc. At this stage Plutarco Elías Calles was President.

According to Alicia Azuela: "In [the] series of characteristics that made of Mexican muralism the typical form of public art of the Revolution Calles saw an excellent propaganda instrument that could help him to project an image of the country, and of its new social reality, appropriate to his government's purposes of centralization."

> *En [la] serie de características que hacían del muralismo Mexicano la forma de arte público típico de la Revolución vio Calles un excelente instrumento propagandístico que podía ayudarlo a proyectar una imagen del país y de su nueva realidad social adecuada a sus propósitos gubernamentales de centralización.* [758]

Calles was an enemy of the church and a friend of Washington, attitudes which Vasconcelos rejected categorically. Calles's rhetoric lacked big mystical conceptions and their attendant aesthetics. He allowed diplomatic relationships with the rest of Ibero-America to cool. Thus from April 1924 onwards, Vasconcelos and his ideas no longer enjoyed the absolute backing of the Presidency.

The muralists adapted to the new state of affairs. Those artists who depended on the patronage of the State adopted the new ideological orientations of the politicians gathered around Obregón. The *Revolutionary* 'family' was divided; Obregón's support for the candidacy of Calles, his support for the leaders of CROM and the suppression of the de la Huerta rising adversely affected Vasconcelos's power and reduced his influence.

The ideas elaborated in the first project group of the National Preparatory School – and represented in the murals of Leal, Charlot, Revueltas, Orozco, Alva de la Canal and Siqueiros – were supplanted by the only alternative that remained in the Calles period. This was Diego Rivera's way. Diego Rivera, who called himself a "worker-painter," represented, as even his critics recognize, the ideology and populist aesthetics of this period in the frescos of the Secretariat of Public Education, carried out between 1923 and 1925; and later on in the work carried out during the Calles régime.

According to Vasconcelos: "in fact even *el Máximo* [Calles] was subordinate to the Treaties of Bucareli and to the economic and hacendaria (sic) politics of the banker and diplomat Mister Morrow."

> *[...] en realidad también el Máximo estaba subordinado a los tratados de Bucareli y a la política económica y hacendaria del banquero y diplomático Mister Morrow. Cada vez que el poderoso Embajador llegaba a la República o salía de ella, el Ejército se movilizaba para darle honores y escolta como al jefe real de la nación. Le agradecían los del gobierno el apoyo prestado en armas y elementos en la lucha contra el pueblo; los hombres de negocios lo cortejaban y ni siquiera se disimulaba la influencia avasalladora del Procónsul. El espíritu de rebelión había muerto.* [759]

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[757] Vasconcelos, José, *El Universal Ilustrado*, nr. 341, November 23 1923, p. 35.
[758] Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, p. 15.
[759] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, pp. 625-626.

When Plutarco Elías Calles became President, he was considered by some circles as representative of the progressive wing of the Sonora group, and even seen as a socialist. Indeed, initially he was more receptive than Obregón to the demands of some rural groups, and he tried to reestablish cooperation between the ruling group and organized labor, especially the CROM, that Obregón had neglected. Luis N. Morones, the leader of the CROM, which was said to have almost a million members, was in Calles's cabinet.

Creative artists adopted various positions towards the ideological and cultural politics of the Calles régime. Thus, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Amado de la Cueva, and others preferred to support the labor struggles of the Jalisco miners, alongside Governor José Guadalupe Zuno, a staunch opponent of the Calles government and of its organizational arm, Luis Morones and the CROM.

This is Siqueiros'version of the position of Rivera and other artists when Vasconcelos was replaced by Puig: "When Puig Casauranc came to the Secretariat of Public Education, to replace Vasconcelos, he considered it pertinent to put before us muralist painters the following alternative: 'If you continue to publish your newspaper The Machete with a political line systematically attacking the government, that is the government of the Revolution, you will have to be suspended from your contracts for painting murals (those of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*)."

> *Al llegar Puig Casauranc a la Secretaría de Educación Pública, en sustitución de Vasconcelos, consideró pertinente ponernos a los pintores muralistas ante la disyuntiva siguiente: "Si continúan ustedes publicando su periódico El Machete con una línea política de ataque sistemático al gobierno, que es el gobierno de la Revolución, tendrán que suspenderse sus contratos de pintura mural (eran los de la Preparatoria). Tal es la disyuntiva: El Machete o la pintura mural"[...] Reunido nuestro Sindicato de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios [...] se procedió a discutir lo que debería hacerse frente al acuerdo del Secretario de Educación Pública. La opinión se dividió en tres tendencias.* [760]

And Siqueiros continues: "Rivera said: 'Although we have to sell our soul to the devil - in this case, as a first measure, the suppression of the publication of The Machete - we continue the mural painting."

> *Rivera dijo: "Aunque tengamos que vender nuestra alma al diablo − en este caso, como primera medida, la supresión de la publicación de El Machete − continuemos la pintura mural".[...] José Clemente Orozco, por su parte, dijo: "Si la política me impide seguir realizando la obra mural ya iniciada, al diablo con la política [...] y yo me largo a los Estados Unidos". [...] Y la proposición mía, quizá la más romántica, expresada en actitud y tono oratorios, fue la siguiente: "Si nos arrebatan los muros fijos de los edificios públicos, hagamos de las páginas de El Machete los muros móviles de nuestro gran movimiento de pintura mural". Mi punto de vista obtuvo el acuerdo mayoritario. [...] Rivera sería expulsado del Sindicato y en el número siguiente de nuestro órgano periodístico El Machete sería dado a conocer el acuerdo de su expulsión al público El Machete, 24 de mayo de 1924.* [761]

Siqueiros said to the newspaper *Excélsior* that Rivera's painting "is a Revolutionary farce that has had as it only practical end the deception of the snobs and the production of money for its author."

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[760] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 222-223.
[761] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 222-223.

La pintura de Rivera, según Siqueiros, es una farsa revolucionaria que sólo ha tenido como fin práctico engañar a los snobs y producir dinero a su autor [762]

And Siqueiros continues: "and we published 'El Machete' that irritated, as it should have, the authorities. These authorities provoked the division and we split into three groups. One gobiernista (sic), one passive and other combative. Diego Rivera was gobiernista, his group took over all the official work, and he took over his group. Orozco went to the United States and the passive group disintegrated."

[...] y publicamos "El Machete", que disgustó, como tenía que ser, a las autoridades. Estas provocaron la división y se tuvieron tres grupos. Uno gobiernista, uno pasivo y otro combativo. Diego Rivera fué gobiernista y su grupo absorbió todo el trabajo oficial y él absorbió a su grupo. Orozco fue a los Estados Unidos y se disgregó el grupo pasivo. [763]

In consequence, none of these artists were allowed to paint murals again, at least during the rest of the twenties. Neither were those painters – such as Jean Charlot, Ramón Alva de la Canal and, to a limited extent, José Clemente Orozco and Fernando Leal – who rejected the political game and refused to work as propagandists for the regime.

When Vasconcelos resigned in 1924, muralism as well as Mexican society as a whole had already lost the orientation that he favored, an orientation towards the ideals of Greek culture which he had strived to put into practice. When he left the Secretariat of Public Education, the muralist movement was falling apart. Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera left for the United States. The only possibility for muralists in Mexico was to become artists of the *Revolution*, to serve the new *Revolutionary* ideology, and to help consolidate the power of the Mexican State.

Charlot:

Not only did Puig keep Rivera at his work, thus assuring him the few more years he needed to finish the decoration of the Ministry, but he also published for all to read some "Brief commentaries" on the panels of the first court, in which he developed his thought that "Rivera is the philosopher of the brush". [764]

Given the prevalence of foreign capital in the Mexican industrial base and the diplomatic tensions that had accompanied the *Revolution*, it was relatively easy to define the anti-imperialist fight as the central problem of the working class. In 1927 the Morrow-Calles agreement with United States was signed and the president's politics moved more to the right. Morones had no choice but to allow the oil laws to be modified in favor of the foreign companies and to support Calles in his decision to establish closer collaboration with foreign managers in the construction of a new Mexico.

For Vasconcelos, Calles was a "Big Boss of the Opereta [sic]. True power was exercised, with skill, by the former partner of Morgan, Don Dwight Morrow, Ambassador, lawyer, millionaire and banker":

El mismo Calles, como se vió poco después, era un Jefe Máximo de Opereta. El verdadero poder lo ejercía con habilidad por los intereses de sus poderdantes y de su nación, el ex socio de Morgan, Don Dwight Morrow, Embajador, y abogado, millonario y banquero. ¡El consumador de la Obra de Poinsett! [765]

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[762] "Alfaro Siqueiros dice que Diego Rivera es un falso revolucionario", *Excélsior*, August 29 1935.
[763] Ibid.
[764] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 301.
[765] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 621.

This ambassador would later play a crucial role in the relationship between the United States and Mexico, and financed some of Diego Rivera's works, specifically in Cuernavaca. Vasconcelos, among others, never forgave Rivera for 'selling out' to North American interests. Rivera tried to justify his attitude as best he could.

During the 6-year period known as the *Maximato*, Calles followed an openly conservative line and blocked all *Revolutionary* proposals. A large number of dishonest individuals, stemming both from *Revolutionary* groups and from the sectors displaced by the Porfiristas, managed to obtain economic and political power. Politics left its *Revolutionary* course and hurled the country into more underdevelopment and thus more dependency on the United States.

> *En vez de retractarse, de acomodarse a las circunstancias y embolsar las fortunas que la moda de la Mexican School ofrecía, Siqueiros respondió a las amenazas afirmándose valientemente, con un hondo sentido de solidaridad, en sus ideas antiimperialistas.* [766]

The muralist movement which the minister had financed was interrupted, in spite of the polemics this caused. The painters returned to easel painting or, under Manuel Rodríguez Lozano's orders, who had replaced Adolfo Best Maugard, became drawing teachers in the new centers for outdoor painting.

At the beginning of 1925, Dr. José María Puig Cassauranc, the second Secretary of Education, allowed Diego Rivera to conclude the decorations of the second patio, but he did not consider the murals of Charlot and of de la Cueva worthy of his attention. Rivera himself ordered part of the frescos his fellow artists had painted on the north wall to be erased, so that he would have sufficient space to carry out a monumental composition: *The Tianguis*.

Vasconcelos believed that so long as the masses remained uneducated, the system of human sacrifices would continue whether the victims were called *Victoriano Huerta, Plutarco Elías Calles* or *Moctezuma.*

> *Desde la época de las misiones, la dificultad de penetración en la masa indígena explica el constante peligro de la idea cristiana, diseminada en un ambiente que sigue siendo Azteca en su capa profunda. Transformar este aztequismo subyacente es una condición indispensable para que México ocupe sitio entre las naciones civilizadas. Mientras no sean educadas las masas, subsistirá el sistema de sacrificios humanos así se llame Victoriano Huerta o Plutarco Elías Calles el Moctezuma en turno.* [767]

Charlot writes that only Rivera and Montenegro managed to make the transition from one regime to the next.

> *At the end of 1924 dethroned Vasconcelos turned to newspaper writing for a living and did not spare his successor the rod in his political articles. The only two painters who had safely bridged the change of regime were Montenegro and Rivera, and both were now called upon to prove their fealty to their new employer, Dr. Puig. Both readily obliged: Montenegro destroyed the portrait of Vasconcelos featured in "The Feast of the Cross," replacing it by a politically neutral female in floating drapes. Not to be left behind, Rivera represented Vasconcelos in a panel of the Ministry that Vasconcelos himself had built as a dwarf comically straddling a white elephant, dipping his pen in a spittoon.* [768]

From this moment on, Vasconcelos's role was played down by virtually all participants. He himself did so on many occasions. Muralism became "Mexican curious", an instrument in the hands of the corrupt politicians.

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[766] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 57.
[767] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 432.
[768] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 303.

The only *Revolution* that happened in Mexico was that portrayed in the murals. Vasconcelos wanted something different. He believed that muralism should be a way of learning, of cultural elevation, which could raise the Mexicans to the level of the cosmic dimension. Vasconcelos did not adapt to the pseudo-*Revolutionary* culture of the new murals, and he was marginalized. Rivera was not unaware of the change in orientation.

> *Valle Inclán, que vio el comienzo de nuestro esfuerzo en la pintura mural, y pedía que en España se imitase en eso al Gobierno de México. Acababa de despedirse de mí y sabía que el Gobierno de México, por entonces Calles, no se preocupaba de murales; los había mandado hacer yo, pero no estaba de moda citarme. Por su lado, De los Ríos y García Lorca hacían teatro popular y misiones de arte, y De los Ríos hablaba de que algo semejante había visto en México, pero también se le olvidaba citarme.* [769]

After Vasconcelos's resignation in 1924, there was a reorientation of *Revolutionary* rhetoric. In practice nothing was permitted which went contrary to North American interests. Vasconcelos had wanted to elevate Mexican culture as an independence project and to free Mexico from foreign influences and externally imposed models. Of course, this was an utopian project, but it had provided the founding idea of muralism and its program. The Americans had always viewed this project unfavourably. Now, they established a new doctrine and new strategies which even went so far as to support the mural activities of Rivera, not only in Mexico (Cuernavaca) but also in the United States itself. There was a simple reason for this change: Rivera's murals had become totally inoffensive.

According to Wolfe, Rivera becomes a tourist attraction while painting in the Secretariat of Education:

> *While painting in the open courtyard of the Secretariat of Education Diego was one of the "sights" of Mexico City. Artists and tourists came from afar to watch him. Men and women who came to the Ministry would pause to look on, as in New York people follow the operations of a steam shovel.* [770]

11) Vasconcelos's resignation in July 1924

Vasconcelos resigned his position as Secretary of Public Education because of the murder of Senator Field Jurado, the senator who had opposed the Treaties of Bucareli, and dissociated himself from Obregón. Vasconcelos was certain that the president knew the names of those responsible for the murder. On January 28, 1924, Vasconcelos had already written a telegram in which he presented his resignation to Obregón. Although Álvaro Obregón rejected this and emphasized that the government did not condone the murder, Vasconcelos's position was weakened after that episode.

Later (1937) Vasconcelos wrote that Obregón was probably not involved in the murders and insinuated that it was Calles who had wanted to eliminate his rivals:

> *Hubo de parte de Obregón cierto respeto de las libertades públicas y si hubo asesinatos políticos bochornosos como el del Gral. Francisco Villa y el de Lucio Blanco ya citado, lo más probable es que Obregón no interviniese en ellos, pues era Calles quien aspiraba a la Presidencia y deseaba deshacerse de rivales.* [771]

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[769] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 166-167.
[770] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 179.
[771] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 586.

Recognition by the North American government and the Treaties of Bucareli

Álvaro Obregón was considered to be the best strategist of the *Mexican Revolution*. He shot or ordered the shooting of almost all his opponents. The problem with Obregón's government was the fact that it was not legitimate, as he had come to power by means of a coup. Obregón wanted recognition from the United States at all costs. This made him especially vulnerable to blackmail on the part of foreign investors in the oil and banking sectors. Recognition for Obregón's government came at last in June 1923 – essentially because the United States no longer saw any real danger in Obregón. From May to August 1923, representatives of the United States and Mexico met in a series of informal conferences, known as the Treaties of Bucareli. Many Mexicans were angry about the concessions which the Obregón government made to North American imperialism in these negotiations. However criticism was silenced very effectively. Senator Field Jurado, who opposed the Treaties of Bucareli, was murdered. Pancho Villa, who had represented a real danger to North American interests, was eliminated by a Mexican army officer in an ambush. The assassin went unpunished, as this was actually the opening shot in the presidential campaign of 1923-24. Adolfo de la Huerta, Obregón's Minister of the Treasury, who had negotiated peace between Villa and the government, was now planning to stand for the presidency without Obregón's consent. Obregón himself preferred Calles, the Secretary of Government.

On December 27, 1923, the Senate of the Republic had approved the Special Convention of Reclamations, signed between Mexico and the U.S.A. This regulated two main topics: compensation to North American citizens for damages suffered during the *Mexican Revolution*, and the rights of foreigners to property and to the exploitation of underground natural resources. The Mexican government committed itself to repaying its external debt and promised not to expropriate property belonging to North Americans without paying cash compensation. The convention was signed on July 20, 1923 shortly after the assassination of Villa.

In August 1924, Mexico became the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic relationships with the Soviet Union.

The Agreements of Bucareli, the impoverishment of the treasury and the alliances of political groups around Calle transformed Vasconcelos's political space. As a strong leader's respected minister, Vasconcelos had enjoyed enormous freedom. Now that the United States was no longer an enemy and the regime's most important internal enemies had been purged (the suppression of the de la Huerta rebellion), many political groups, headed by the CROM, united to form an apparatus of national control. In this context, the Secretariat of Public Education could no longer be the fief of a single person. The CROM attacked the Secretary, and the muralists adapted to the new state of affairs. Actually a secret pact had been concluded between the then candidate Obregón and the leaders of the CROM on August 6, 1919.

According to Barry Carr,

> *[...] este pacto señaló la entrada definitiva de la CROM a la escena política* [772]

In 1923 the CROM had started putting pressure on the Secretary of Education and organized a student strike. In the early months of 1924, the muralists'problems increased; the press attacked Orozco, and there were even attacks on his person. In that year Lombard Toledano proposed that Vasconcelos's educational program be replaced by a plan devised by the CROM. In his last year as minister, Vasconcelos met with opposition everywhere and could not start any new projects. Obregón's pact with the CROM prevented Vasconcelos from continuing his individualistic actions, which had been predicated on the supreme commander's absolute support. Obregón's rapprochement with the United States removed the importance of the Secretariat of

[772] Carr, Barry, *El movimiento obrero y la política en México, 1910/1929*, Ed. Era México, p. 112. Quoted in Manrique, Jorge Alberto, "Las contracorrientes de la pintura Mexicana", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 261.

Education as a means of ensuring international prestige. The structuring of the state by means of corporatist political organizations afforded the masses a degree of participation in the official rhetoric and in the nationalist culture.

Events forced Vasconcelos to make a decision soon after the disorders in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* caused by the interference of the CROM in the politics of the student body. The Director of the National Preparatory School, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, was an active Union member and an open Calles supporter. On 16 August 1923, after numerous problems, strikes and even physical attacks on the still unfinished murals of José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, Vasconcelos asked Lombardo Toledano to resign and invited the student leaders to participate in the election of a new Director. However, the students refused to negotiate. Some days later, as a protest, Pedro Enríquez Ureña, then Director of the summer courses at the University, and Antonio Caso, Rector of the University, tendered their resignations. The majority of the students returned to their classes; a minority group called for the resignation of José Vasconcelos.

The SOTPE (Sindicato de Obreros, Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores) rejected the manifesto of the Federation of Students from Mexico. Siqueiros, as Secretary-General of the Union, declared that his painting was part of a pedagogic *Revolutionary* program and as such could be combated by those that considered it mistaken or absurd, but with reason and not with stones.

> *Es posible deducir, sin tener una documentación precisa sobre la Federación de Estudiantes Mexicanos, que el escándalo de los estudiantes y la destrucción de murales estuvieron vinculados entre sí debido a la discrepancia política que existía entre ellos mismos. Por un lado estaban aquellos que defendían los murales, los estudiantes que se llamaron a sí mismos comunistas.* [773]

Finally, after numerous attacks, Vasconcelos asked Obregón for police assistance and under the pretext of a reorganization expelled the students who had caused trouble. He named Ezequiel Chávez and Roberto Medellín as replacements for Antonio Caso and Lombardo Toledano.

In a circular of January of 1920 it had been indicated that the Secretariat would only provide a small quantity of free school books and that it would be necessary to appeal to the financial cooperation of the families for the purchase of the numerous manuals used in the program of primary school education. Faced with a political and economic crisis that restricted the scope of his program, Vasconcelos had little choice but to resign. Obregón's presidency, which had begun with enthusiasm and national cohesion, finished in confusion and repression.

Vasconcelos's old team disintegrated. Henríquez Ureña, Caso, Lombardo had come out on the side of his enemies. The CROM, which had prepared the ground for the subsequent regime, put pressure on that enlightened, overbearing and personable minister until he was forced to leave the ministry in the middle of 1924.

> *La CROM, que preparaba el terreno para el siguiente régimen, presionó de diversas maneras contra ese ministro iluminado, despótico y personalista, hasta que lo hizo renunciar al ministerio a mediados de 1924* [774]

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[773] "Los destructores de pinturas, Manifiesto del grupo comunista estudiantil de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria.", *El Demócrata*, July 21 1924. Quoted in Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, pp. 203-204.

[774] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 124.

After Vasconcelos's resignation in July 1924, when he left to campaign to be Governor of Oaxaca, the protests by student groups against the artists became more vocal.

> *[...] y que por lo tanto estaban de acuerdo con los lineamientos del SOTPE. El otro grupo lo formaban aquellos que en 1923 estuvieron en contra de Lombardo y que en 1924 mandaron a Oaxaca un mensaje solicitando el apoyo del grupo estudiantil a favor de la candidatura de Vasconcelos como gobernador.* [775]

It is an interesting fact that *The Machete* supported Vasconcelos. "The organ of the communist painters, *The Machete*, followed my instructions and supported my candidacy with articles that, of course, nobody read in Oaxaca. Anyway, then and now, I thank them for the gesture":

> *El Machete no hizo lo propio; por el momento, El Machete, órgano de los comunistas de la pintura, se puso a mis órdenes, apoyó mi candidatura con artículos que, por supuesto, nadie leía en Oaxaca. De todos modos, y por de pronto, agradecí el gesto.* [776]

On July 1, 1924, for the second time within a few months, Vasconcelos tendered his resignation. He would write in his memoirs: "It had been a beautiful dream: to uplift the country by means of education":

> *Asqueado de mí mismo, me puse a redactar un telegrama en que presentaba a Obregón mi renuncia. Lo firmé el 28 de enero de 1924. Le decía que no podía servir lealmente una situación que ofendía mis más arraigadas convicciones, y me ponía a sus órdenes como particular y como amigo. [...] No había motivo para que abandonara el despacho mientras no fuese designado mi sucesor. Se pasó el tiempo en recibir visitas. Contemplaba con tristeza las oficinas suntuosamente decoradas por los mejores artistas de la época, y en la mejor época del arte Mexicano. Todo estaba envuelto en simbolismos de carácter universal que no llegarían ni a comprender los imbéciles que habrían de sucederme. [...] Había sido un bello sueño el propósito de levantar el país por medio de la educación. Cuando apenas comenzábamos, nuestro presupuesto fue burlado y reducido para pagar tropas adictas, para enriquecer a generales, para fortalecer de nuevo al militarismo que nos deshonra desde hace un siglo [...] Yo me retiraré a la vida privada* [777]

Vasconcelos withdrew his resignation until the inauguration of his favorite work: the National Stadium (demolished in 1950 to make way for the Juárez residential complex). Having inaugurated the stadium, Vasconcelos left the Secretariat and proclaimed the country to be once more in the hands of Huichilobos. [778]

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[775] "Formidable escándalo formado por escolares en preparatoria", *El Demócrata*, July 5 1924. Quoted in Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 204.
[776] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 261.
[777] Ibid, pp. 232-233.
[778] The name that the Spaniards had given Huitzilopochtli, the god of war.

En lo de adelante, cada vez que en el país o en el extranjero quería el Gobierno dar muestra de su labor, lo primero que hacía era exhibir la película tomada en la fiesta del estadio.

Al salir a la calle para tomar los autos, un joven se desprendió de los grupos de curiosos y gritó: «¡Viva El Maestro [...]!»

Era la primera vez que me daban en público este título y pensé con amargura: «El Maestro que ya se va [...]»

Y el país queda, otra vez, en manos de Huichilobos. [779]

The official reason for his departure was so that he could stand for the position of Governor in Oaxaca, his native state. In fact, deep political divergences had arisen between Alvaro Obregón and his Secretary of Education since the murder of Senator Field Jurado in January of 1924. The spectacular decrease in the budget for 1924, which considerably limited the Secretariat's scope for action in pedagogic and administrative aspects, convinced Vasconcelos that he would no longer have the resources at his disposal to carry out his policies.

When de la Huerta had been in power, José Vasconcelos had attempted to resign because the protestants "made foreign policy, and because this was creating difficulties for de la Huerta":

Por último, me mandó llamar De la Huerta.

-¡No sabía, Pepe, que usted fuera católico! − me dijo [...]

-Pues bien: ahora ya lo sabe; pero católico o no, si yo he de seguir en Educación, saldrán de allí los protestantes porque han hecho política extranjera, y como esto le está creando a usted dificultades, vengo a entregarle mi renuncia. [780]

Vasconcelos's resignation, which became effective on July 3, 1924, led to all mural work being suspended, and the *de facto* situation was confirmed by a presidential ordinance of August 1924.

Many contradictions made the Obregón government turn authoritarian and dictatorial. The regime developed a type of leadership cloaked in demagoguery and populism. Besides the authoritarianism, a paternalistic and populist attitude was adopted. Inside this system of populism the government used culture as a means to unify the population and to control it ideologically, with or without Vasconcelos. Ultimately the focus and the freedom that Vasconcelos gave to education and art during his ministry was directly opposed to the government's interest in the centralization of the power. These policies also affected cultural activities and forced Vasconcelos to leave the country. He then abandoned his former ideals (anti-imperialism and miscegenation) and embraced a feverish and irrational Hispanism, pseudo anti-imperialism, and populism. This is Vasconcelos's tragedy.

José Vasconcelos resigned when Plutarco Elías Calles became President of the Republic. Vasconcelos put himself forward for election as Governor of the State of Oaxaca. However, there were irregularities in the elections. Vasconcelos claimed that he had won, but his electoral victory was not recognized, and he went into exile again. He spent 1924 and 1925 in Europe. Thereafter, Vasconcelos embarked on a long pilgrimage around the world – interrupted by the presidential campaign of 1929 – which lasted until 1939. Vasconcelos became a wandering exile and his interventions in the national life of Mexico became ever more marginal. During this period, he visited several universities in Europe and in the United States, he held conferences, gave interviews, published journalistic articles, etc. and published the first edition of the magazine *La Antorcha* in Paris and Madrid. He returned to Mexico on November 10, 1928, as presidential candidate for the *Antireeleccionista National Party*. He won sympathy and popular support but victory was granted to the official candidate, Pascual Ortiz Rubio.

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[779] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 253.

[780] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 950.

12) The Presidential Campaign of 1929

By 1929 divisions amongst intellectuals and artists were very evident. Vasconcelos, who was in the United States, criticised Rivera for supporting Pedro Rodríguez Triana's presidential campaign. Triana was the candidate put up by the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino Comunista* against the representative of the official party, Pascual Ortiz Rubio.

Orozco and Siqueiros remained abroad because of various disagreements with the Calles regime. Rivera was expelled from the Communist Party and, free from his old ideological constraints, could accept any commissions he wanted.

In 1929 the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* was formed. Following the centralist politics of Calles, it united the various factions and smaller parties which supported the regime into one single party. The aim was to silence opposition and to suffocate democratic hopes.

Blanco says that Vasconcelos "could not remain in the State as an individual, with the privileges and the freedom that he had enjoyed. Either he left the government or he would became just another official, without personality and without the power to take decisions":

> *Conforme se fue preparando la organización política del Estado para que Calles tomara el poder, desaparecieron los espacios para individuos personalistas. Vasconcelos no podía permanecer en el Estado como individuo, con los privilegios y la libertad que había venido disfrutando. O salía del gobierno o se convertía en un funcionario más, sin personalidad ni poder de decisión, al servicio de las personas y las consignas que fuera estableciendo el nuevo orden de cosas.* [781]

Accordingly, Vasconcelos presented himself as an independent candidate in the presidential elections.The *vasconcelist* movement was an exceptional movement, considering the traditional lack of opposition. It represented an effort to obtain a true democracy. However it was eventually repressed with the help of terror, and Pascual Ortiz Rubio became President.

During the campaign, Vasconcelos resurrected the old mythical association with Quetzalcóatl. Vasconcelos against Calles, Quetzalcóatl against Huichilobos (the name that the Spaniards had given Huitzilopochtli): this was Vasconcelos's allegory in his fight against Plutarco Elías Calles, the tyrant among the tyrants, the "Supreme Chief" of barbarism whom Vasconcelos accused of weakness and submissiveness towards the American ambassador Dwight Morrow. The *Proconsul's* interference in the politics of the *National Revolutionary Party*, which Vasconcelos described several times in *The Proconsulado* and in *The Flame*, was so extensive that it gave the fourth volume of his memoirs its title.

His entry into the capital resembled a victory parade. On March 10, 1929, in the Plaza de Santo Domingo, near the Secretariat of Education, Vasconcelos made a major speech, in which he says: "I feel today that the voice of Quetzalcóatl, that same historical and millennial voice, today looks for expression in my throat and gives it force so that it screams, me without armies screaming to so many that are supported by armies [...] now like a thousand years ago, [what] in condensed form Quetzalcóatl exclaimed: Work, Creation, Freedom".

> *Y por encima de todo este campo de devastación, levanto la vista en estos momentos solemnes y me parece que en estos mismos sitios de la vieja plaza de Santo Domingo resonó en otras épocas la voz que anunciaba catástrofes, horrorizada delante de las*

[781] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 132.

degollaciones y felonías de Huitzilopochtli. Y como el profeta fue expulsado y desterrado, fue olvidado, los caníbales continuaron su cena, pero el invasor no tardó en presentarse vengativo, con el hierro de los conquistadores. Y vino después el fracaso de otras predicaciones, otro eco de la voz milenaria que por boca de Madero condenaba a los asesinos de la dictadura, y la Revolución ha estado fracasando porque acalló aquella voz y asesinó al profeta, y lo echó en olvido y tornó al festín de Huitzilopochtli. Yo hoy siento que la voz de Quetzalcóatl, la misma voz histórica y milenaria, busca hoy expresión en mi garganta y le da fuerzas para que grite, yo sin ejércitos, a tantos que se respaldan con ejércitos [. . .] ahora como hace mil años, [lo que] en condensado exclamara Quetzalcóatl: Trabajo, Creación, Libertad. [782]

Vasconcelos explained that "to leave the bloody mess honorably was the only thing that was open for me to do":

Salir con honor del enredo sangriento era lo único que nos quedaba por hacer. Y, por lo pronto, no dar a conocer juicios que hubieran hecho cundir el desaliento. [783]

Under pressure from the government, *El Universal* stopped publishing Vasconcelos's articles as of August 8, 1929. He did not work with the paper again until 1941. As an intellectual, Vasconcelos had had an enormous influence amongst the middle class and particularly among the young students of the capital. For the boys that followed him, his campaign was a cry of pure exaltation sung to the melody of his anthem, entitled simply *Me importa madre.*

According to Blanco: "In general terms, the allegory that Vasconcelos builds in his Autobiography is founded in a close identification between himself and the nation; historical, cultural and even racial heir of the country, the now "Creole" sees how the masses ('another race', 'another nation') and the United States invade his estate."

En términos generales, la alegoría que Vasconcelos construye en su Autobiografía parte de una estrecha identificación entre él mismo y la nación; heredero histórico, cultural y hasta racial del país, el ahora "criollo" ve cómo las masas ("otra raza", "otra nación") y los Estados Unidos invaden su heredad. La alianza de los caudillos tanto con las masas como con Washington es, para Vasconcelos, una reiterada forma de despojar al "Mexicano" (clase media nacionalista) de su reino. Como Ulises, Vasconcelos se arrojó a luchar contra los enemigos de ese ideal de nación; tuvo sus aventuras épicas (naufragios, huidas ingeniosas con ayuda del Destino, sirenas, circes, nausícaas, calipsos y demás diosas y musas tutelares). [784]

On election day Vasconcelos was in Guaymas. A messenger from Ambassador Morrow assured him that the government would give him the rectorship of the University, if he declared that he had been defeated. He refused and in December 1929 proclaimed the *Plan of Guaymas,* in which he declared himself the victor and called for an uprising.

The Plan of Guaymas led to him being sent to jail. He was freed on condition that he leave the country. On December 12, 1929, Vasconcelos crossed the northern frontier. On December 27, President Hoover gave an

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[782] Vasconcelos, José, discurso en *El Universal*, March 11 1929. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, pp. 153-154. Unaccountably excluded from Vasconcelos, José, *Discursos 1920-1950*, according to Blanco.

[783] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 761.

[784] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 179.

official reception for Ortiz Rubio as Elected President of Mexico. Later Vasconcelos continued his exile in various European countries, where he resumed publication of *La Antorcha*.

Vasconcelos had to take refuge in the United States. Some time later he was, by his own account, forced to abandon the country because of pressure from Calles, from the imperialistic press and from the friends of Morrow. He later left for South America, where he continued his fight.

Vasconcelos:

> *El candidato independiente se declaró a sí mismo Presidente Electo. Invitó a la rebelión en el Plan de Guaymas y no fué seguido. Tuvo que convertirse en prófugo; se retiró a los Estados Unidos. Hallándose en los Estados Unidos y como siguiese incitando a la rebelión, el gobierno de Portes Gil dio una orden a todas las oficinas fronterizas para que se impidiese la entrada de Vasconcelos a México. Por su parte, los amigos de Calles en Estados Unidos, la prensa imperialista y los amigos de Morrow hicieron tal presión, que Vasconcelos tuvo que abandonar también a los Estados Unidos, dirigiéndose a la América del Sur, para continuar desde allí su prédica rebelde.* [785]

On December 29, 1929 Vasconcelos informed *The New York Times* that he was leaving politics and would retire to work in exile as a professor at the University of California. In the meantime, Portes Gil officially banished him from the country.

Blanco:

> *Quiso en 1929 recobrar su tierra prometida y fracasó. Consternado porque no se había cumplido el mito, descendió del papel de Ulises al de un mentor de ulises futuros, del papel del Mesías al del simple profeta que lo anuncia en el desierto.* [786]

Vasconcelos described the elections as a farce, in which "the unknown and rather disreputable Ortiz Rubio had obtained nearly two million votes; a communist candidate, from the government, had received, according to the official invention, forty thousand votes; and the independent candidate, who had walked in front of the film cameras of foreign correspondents surrounded by huge crowds, was awarded a pittance of twelve thousand votes":

> *En Nueva York, los banqueros socios de Morrow, habían dado el cómputo de la elección presidencial Mexicana, a las once del día de las elecciones, es decir, varias horas antes de que en México pudieran ser cerradas legalmente las ánforas. Las cifras precisas se publicaron, sin embargo, en Wall Street, de acuerdo con cálculos improvisados varios días antes de las elecciones, por un seudopartido oficial titulado el Partido Nacional Revolucionario. Según tal cómputo, el desconocido y mal reputado Ortiz Rubio había obtenido cerca de dos millones de votos; un candidato comunista, del gobierno, había asegurado, según la invención oficial, cuarenta mil votos, y el candidato independiente, que había paseado multitudes ante la cinta cinematográfica de los corresponsables extranjeros, recibió la limosna de un reconocimiento de doce mil votos.*
>
> *Es de advertir que los corresponsales extranjeros recibían unánimemente sus instrucciones, cada mañana, en la Embajada de los Estados Unidos.* [787]

[785] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, pp. 219-220.
[786] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 179.
[787] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 620.

Vasconcelos's unsuccessful attempt to be elected President led him to denounce the election results as fraudulent. Thereafter, he allied himself with right-wing and clerical forces opposed to the "Revolutionary régime".

Marta Robles:

> *La campaña presidencial de José Vasconcelos (1928-1929) inicia otra etapa mesiánica cargada de mártires. Plutarco Elías Calles protagoniza al tirano, y el "Partido Oficial", como llamaran al recién creado Partido Nacional Revolucionario, significa "la conversión de la dictadura personal en dictadura de camarilla".* [788]

On his return to Mexico in 1940, Vasconcelos was named director of the Library of Mexico; he received the title *Honoris Causa* of the National University of Mexico and of Puerto Rico, Chile, Guatemala and El Salvador. He died on June 30, 1959.

The Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral, who became the first Latin American and the first female poet to win the Nobel Prize in Literature said, in 1922, a few months after arriving in Mexico, that this was the race that she had dreamt about, the people that sings. In 1925 she regretted the exile of the "teacher," whom she described as:

> *[...] el hombre más constructor que la raza de Adán ha hecho sobre esta pobre América.* [789]

The twenties ended tragically for José Vasconcelos. In the following years, the image that remained of Vasconcelos was of an embittered man, disaffected with everything, and this permanently distorted his image. The work Vasconcelos had done as Secretary, when he had been responsible for culture and arts in Mexico, was depicted as a minor planning exercise, and he was ridiculed even by his fellow citizens. The social and political developments in Mexico, replete with demagogy and populism, his own estrangement and, as discussed in the following chapter, the personal animosity of Rivera, led to Vasconcelos becoming an overlooked parenthesis in the history of Mexico.

I believe Vasconcelos made two major contributions. He performed crucial work in the development of education, where he created a Ministry of Education with an ethos and a cultural mission, from which countless Mexicans have since benefited. In the field of the arts proper, he initiated the most important Mexican artistic movement in recorded history, *Mexican Muralism*. Rivera himself, and not only he, continued this project, a project which gave dignity to the Mexican race. I believe that the arts in Mexico, and especially muralism, owe much to José Vasconcelos.

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[788] Robles, Martha, *Entre el poder y las letras: Vasconcelos en sus memorias*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1991, p. 10.

[789] Mistral, Gabriela, Letter to Manuel Gómez Morín, April 1925, *Archivo de Gómez Marín*. In Krauze, Enrique, *Caudillos culturales de la Revolución Mexicana*, Siglo XXI, Mexico 1976, p. 266.

CHAPTER V. DIEGO RIVERA AND MYTHMAKING

Initially, this chapter was supposed to cover Rivera's life from birth until his death in 1957. Due to the extent of the material, I decided to stop the analysis of his life and work at the beginning of 1930, when Rivera left Mexico to paint murals in the United States. The chapter on José Vasconcelos also ends at about the same time.

I will, however, discuss some works and important events after 1930, in order to understand Rivera's life and work more completely. I follow Rivera from his birth to his time in France and consider his return from Paris and the subsequent period in Mexico until his move to the United States in 1930. His mural production is discussed chronologically; I introduce relevant aspects linked to classic Mexican mythology as well as to the more recent mythologies, particularly the mythology of the *Mexican Revolution* and the individual mythology of Rivera. I also consider the scandals and the controversies involving him insofar as they are relevant to an understanding the construction of the myths around Mexican muralism.

Rivera used scandal to help build an image of himself and of Mexico. That image of Mexico is a construction, a utopia which does not correspond to reality. The image is the basis of *Mexicanidad*, an idea of Mexico built of contradictions, poetical narratives, lies and various levels of myth.

Rivera's mural production began in Mexico City with the mural *The Creation* in 1922. As noted earlier, this mural fits logically into the mural program initiated by José Vasconcelos. However, Rivera later claimed that the mural program was his, and that he intended to paint the whole history of philosophy, a claim which would start the first of many controversies concerning his mural activity. Many controversies marked Rivera's life, and contributed to a vision of Mexican muralism much influenced by what Rivera said and did. For many commentators, these scandals are just *fait divers,* without any larger significance. I believe that this is a major problem, which has not been properly taken into account in the various analyses of Mexican Muralism.

Rivera was Mexican muralism's most prolific myth-maker. Rivera's personality and his own vision and interpretation of Mexican culture influenced and determined the collective vision we now have of Mexico and of the murals produced in the first half of the twentieth century to such an extent that it is now difficult to separate the two visions. This is verified in two parallel structures: on one side we have the *Riverian* discourse expressed in the murals he painted in Mexico and in the United States; on the other hand, we have the discourse Rivera produced in the form of his written texts, interviews, public acts and ceremonies, as well as the various social, political, ideological, and artistic scandals. Both kinds of discourse were important for the construction of the myths that interest us. Rivera never left anything to chance; he was complicated but coherent, although he does not always appear so. Even though he is accused of being an opportunist who lied systematically and maintained a demagogic posture, it is very difficult to criticize him because his zigzags are continuous and astonishing.

According to Hans Haufe, "[Rivera's] own conflicts and his political opinions change frequently, changes that always are accompanied by public, polemic activities, publications and scandals. Like his personality, his work is full of contradictory elements, anachronisms and ruptures".

> *Lo limitan [Rivera] en esta tarea [proporcionar a las masas los conocimientos básicos históricos en forma de epopeyas de amplia envergadura] por una parte el medio ambiente y, por la otra, sus propios conflictos y sus opiniones políticas, que cambian frecuentemente, cambios que siempre van acompañados de actividades públicas, polémicas, publicaciones y escándalos. Igual que su personalidad, también su obra abunda en elementos contradictorios, anacronismos y rupturas.* [790]

[790] Haufe, Hans, "Rivera, la historia y los mitos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 120.

Even before Rivera's return to Mexico in 1921, he was referred to as a "mythomaniac". Rivera presented a very personal view, apparently believing in what he said, justifying his attitudes with a special *Riverian* logic that disarmed everyone. From 1921 until his death in 1957, Diego Rivera presented various facets of his character to promote successive and contradictory versions of his life and work. He convinced many, but he left others confused. A constant need to justify himself is present throughout his writings and in his works.

Elie Faure, the art historian and poet who maintained a lifelong friendship with Diego Rivera, alerts us to the fact that Diego Rivera was a mythomaniac.

> *Hace unos doce años conocí en París a un hombre de una inteligencia casi monstruosa. Así me represento a los creadores de fábulas que pululaban, diez siglos antes de Homero, en las laderas del Pindo y en los islotes del Archipiélago. Me contaba sobre México, donde había nacido, cosas extravagantes. Mitólogo, pensaba yo, o tal vez mitómano.* [791]

Rivera was himself very conscious of this criticism. In his *Confesiones a Luis Suárez,* Rivera states: "Generally, in what has been called my anecdotario (sic), and as part of what it has suited some to call my mythomania, there is included as an example of this last the incident that, at the age of six and not five, happened to me in the church of San Diego, in Guanajuato."

> *Generalmente, entre lo que se ha dado en llamar mi anecdotario y formando parte de lo que se ha convenido en nombrar mi mitomanía, se incluye como manifestación de esta última el incidente que, a los seis años y no a los cinco, me ocurrió en la iglesia de San Diego, en Guanajuato. Por cierto que cuando se celebró hace algunos años un congreso de historia en Guanajuato, donde el historiador Pompa Y Pompa presentó un ensayo sobre el mito de El Pípila, la señora Amalia de Castillo Ledón, mi querida amiga, quería presentar uno que en cierta forma debería ser par del de Pompa y Pompa, sobre el mito de Diego Rivera. Y era precisamente con asunto central de lo que yo relataba respeto a la iglesia de San Diego. Amalia quería que su trabajo fuera sólido, y se dedicó, antes de leerlo en el Congreso, a investigar en la ciudad, y encontró que algunas personas ya muy viejas no solo confirmaban el relato mío, sino que agregaron muchos detalles que yo mismo no había advertido. Y eso dio por resultado que Amalia, desilusionada, no presentara el estudio.* [792]

In the interviews Rivera gave to Luis Suárez, he states that "In Elie Faure's book, Mon periple, the author says that I was a great disillusion for him, because during the years that we met each other in Paris, he considered me to be a prodigious mythomaniac, possessed of an extraordinary imagination. And when he came to Mexico, he was confronted with the fact that what he had believed to have been lies was nothing more than tales, sometimes a little exaggerated, but not even attaining the level of fiction, sometimes literal, of Mexican affairs".

> *Por otra parte, en el libro de Elie Faure, Mon periple, dice el autor que fui una gran desilusión para él, porque durante los años que nos conocimos en París me consideró un mitómano prodigioso, dueño de una imaginación extraordinaria. Y al venir a México, se encontró con que todo lo que él creía mentira no era sino relatos, a veces un poco exaltados, sin llegar a la ficción, a veces literales, de las cosas de México. En realidad, lo que sucede es que probablemente debido a que gracias a que mi padre fue en realidad un gran educador, no sufrí represiones durante la niñez, lo cual dio por resultado que más tarde no arraigaran en mí los falsos respetos ni el miedo al "que dirán" y demás circunstancias que hacen creer pelos en la lengua, en donde yo no tengo ninguno. Y resulta que por decir las cosas tales como son, con la acentuación y energías suficientes*

[791] Faure, Elie, Varía. Quoted in Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 33.
[792] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, pp. 57-58.

para que se entiendan claro, la gente a quienes conciernen y no convienen prefieren declarar que son mentiras, ya que no podrían presentar pruebas en contrario. [793]

The role of Rivera is extremely complex because he seemed to be everything at once: opportunist, demagogue, accommodator, liar, and mythomaniac; and at the same time, a *Revolutionary* painter and proletariat, a *Zapatist*, and a major symbol of Mexico. Even when he was accused of being a "mental tourist" (as Siqueiros described him), who had sold himself, almost everyone seemed to accept his contradictions.

While carrying out my research in Mexico, I was warned about the many problems that awaited me if I tried to disassemble the complex reality around Rivera and find some kind of "truth". Many affirm that Rivera's paintings demonstrate another level of "truth". According to them, Rivera's murals are unquestionable and independent of the artist's incoherencies and somersaults. In any case the prestige and the artistic authority of Rivera are beyond question, which makes it very difficult to analyze the phenomena with accuracy.

According to Luis Suárez: "If some historian used critical analysis to make an unnecessary purification, and sought to separate the true from the false, it would rob Rivera's life and the age in which he lived, of the dialectical context."

Si algún historiador llevara el análisis crítico a una innecesaria depuración, y pretendiera separar lo cierto de lo falso, despojaría la vida de Rivera de la contextura dialéctica con que él y su tiempo la vivieron. [794]

Obviously Rivera's mural works have their own existence and value, regardless of anything said about the painter and his pirouettes. It is also true that the interpretations of his work are almost always impregnated with mystifications and myths, most of which were invented by Rivera himself. Many authors simply accept Rivera's versions; others have amplified them and perpetuated the myths. Rivera's paintings exist *per se;* they are there. I could have made a more formal or even iconographical analysis of their content, but my aim was to examine the different functions of these paintings, with their multiple discourses, to try to see how they related to the official discourse and propaganda of the diverse regimes and to the unconscious discourse of the community, and to analyse how they work as myths, helping to construct the all-encompassing myth of *Mexicanidad*. It is this larger myth that interests me most.

Cuauhtémoc Medina sees this mythology as an unsalvageable pile of rubble:

From Vasconcelos to Octavio Paz, from Diego Rivera to Carlos Fuentes, Mexican intellectuals and artists have constructed a Mythology that is precisely that nation that springs to people's lips when they speak of "Mexico." A construct which, due to various causes and political programs, has ended up as an unsalvageable pile of rubble. [795]

We cannot expect to achieve certainty, but, through the testimony of Rivera and others, we can try to understand the reason for many of the doubts, vague stories, lies, and myths. One certainty we have: Rivera was the person primarily responsible for this state of things. There were many scandals, myths, and problems in his life and work. Some seem minor, but each and every one of them had a historical importance.

The following list highlights some of the problems and important moments in Rivera's life and career:
his date of birth
his true and complete name
the date he enrolled in the National School of Plastic Arts
the racial mixture in his family tree

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[793] Ibid.
[794] Ibid, p. 17.
[795] Medina, Cuauhtémoc, *Cercanías Distantes,* Irony, Barbary, Sacrilege. Retrieved 2003-08-12 from http://zonezero.com/magazine/essays/distant/fziff2.html.

his atheistic childhood
his fame in Paris
his friendship with Picasso and the claim that Rivera was a disciple of Picasso
the problem of his participation in the *Mexican Revolution*
his assumed participation in the attack against Porfírio Díaz
the problem with the painting *Paisaje Zapatista*
the so-called *Affaire Rivera* in Paris
his trip to Italy
the date of his return from Paris to Mexico
the Christian ideas and publications he illustrated
the problem of who painted the first fresco in Mexico
the problem of the theme of his first mural, *The Creation*
the censored poems in the SEP
the mural of *The Arsenal* in the SEP
the representation of Vasconcelos in the SEP
the scandal in Detroit
the image of Lenin in *Rockefeller Center*
his murals at Giro's Bar in the new *Hotel Reforma* [the *Dictatorship*, etc.]
the sentence God doesn't exist in Hotel del Prado
the representation of Cortés in the National Palace
the theme, "The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice" [Marx] in the National Palace
the representation of Marx in the National Palace
the image of Cortés in the National Palace
the scandal of Guadalupe-Cantinflas
the *Cristeros* theme in the National Palace
the project Dream of peace-nightmare of war
his militancy and expulsion from the Mexican Communist Party
his militancy and expulsion from the *Fourth International*
his public controversies with Siqueiros
his assumed participation in the attack against Trotsky
his readmission to the Mexican Communist Party
his use of the *Revolutionary* character of Zapata
his use of the character of Posada
etc., etc.

Rivera played a fundamental part in the ideological consolidation of the post-*Revolutionary* Mexican state. That state relied on a populist and demagogic logic in which myth played a dominant role, and Rivera was able to satisfy the state's need for myths. Nationalism and populism were not simply abstract, ideological or political ideas, but they became established political practice.

For Shifra M. Goldman, "nationalism has been in Mexico, as in Latin America in general, one of the most dynamic forces of change. It has been deeply crisscrossed with a necessary sense of dignity, pride, and self-assertion. To combat feelings of inferiority, the intellectuals have reconstructed the past, and when making it they have created a mythology of the old utopias. The Mexican painter who fulfills this role is Diego Rivera."

> *El nacionalismo ha sido en México, al igual que en Latinoamérica en general, una de las fuerzas más propulsoras del cambio. Ha estado profundamente entrelazado con un sentido necesario de dignidad, orgullo y afirmación. Para combatir la inferioridad, los intelectuales han reconstruido el pasado, y al hacerlo han creado una mitología de las antiguas utopías. El pintor Mexicano que compendia este papel es Diego Rivera, quien*

desde el Marxismo compara de manera dialéctica las fuerzas positivas y negativas que operan en un periodo histórico, poniendo énfasis en lo positivo. [796]

According to Hans Haufe, "the post-Revolutionary State needed central myths, valid models for the masses."

Un problema permanente consistió en conciliar la tendencia critico-utópica de Rivera con el efecto público deseado por el Estado. Este Estado posrevolucionario necesitaba mitos centrales, modelos válidos para las masas. Su liturgia política celebrada la consagración del arte sobre todo en lugares como el Palacio Nacional, antigua residencia de los virreyes. El fondo histórico le era indispensable para captar de inmediato el interés del espectador. Tarea de la pintura era completarlo mediante elementos estereotipados de sentido inequívoco; servir como demostración de la continuidad de todas las tradiciones positivas, entre las que cuentan, también, los monumentos arqueológicos y las obras folklóricas. Estas gozan de protección gubernamental porque of recen la legitimación necesaria. Además son útiles como artículos de exportación. [797]



Figure 56. Diego Rivera: Portrait of Lenin. *Rockefeller Center*, New York.

I have spent several years studying the extensive bibliography on Mexican Muralism in general and Diego Rivera in particular, as well as following up references I found on the Internet (including topics submitted to discussion forums, etc.). **Figure 56** shows a reproduction of Lenin from *Rockefeller Center*, and in **Figure 57** we can see a detail of the mural in Bellas Artes. I have discovered that an enormous importance and relevance is given to the "gestures" of Rivera, leading to generalizations, reductions, and mystifications that are the origin of the simplified model of "explanation" of Mexican Muralism.

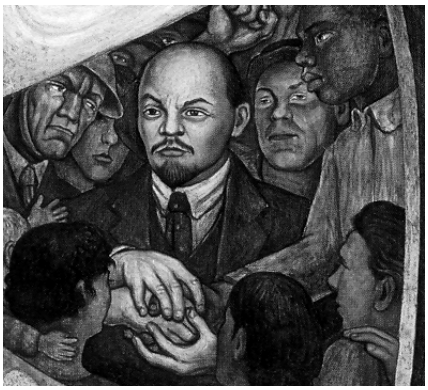


Figure 57. Diego Rivera: Portrait of Lenin. *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, Mexico City.

The largest number of references concerns the image of Lenin in *Rockefeller Center*, the sentence *God doesn't exist* in the Hotel Reforma, the image of Cortés in *National Palace*, Marx's image in the National Palace, the mural *The Arsenal* in the SEP, the representation of Vasconcelos in the SEP, the scandal in Detroit, his militancy, and his expulsion from the Mexican Communist Party. For many, Mexican muralism is synonymous with the murals of Rivera and the controversies and scandals that these provoked. [798]

Diego Rivera had a particular gift for scandal. "Whatever Rivera touches becomes a scandal," says Carlos Monsiváis:

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[796] Goldman, Shifra M., *Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, p. 11.
[797] Haufe, Hans, "Rivera, la historia y los mitos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 120.
[798] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, pp. 134-135.

Lo que toca Rivera lo vuelve escándalo: su celebración de la antropofagia, su culto por el arte prehispánico [tan importante en la revaloración de estas culturas], sus ingresos y expulsiones del PCM, sus saltos y conversiones ideológicas, sus amores. Con pasión, la sociedad o la ciudad siguen sus pleitos y romances, con interés que excede con mucho la preocupación política, sin dejar de ser ideológico. [799]

The scandals and controversies provoked by Rivera were many, and they were dispersed throughout his life in a complex but logical web. Esther Cimet notes that Rivera was not submissive; many times he provoked the State institutions or private patrons who had given him commissions.

Como los muralistas eran contratados con frecuencia por instituciones públicas, el muralismo se calificó como "arte oficial". Sin embargo, los murales de Rivera − incluso los de encargo particular − no muestran una sumisión mecánica a los intereses del patrocinador. Por el contrario, las imágenes repetidamente desbordaron lo que el patrocinador estaba dispuesto a tolerar. En este aspecto, interesa la paradoja que implica contratar a un artista conflictivo a sabiendas de las probables críticas y escándalos que suscitaría su obra. Pero tal era el prestigio de Rivera y la atracción de su personalidad que la presencia de una de sus obras en los muros de un edificio, se convirtió en signo de distinción y orgullo. En cuanto al patrocinio oficial, se añadía además la búsqueda de legitimidad política. [800]

Jorge Alberto Manrique discusses Rivera's capacity to provoke scandals with his paintings.

La controversia y el escándalo son compañeros inseparables del arte de vanguardia y Rivera tuvo la capacidad de provocarlos con su pintura [aunque también haya habido algo de su personal sentido del escándalo], en el reducido medio Mexicano primero y después también en el ámbito de los Estados Unidos y en otros países. [801]

In a study on Jorge González Camarena by José Natavidad Rosales Rivera is quoted as saying "rather a good scandal than a good mural."

[...] más vale un buen escándalo que un buen mural [802]

Consequently, I would say that Rivera was not only contradictory in his own personality, but also that those contradictions represented his time and culture. This is what made it so easy for Mexicans in general to identify themselves with his mythological constructions. Moreover, one forgives Rivera everything, as Antonio Rodríguez told me when I met him in Mexico in 1991. [803]

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[799] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Diego Rivera, creador de públicos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 11.

[800] Cimet, Esther, "Confrontaciones de una obra pública: cronología mural", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 84.

[801] Manrique, Jorge Alberto, "La vanguardia de Diego Rivera", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, pp. 29-30.

[802] Natavidad Rosales, José, "Jorge Gonzáles Camarena, El vigor, el fuego, el poder", Exposición Retrospectiva, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, 1970.

[803] The interview with Antonio Rodríguez took place on March 14, 1991. Rodríguez could not understand why I was particularly interested in the character of Vasconcelos. In answer to my question who was the biggest liar, Dr. Atl or Rivera, since both are described as liars and mythomaniacs, Antonio Rodríguez answered that both were equal in their lies.

The various artists, friends, biographers, critics, and historians of his work adopt one of three basic positions:

1. Some have an uncritical attitude, serving merely as mouthpieces of Rivera's rhetoric and affirming the value of his work without reservations. The biographer Gladys March, who is often quoted, is a typical example of this position. [804]
2. Others concede the ideological lapses, the lies, and the mythomania of Rivera, but they view these as unimportant details. They are interested only in Rivera's work. This category includes Justino Fernández, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, José Crespo de la Serna, Raquel Tibol, Bertram Wolfe, and Antonio Rodríguez. For them, political, national and artistic interests are more important than these "details".
3. The third group considers Rivera above all as an opportunist and a demagogue whose work is not especially original. They try to disassemble the incongruities and jugglings of Rivera, but they still appreciate some aspects. Orozco, Siqueiros, Cuevas, and Paz are prime examples.

Members of all three groups share the belief that Rivera's work is of major importance for Mexico. Despite the controversies, almost everyone who went to his funeral praised his work. A presidential ordinance declared Diego Rivera's artistic production (and that of David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, José María Velasco, and Frida Kahlo) to be part of the "artistic patrimony of the nation." [805]

There is a clear tendency to pass over or to minimize certain complications that Rivera inspired. There is a clear tendency towards "whitewashing" Rivera on the part of the institutions. On the other hand, there is no such indulgence towards Vasconcelos. While Vasconcelos built the "invisible" foundations of the modern culture of Mexico, Rivera built a visual myth, present and tangible, and his contradictions and lies are forgivable. The "modified" truth, which legitimizes a populist and pseudo-*Revolutionary* attitude, "pleases everyone" and silently condones the distortions. Diego Rivera was a myth-maker and a mythomaniac who contributed generously to the fantasies of the middle class about the essence of Mexican nationality.

Rivera's companion Frida Kahlo, who had a less objective relationship with reality, says: "His [Diego's] so-called mythomania is directly related to his tremendous imagination, and he is a liar as the poets and the children are liars, and as are those who still have not been made idiots in schools or by their moms."

> *Su llamada mitomanía [de Diego], está directamente relacionada con su imaginación tremenda, y es tan mentiroso como los poetas y los niños que no han sido tornados aún en idiotas por las escuelas y sus mamás... Nunca le he oído pronunciar una sola mentira que sea estúpida o banal... Y lo más extraño en cuanto a las así llamadas mentiras de Diego, es que tarde o temprano, los involucrados en sus imaginativas situaciones, no se enojan por la mentira, sino por la verdad contenida en ésta, que siempre sale a la superficie.* [806]

Dolores Olmedo was the person responsible for ensuring that the greater part of the paintings by Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo remained permanently in Mexico, in a museum located in Xochimilco named after her. She was once asked, "of all that has been written about the 'maestro', which lie do you believe is the biggest?" She answered: "that he was linked in the murder of Trotsky":

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[804] Gladys March's book was published after the death of Rivera and it was never controlled by him, being considered by many as speculative. In spite of that it is a reference often used by several authors and it is because of that reason that it interests us.
[805] Federal law on Monuments and Archaeological Areas, Artistic and Historical published May 6 1972, in the Diario Oficial de la Federación and reformed December 23 1974, December 31 1981, November 26 1984 and January 13 1986. These important works by Mexican artists enjoy a special protection that prevents them leaving the country because they are considered the Artistic Patrimony of the Nation.
[806] Kahlo, Frida, "Retrato de Diego". Published in the monograph *Diego Rivera: cincuenta años de su labor artística*, INBA. Mexico, 1951.

Que estaba vinculado en el asesinato de Trotsky. El era un hombre muy bondadoso. Yo lo tengo como una especie de semi Dios. Para mí Diego Rivera es México y México es mi país. Por eso poco a poco he ido comprando su herencia. [807]

Antonio Rodríguez says:

I found it difficult to believe many things Rivera told me in our numerous talks about this period of his life. It all sounded too fantastic and even absurd. Much later, listening to his conversation with Hoffmeister, the cartoonist, in a cafe in Prague, I realized that a great deal that had appeared to me imaginary, invented or exaggerated was strictly true. Having invented so much, Rivera managed to transform his dreams and fantasies into genuine facts. On the other hand, by a sort of osmosis, his authentic exploits assumed the character of nebulous truths, legends and fantasies. [808]

Moreover, according to Raquel Tibol,

El diagnóstico de mitómano hizo que muchos le endilgaran a Rivera más mentiras o falsedades de aquellas que en verdad y abundantemente había incurrido. Mentir sobre el mentiroso no sólo fue aureola de la leyenda riveriana, sino arma de contrincantes en las pugnas políticas. [809]

Rivera transformed himself into a mythological figure and managed to reconcile, with evident ease, truly enormous contradictions. His contradictory attitudes must be analyzed in relation to the national question in its full historical dimension and with its specific contradictions. Diego Rivera's works resonated all the more strongly because of these contradictions. Over time the contradictions became more marked because of the irreconcilable historical and social contradictions that arose when *Revolutionary* leaders, society women, and the *haute bourgeoisie* coexisted. This, of course was also the source of the fascination exercised by his art.

Rivera knowingly dominated and managed the vocabulary of political rhetoric. He was a vivacious, contradictory, provocative personality, and sometimes he was indecipherable. His speeches on aesthetic, ideological, and other subjects were inconsistent and contradictory; he changed his stated opinions to fit the requirements of the moment, or for reasons of political convenience.

Patrick Marnham, author of one of the most recent works on Rivera, here poses some questions, which he then tries to answer. In my opinion Marnham's answers explain much:

In the last decade of his life Rivera took increasing pleasure in his skills as a storyteller. He devoted his inventive power to his autobiography, reliving his life as a fable, rather as he had relived the Aztec past as a fable in the National Palace. My Art, My Life is the biographical equivalent of the magical realism school of fiction. Sometimes there are rational explanations for his inventions. Why did Rivera claim to have led a student strike at San Carlos when he was in fact a docile and hard-working young painter? Because Siqueiros actually did lead a student strike there ten years later. Why did Rivera invent his non-existent Revolutionary experience in 1911? Because his rivals, Orozco and Siqueiros, both lived through the Revolution, and the latter fought in it with distinction. Why did Rivera claim to have known Posada? Because Orozco did know Posada. Why did Rivera pre-date his Cezannean influence by ten years, to 1909? Because Siqueiros saw Cézanne for the first time in 1919. And why did Rivera always claim to have spent seventeen months

[807] Villamizar, Simón, "Dolores Olmedo − Ángel guardián de Diego Rivera", *Cultura Y Espectaculos, El Universal.com*, Cultura Y Espectaculos, Caracas, Saturday, May 24 1997.
[808] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 162.
[809] Tibol, Raquel, Arte y Política: Diego Rivera, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, prólogo, p. 17.

in Italy, studying fresco? To emphasise the seriousness of his "vigil"? Or perhaps because he did not want to account to the Mexican government for the 2,000 gold pesos he had spent in four months. [810]

Several testimonies exist relating to Rivera's natural proclivity for lying; he became famous for it. Gladys March, in the foreword to Diego Rivera's dictated memoirs, writes: "Essentially, this is Rivera's own story, in his own words. As such, it cannot always coincide with what other people would call 'the facts.'"

Esencialmente, éste es el propio relato de Rivera, dicho con sus palabras. Como tal, puede no coincidir siempre con lo que otras personas llamarían "los hechos". Elie Faure fue uno de los primeros en reconocer una cualidad dominante en la mente de este artista: "Mitólogo, me dije a mí mismo; tal vez incluso ¡mitomaníaco! Rivera, quien más tarde, en su trabajo, transformaría la historia de México en uno de los grandes mitos de nuestro siglo, no podía, al contarme a mí su propia vida, suprimir su colosal imaginación. Ya había convertido ciertos sucesos, particularmente de sus primeros años en leyendas. [811]

Gladys March compiled a series of interviews with Rivera in this autobiographical volume. Written in 1957 and finished soon after Rivera's death, it relates the essence of Diego Rivera as a person and as a painter. In comparison with other books on the same topic, it is perhaps inexact in chronology, but it is a brilliant exposition of Rivera's personal mythomania.

On the other hand, Bertram D. Wolfe, Rivera's semi-official biographer, [812] was well aware of the "fabulous" artist's love of fables.

Diego's person and bulk were fabulous. His life was fabulous, his accounts of his life more fabulous still. His fecundity as an artist was fabulous, too. His talk, theories, anecdotes, adventures, and his successive retellings of them, were an endless labyrinth of fables. His paintings on the walls of public buildings in Mexico are one long, beguiling fable concerning his world, his time, his country, its past, present, and future. The tall tales for which Diego was famous, improvised effortlessly as a spider spins his web, their pattern changing with each retelling, were fables wrapped in fables, woven so skillfully out of truth and fantasy that one thread could not be distinguished from the other, told with such artistry that they compelled the momentary suspension of disbelief. If Diego Rivera had never touched brush on wall or canvas, merely talked and had his talk set down, Baron Münchausen would have to look to his reputation. [813]

Bertram D. Wolfe strives for a measure of objectivity.

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[810] Marnham, Patrick, *Dreaming With His Eyes Open: A Life of Diego Rivera*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York 1999.
[811] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 12.
[812] Bertram David Wolfe [1896-1977] was a foreigner and a left-winger. In 1919 he participated in the foundation of the Communist Party of the United States and he was a member of the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party [PCM] until he was expelled from the country by the government of Calles, in the summer of 1925.
[813] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 6.

> *In this book I have tried to keep a distance from the man with whom I had so long an intimacy, in order to get a fresh perspective on the legendary figure and on the artist who has made so large an impact upon the painting of his time. I have tried to keep in their proper proportions absurdity and seriousness, weakness and strength, charlatan and genius.* [814]

Wolfe continues:

> *In 1947 I wrote a monograph on Diego Rivera at the request of the Pan-American Union. In 1954, when he rejoined the Communist Party after years of guerrilla war, I did his political profile in an article entitled "The Strange Case of Diego Rivera." Through mutual friends he continued to send me messages, clippings, and photographs. When he was dictating material for his intended autobiography to Gladys March [published posthumously without his final revison], he still referred to me as "my biographer," drew freely on passages from my book of 1939, pointing out only one secondary disagreement with what I had written.* [815]

According to Xavier Moyssén, who collected Rivera's numerous texts, these documents "present serious problems for their study and reliable employment as reference sources."

> *Los textos que escribió Diego Rivera, aquí reunidos, presentan serios problemas para su estudio y empleo confiable como fuentes de referencia. Uno de los problemas, acaso el mayor, es el relacionado con la constante alteración que hizo de las noticias y datos que se veía obligado a manejar, sobre todo en los de carácter histórico, así desvirtuó las informaciones establecidas unánimemente como fidedignas, para ajustarlas a los intereses que perseguía mediante un discurso tendencioso y unilateral; algo semejante a los que hizo cuando interpretó la historia de México en su obra más significativa, en el cubo de la escalera del Palacio Nacional y en el último fresco que ejecutó en ese edificio. Lo curioso es que con notoria habilidad tergiversaba la verdad sin mayor preocupación, incluso en algunos sucesos en los que intervino como protagonista y de los cuales había testigos para desmentirle.* [816]

The reputable journalist Luis Suárez says of Rivera: "Before my very eyes, he jumped on what he wanted, he erased what he didn't want and he invented as much as he wanted."

> *En la vida de este mágico embrollador de la historia propia y de la ajena hubo otros días y otros actores. En momentos distintos, y a otros testigos, los contaría y movería en el anchuroso campo de su vida. Ante mí, saltó lo que quiso, borró lo que no quiso e inventó cuanto quiso.* [817]

Suárez continues to wonder: "On the other hand, faced with a creator of realities and fantasies, who can tell where one ends and the other begins?"

> *Pero aún así, ésta es también historia, porque la vida histórica de Diego Rivera abarca cuanto objectivamente la enmarca y cuanto subjetivamente la desborda, pues se trata de una vida extraordinaria. ¿Quién, por otro lado, separaría en un recreador de realidades e imaginaciones, el límite de unas y otras? La verdad se viste en ellas, y por ellas, de distinta manera, y la ficción no es mentira. Parecerán inventados no pocos hechos ciertos;*

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[814] Ibid, pp. 3-4.
[815] Ibid, p. 5.
[816] Moyssén, Xavier, *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 11-12.
[817] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 9.

y reales, muchas cosas imaginadas. Intentarla desarticularía el armazón del relato, que vi nacer y revivir compuesto por ligas sutiles, todas vitales como las arterias, venas y venillas de un cuerpo. [818]

Luis Suárez describes Rivera's autobiographical writing as "a work of art, a fantastic invention."

Acaso antes de abrirlas, convenga una vez más subrayar que Diego Rivera, exaltado relatador de la historia colectiva de su pueblo, se convertía en gozoso adulterador de la propia. Su legado autobiográfico es también obra de arte, invención novelesca. La realidad imaginada suple en boca de Diego las lagunas de su vida o sustituye brillantemente − maliciosamente también -, en gestos que mucho le divertían, aquellos aspectos corrientes y groseros de toda y cualquiera vida, porque acaso resulten inadecuados para el examen conjunto de la vida de un hombre que actúa con extravagancia, pero con la sobrenaturalidad que han de poseer los genios. [819]

For Alberto Híjar Serrano: "Rivera builds a universe of irreconcilable and contradictory relationships in which Revolutionary leaders, society women and grand bourgeois coexist."

Rivera construye un universo de relaciones contradictorias irreconciliables donde coexisten dirigentes revolucionarios, mujeres de sociedad y granburgueses. Pero es la tendencia popular lo que lo anima aunque no del todo por la falta de caracterización del Estado, de la fase histórica y del lugar del arte. Rivera tampoco aprende nada de Lenin que actualiza el Marxismo para la fase imperialista que lo obliga a precisar el carácter represivo del Estado, de la fase histórica y del lugar del arte y las superestructuras en la totalidad social. [820]

Moreover, Alberto Híjar Serrano continues,

Las principales proposiciones políticas de Diego Rivera caminan al ritmo de marcha de la consolidación del estado Mexicano y de las organizaciones populares que tienden a contradecirlo. [821]

According to Linda Downs and Ellen Sharp, Rivera's biographers Bertram Wolfe and Loló de la Torriente claim that Rivera never read Marx:

Of critical importance to an understanding of Rivera's work, and particularly his murals, is the relationship of Rivera's aesthetic to Marxist political theory. While acknowledging the use of Marxist theory in the development of the subjects, themes, and composition of his murals, his biographers Bertram Wolfe and Loló de la Torriente claim that he never read Marx. [822]

For Justino Fernández,

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[818] Ibid, pp. 9-10.
[819] Ibid, p. 12.
[820] Híjar Serrano, Alberto, "Diego Rivera: contribución política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 64.
[821] Ibid, p. 40.
[822] Linda Downs and Ellen Sharp, *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, Preface and Acknowledgments, p. 15.

No obstante las contradicciones y algunos sinsentidos, el pensamiento estético de Rivera resume muy bien su posición y habla siempre como artista, si bien interesado en la Revolución socialista. [823]

Octavio Paz talks about censorship and distortion of the truth concerning Rivera and Frida Kahlo with a view to "canonization and mummification."

[...] en las publicaciones oficiales consagradas a estos pintores [Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo] se oculta la verdad. Las biografías de todos ellos han sido expurgadas y amañadas con propósito de canonización y de momificación. [824]

Xavier Moyssén describes Rivera's occasional demagoguery as regrettable.

[…] *parte importante la ocupa la ideología política con la que se ha pretendido involucrar teóricamente a la pintura; sin embargo, soy de opinión que lo más significativo se localiza en los escritos que en un sentido más amplio se relacionan con el arte y sus practicantes, más allá de lo puramente circunstancial de una comprometida postura política, que en ocasiones cayó lamentablemente en lo demagógico.* [825]

On one occasion, Alfonso Caso said: "Diego, his lips have never been stained with a truth."

Diego, sus labios jamás se han manchado con una verdad. [826]

Justino Fernández states that, according to Rivera, the painting is a "lie" that expresses truths.

Tuvo Rivera un claro concepto de la pintura como distinta al "realismo", respecto de éste, como una "mentira", pero con verdad en sí misma, es decir, como arte verdadero, como creación y no representación; una "mentira" que expresa verdades. O sea, dicho de otro modo: el arte no es representación sino creación libre que, expresa verdades. En su obra pictórica misma está la comprobación de su acerto, sólo que le faltó agregar, como lo hizo Orozco, que se trata de lo que uno cree que es la verdad en un momento dado; pero no era esa la idea ni la creencia de Rivera. [827]

For the art critic Raquel Tibol, Rivera is inexplicably polemic, controversial, and contradictory.

Polémico, controvertido, contradictorio hasta lo inexplicable [828]

Raquel Tibol says, "art and politics are frequently, or almost always, intertwined in a narrow and indivisible way."

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[823] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 502.
[824] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 69.
[825] Moyssén, Xavier, *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 8-9.
[826] Gurría Lacroix, Jorge, *Hernán Cortés y Diego Rivera*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1971, p. 66.
[827] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 501.
[828] Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, prólogo, p. 27.

> […] *para una personalidad vivaz, contradictoria y, a veces, indescifrable como la de Rivera, ayuda a seguir el curso de su inteligencia en conflicto y evitar confusiones, más aún cuando arte y política se entrelazan con frecuencia o casi siempre de manera estrecha e indivisible.* [829]

Linda Downs comments that the memoirs and autobiographies of Diego Rivera have contributed to the image that the public has of Diego Rivera as a precocious, fervent, and combatative *Revolutionary* who completely rejected his participation in the European avantgarde to follow his chosen course as leader of the artistic Revolution of Mexico.
The author points out that the facts were more prosaic, since, for example, from 1911 to 1920, Rivera lived in Paris. Upon his return to Mexico in 1921, he was one of the artists who received commissions to paint murals in the public buildings. The investigator's idea is to clarify the truth of the legend and to allow a re-evaluation of Rivera's work, especially on the part of North American critics.

> *Over the past forty years, critical opinion in the United States has remained virtually unchanged: Rivera's work and the Mexican Mural Movement as a whole have been characterized as politically motivated, stylistically retrograde, and historically isolated. Furthermore, Mexican scholars have traditionally emphasized the overt Revolutionary ideals and didactic content of Rivera's murals in Mexico, thus extolling the very aspects of his work that have carried a negative connotation in the United States. In Mexico Rivera's work is synonymous with the institutionalized ideals of the Mexican Revolution, which promoted indigenous culture to the exclusion of foreign influence.* [830]

The *Dirección de Artes Plásticas* sees Rivera as myth and reality, which calls forth admiration, rejection, even bewilderment, but in any event recognition:

> *RIVERA es todavía un mito y una realidad. Si en vida logró que su pintura fuese noticia cotidiana, referirse hoy al hombre o a su trabajo provoca polémica. La discusión en torno a su persona y a su obra no ha cesado; de las nuevas aproximaciones a la trayectoria del individuo, de las recientes lecturas de su pintura surgen discrepancias. Rivera subversivo, intelectual, militante, vanguardista, estudioso, muralista, mitómano, patriota, pintor, amante, progresista, provoca admiración, rechazo, desconcierto, pero en todos los casos reconocimiento.* [831]

For the art historian Desmond Rochfort,

> *The myth of Rivera the Revolutionary is a combination of often highly idealized interpretations surrounding the Mexican mural Renaissance and the myth built up around Rivera, often by Rivera himself, as a great Revolutionary communist painter. Yet the reality and the myth are often contradictory. Rivera, having subdued his own Mexican national bourgeoisie during the 1920s, went on to barnstorm his way into the minds of major American capitalists during the 30s, persuading them that they too should commission their share of his outpouring of apparently Revolutionary public images on the walls of their most sacred buildings. This he did while at the same time largely retaining his credibility as the standard bearer of a radical socialist public art movement. This reputation rested on the often brilliant series of fresco cycles he painted for the Mexican government during the 20's on the walls of some of the most prestigious public buildings in*

[829] Ibid, p. 13.
[830] Downs, Linda, *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, introduction, p. 18.
[831] In *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. V.

Mexico City. In these he expressed the struggles of the 1910 Mexican Revolution and the traditions and history of the Mexican people on their long march towards national independence and social liberty. His membership in the Mexican Communist Party and his subsequent exploitation of the controversies that surrounded the commissions he undertook for capitalist patrons in the United States only added to Rivera's "radical" reputation. [832]

D. H. Lawrence identified Rivera with the terrifying figure of Tezcatlipoca. Lawrence's book has been the origin of many myths, especially those common in the United States about Mexico, the muralists, and Rivera; the Mexicans themselves have assimilated these myths.

According to Alfredo Cardona Peña: "D. H. Lawrence identified Rivera with the terrible Tezcatlipoca, solar and ecumenical deity of the old Mexico. In fact we can identify this painter with each one of the deities that form the Aztec vault: with Tláloc, god of the water; with Quetzalcóatl, beneficent god of the light; with the profound Coatlicue, goddess of the earth and of death who appears with eagle claws and a skirt consisting of snakes."

Sale Diego Rivera como un geiser de la tierra Mexicana y comienza a pintar como lo haría un dios Azteca en los tiempos del sacrificio humano, lleno de sangre y de asombrosa vitalidad. David H. Lawrence identificaba a Rivera con el terrible Tezcatlipoca, deidad solar y ecuménica del antiguo México. En realidad podemos identificar a este pintor con cada una de las deidades que forman el panteón Azteca: con Tláloc, dios del agua; con Quetzalcóatl, dios benéfico de la luz; con la profunda Coatlicue, diosa de la tierra y la muerte, que aparece con garras de águila y falda de serpientes. [833]

1) Diego Rivera's biography

Figure 58. Diego Rivera: Self-portrait, painted in 1941 and dedicated to Irene Rich [834]



Sometimes December 13, 1886, is cited as Diego Rivera's date of birth, but this is an error. According to the artist's birth records, available for consultation in the Museo Estudio Diego Rivera in San Angel, Mexico City, Diego María Rivera was born on Wednesday, December 8, 1886, in Guanajuato, Mexico, with his twin, Carlos María Rivera. Carlos María died in 1888. In 1891, a sister, María del Pilar, was born. In 1892, the Rivera Barrientos family settled in Mexico City.

In several biographies, Diego's name is given as Diego María de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera Barrientos de Acosta Sforza y Rodríguez de Valpuesta; it is also listed as Diego María Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez.

According to Wolfe:

[832] Rochfort, Desmond, "Diego Rivera: Myth and Reality", *Community Murals, An International Visual Arts Magazine*, Vol. 11, Number 3, Fall 1986, p. 8.
[833] Cardona Peña, Alfredo, *El monstruo en su laberinto*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1980, p. 15.
[834] In Smith College of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, United States. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 6.

There the elder was baptized Diego Maria de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez. [...] I have not seen the baptism certificate, but the name was thus given to me by the painter. [835]

The signature of Rivera on the sketch for the *Rockefeller Center*, according to Lucienne Bloch's article in *Art in America*, is his full name (together with the title of marquis): "Diego María Concepción Juan de Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera Sforza y Barrientos d'Acosta y Rodríguez de Valpuesta, Marques de la … (illegible), Señor de la Ribera y lorde de Castel … (illegible)."

According to Rivera, "I can lay claim, by way of Don Anastasio, to the title of a Spanish nobleman, [a title] which I later transferred to a relative."

Es por Don Anastasio por quien podría pretender el título de noble español que después transferí a un pariente. [836]

Diego Rivera told the most incredible stories about his origins and ancestors to his different biographers. In the biography that the painter dictated to Gladys March, he relates that he came from a family in which practically all "races" were represented:

Había sangre mestiza en ambos lados de mi familia. Mi abuela materna, Némesis Rodríguez Valpuesta, era mestiza de español e india. La familia de mi abuelo materno, Juan Barrientos, agente de minas, había venido del puerto de Alvarado, célebre en todo México por su excelente pescado, su fruta opulenta y la alegría y vigor de su gente negroide; no está, pues, fuera de razón suponer que mi madre me heredó rasgos de tres razas: blanca, roja y negra. La madre de mi padre, mi abuela Inés Acosta, provenía de una familia de judíos portugueses que descendía del filósofo racionalista Uriel Acosta. A los quince años se había casado con mi abuelo paterno, don Anastasio de Rivera. Don Anastasio tenía entonces sesenta años, era oficial veterano del ejército español e hijo de un Italiano que también había servido de oficial en las fuerzas militares de España. Cuando todavía estaba en el ejército español, mi bisabuelo paterno fue enviado a una misión diplomática a Rusia a fines del siglo XVIII. Allí nació mi abuelo. Nadie supo en España quien fue la madre de mi abuelo. Como mi abuelo le dijo a mi padre, muchos son los que pueden presentarse como hijos de padre desconocido, pero sólo él, don Anastasio, disfrutaba la distinción de ser hijo de madre desconocida. La explicación era que mi bisabuelo Italiano se había casado en Rusia, su mujer había muerto en el parto y él llevó consigo a su hijo al regresar a España. [837]

According to Wolfe:

He satirized the mestizo middle-class intellectuals of which he formed a part. [838]

I believe that when Rivera assumed a multicultural and multiracial origin, he sought to symbolize the essence of the *Mexicanidad* or *fusión de razas*, in accordance with the theories of Vasconcelos.

Luis Suárez states that, according to Rivera, "His defense of the Soviet Revolution is a kind of hereditary tendency."

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[835] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 17.
[836] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 17-18.
[837] Ibid, pp. 17-18.
[838] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 384.

Diego recurre a un planteamiento más audaz y aporta ese antecedente a su defensa de la Revolución soviética como una especie de tendencia hereditaria, acaso fatalista, pues resulta, entre tantas cosas sorprendentes del relato, que su abuelo había nacido en San Petersburgo. Revela este antecedente familiar en medio de la truculenta historia que tiene por escenario las guerras carlistas españolas y el pueblo de Loyola, en la provincia de Alava, donde el abuelo, general español, comete la tremenda venganza de llenar con los curas de la zona, el algibe cuya agua aquéllos habían envenenado para que reventaron los liberales. [839]

One of the histories that Rivera tells concerned the period when he was two years old. Rivera told Gladys March that "for this reason, [His health was weak until he was two] my father gave me to Antonia, my Indian grandma. Antonia, whom from then on I loved more than my own mother, took me to live with her in the hills."

Por esta razón, [Su salud era débil a los 2 años de edad] mi padre me entregó a Antonia, mi nana india. Antonia, a quien desde entonces quise más que a mi propia madre, me llevó a vivir con ella en las montañas de la sierra. [840]

Rivera said to Gladys March: "My two years with Antonia saved me from an early deformation of the mind; I grew up like the animals, free of human dirt":

Dejé mi hogar por el de Antonia cuando tenía dos años y volví cuando tenía cuatro. Ahora ya no estaba flacucho, sino robusto y gordo. Pero mi cuerpo era desproporcionado en dos cosas: tenía los pies demasiado pequeños para las piernas y la frente demasiado alta y amplia para la cara. Sin embargo, mis dos años con Antonia me habían salvado de cualquiera deformación temprana de la mente; hasta entonces había estado creciendo como los animales, libre de la porquería humana. Muchos años después he tenido la duda de si mi padre no lo planearía así para que pudiera yo a los prejuicios y mentiras de los adultos. [841]

He told Luis Suárez that he was "suckled until very late, even when I was already three years old, but from the age of one and a half not from a woman's breast, but directly from the breast of a goat, which became my nurse."

Mamé hasta muy tarde, ya bien cumplidos mis tres años, pero desde más allá del año y medio no de seno de mujer, sino directamente del de una cabra, que se agenció mi nodriza. [842]

According to Rivera, as a boy, he had exceptional abilities; however his is the only testimony on this score. He claims that his first experience of "sexual love" was when he was nine years old! Rivera:

A la edad de tres años me llevaron a la Iglesia para pedirle a la Virgen por mi madre, quien iba a presentar un examen. Pero en casa yo había visto dos santos de madera que estaban arrumbados con unos trastos viejos en un rincón y me escandalizó la insinuación de irle a rezar a semejante cosa. Me subí en las escaleras del altar y les grité a las mujeres arrodilladas que ahí rezaban: "¡Viejas idiotas! ¿Ustedes creen que si yo le pido a la fotografía de mi papá que tenemos colgada en la casa, dinero para una máquina de vapor me lo va a dar?" Y en seguida les dirigí una arenga antirreligiosa primitiva e infantil. Éste

[839] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 29.
[840] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 19.
[841] Ibid, p. 20.
[842] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 44.

fue mi debut en público. Las señoras pensaron que estaba poseído del demonio y trataron de librarme de sus garras con toda clase de conjuros. En cambio, un grupo de librepensadores viejos que se reunían todas las noches en una banca determinada del pequeño parque del pueblo, me acogieron en su compañía. Así encontré a mis primeros amigos, todos entre cincuenta y ochenta años. Entre ellos había tres ingenieros. A ellos les debo el que los maquinistas de las locomotoras que transportaban la plata de las minas de mi ciudad, me llevaran en sus viajes para que les hiciera compañía durante el trabajo. La satisfacción que esto me causaba persiste en mí hasta el presente. A los cinco años aprendí a guiar una locomotora, y si no andaba vagando por la estación de carga, pasaba el tiempo dibujando descarrilamientos, batallas o máquinas fantásticas que inventaba en gran número. Yo era el "niño prodigio" de la ciudad en la que nací el 8 de diciembre de 1886. Mi padre entró a los trece años como voluntario en el ejército republicano liberal que combatía a Maximiliano y la reacción y había acompañado a Juárez en su peregrinación al extremo norte de México. [843]

His famous anticlerical attitudes also date back to his childhood. At the age of six (five in other versions) he supposedly said in church, "There is no God," which foreshadows the scandal of the sentence, "*Dios no existe.*"

Un día, sin que mi padre lo supiera, mi tía abuela Vicenta se arriesgó a llevarme a la iglesia de San Diego. Pensó que allí debía pedirle a la Virgen María por el éxito de los exámenes que para obtener su diploma iba a presentar mi madre esa mañana. Desde la entrada de la iglesia mi repugnancia fue tan grande, que todavía siento un malestar en el estómago cuando lo recuerdo. [...]

Entonces di dos pasos hacia el cura y grité:

- Vea usted como su Dios, su Virgen y sus santos no significan para mí nada más que su libro y sus signos.

Entonces empuñé el candelero en mis manos:

- ¡Fuera de aquí! − grité.

Si trataba de evitar un escándalo o simplemente no sabía como cortar con un muchacho como yo, no puedo decirlo; pero el cura cerró su libro, se cubrió la cabeza y salió corriendo. En esos momentos no me cambiaba por nadie del mundo. Me posesioné del centro del altar, y sacudiendo los puños grité:

− ¡Vean ustedes; no hay Dios! ¡Todos ustedes son vacas estúpidas!

Muchos hombres de aspecto rudo se habían juntado a los viejos, pero cuando dije: "No hay Dios", se cubrieron los ojos con las manos, se taparon los oídos y corrieron. En su pánico, se empujaban los unos a los otros tratando de salir de la iglesia, y gritaban conforme corrían: "¡El diablo está aquí!" [844]

After this, representatives of "the Eleven Veterans of Freedom in Guanajuato" considered him "a smaller brother," and they asked him to join their group! That same night he was accepted in the Masonic lodge of Guanajuato as a "younger brother". This was how Rivera explained his beginnings as a Revolutionary. Despite this, Rivera later said that he respected religion and loved the Virgin of Guadalupe:

Si desde niño hablé con verdad de mi sentir, éste nunca me ha impedido ser solidario con los católicos de buena fe en lo que ellos practican realmente de la doctrina de El Maestro, que predicó con palabras y ejemplo la fraternidad y la solidaridad humanas. [...] amo a la Virgen de Guadalupe, símbolo de la patria y estandarte de ésta en manos de Hidalgo, el

[843] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 119.
[844] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 21-24.

iniciador de la independencia de la tierra Mexicana para que sólo la posean quienes la trabajan con sus manos; ambas independencias, lejanas aún, siguen siendo, con la Virgen de Guadalupe, banderas vigentes de la lucha, necesarias para mi pueblo. [845]

According to Luis Suárez the atheistic precocity of Diego preceded his freemasonry:

La precocidad atea de Diego se adelanta a su condición masónica. [...] Diego, infante, se sitúa naturalmente en el pensamiento liberal y volteriano de la época, y se rodea de significación revolucionaria apropiada al tiempo, cuando cuenta que van por él para que asista a una tenida de la Logia. Y esto lo hace con la misma intención de acompasamiento histórico que revela más tarde al vincular toda su conducta política al Partido Comunista, incluso cuando está fuera de sus filas, dando a su actitud de este período interpretaciones de fondo muy distinto a las aparentes. [846]

Rivera said that his grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and others before had always been members and important officials of freemasonry. However, his grandfather was a general in the Spanish army. Rivera added that his grandfather arrived in Mexico and was presented with his partners to Benito Juárez, explaining to him that he had come to defend freedom; he asked to be put in charge of military administration, and Benito Juárez granted his request. Luis Suárez comments: "His impudence is greater towards his older relatives. Diego portrays them in heroic terms, as if they were in an epic poem and attributes to them a liberal and Revolutionary line more or less concordant with his."

Sus desplantes son mayores para sus familiares más antiguos. Diego los sitúa en la heroicidad, casi en la epopeya, cuando siguen una línea liberal y revolucionaria más o menos concordante con la suya; y en lo grotesco si forman parte de escalones sociales de su tiempo, de manera que los recorta en plantilla de nobleza − a cuyas menciones era muy dado el artista − como un modo de significar su rebeldía, incluso contra lo propio, y se burla de ellos. [847]

It is usually said that Rivera entered San Carlos' Academy in 1896 at the age of ten, and that his teachers were Santiago Rebull, Andrés Ríos, José Salomé Pina, Félix Parra and José María Velasco. Raquel Tibol states that in 1897, when Diego was eleven, he attended night classes in drawing at the Academy with Andrés Ríos. It was only two years later, in 1899, that he started being taught by the painters Rebull, Parra and Velasco.

His autobiographical data, which influenced the later biographies, were published in *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, page 3, Mexico, March-April of 1926, and confirms these statements:

1899-1901. − Recibió lecciones de don Santiago Rebull, don José María Velasco y don Félix Parra. [848]

Some biographical data reports that in 1899 at age thirteen, Diego briefly entered the military school. This cannot be confirmed, and it is probably untrue.

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[845] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, pp. 66-67.
[846] Ibid, p. 27.
[847] Ibid, pp. 15-16.
[848] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100. Rivera's Auto-biographical Data, written in 1926, influenced all subsequent biographies, where errors were repeated that in most cases were neither casual nor accidental.

However, in the same autobiographical data of 1926, Rivera claims that in 1902, when he was 16, he left the Academy, rebelling against the system of an almost photographic realism that the new director, Antonio Fabrés, had introduced, and began to work independently:

> *1902. − Empezó a trabajar libremente en el campo disgustado de la orientación de la escuela bajo el catalán Fabrés.* [849]

In 1942, Rivera differentiated between "true" and "false" academism, rejecting certain teachers, Fabrés for example, as unworthy:

> *A las postrimerías del reino de don Porfirio se entronizó en México un academismo oficial de calidad inferior que luchaba comedidamente con otro academismo de calidad distinguida. A través de este último estaba ya aquí la mano larga del pangermanismo tentacular. Artistas de gran talento fueron Julio Ruelas y Germán Gedovius, que procedían de las academias alemanas de Karlsruhe, el primero, y de Munchen el segundo; el otro academismo vino a crecer con la llegada a México, importado por don Justo Sierra, el pintor catalán Antonio Fabrés, siguiendo el consejo del entonces "arbiter elegantarium" del arte entre los "científicos" de don Porfirio, el escultor Jesús Contreras, quien procedía de las academias de México y París, como Fabrés de las de Barcelona y Roma, pintando moros y mosqueteros para gusto del público que concurría al "salón de los Artistas Franceses" y todavía en 1900 se horrorizaba de los impresionistas y post impresionistas, que sin embargo, empezaban a ser capitalizados por la gran burguesía de gusto refinado. Ésos eran "los tiempos de don Porfirio."* [850]

In 1906, Rivera displayed twenty-six works in the annual exhibition of the Academy, and he participated in the exhibition of modern painting organized by the magazine *Savia Moderna.* He also worked as an illustrator for *Savia Moderna*, which was edited by Alfonso Cravioto and Luis Castillo Ledón. The *Savia Moderna* was the first attempt to build an association uniting the forward-thinking intellectuals of the time and formed the nucleus of what later became became the *Athenaeum*.

In 1907, Rivera left Mexico for Spain on a scholarship from the Veracruz governor, Teodoro Dehesa. Diego carried a letter with him from Dr. Atl, the Mexican painter of volcanoes, who had studied previously in Spain. The letter was addressed to Eduardo Chicharro; Dr. Atl thought that it would be a good idea for Rivera to study in the Spanish painter's atelier in Madrid.

One of many stories told about Rivera concerns his alleged cannibalism during his stay in Spain.

According to Alfredo Cardona Peña,

> *Muchos años atrás, cuando el artista estuvo en Toledo, España [1907], surgió entre el pueblo la leyenda de que "se alimentaba con huesos de niños", y parece que lo llegaron a apedrear por eso.* [851]

Rivera says that in 1904, he and others experimented with a "cannibal diet for two months and it improved everybody's health. During the period of our experiment, I discovered that I liked to eat the legs and the chests of women, because, like in other animals, these parts are delicious. . . . What I liked most of all was a woman's brains in a vinaigrette."

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[849] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100.
[850] Rivera, Diego, "*La Pintura Mexicana*", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 266.
[851] Cardona Peña, Alfredo, *El monstruo en su laberinto*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1980, p. 11.

En 1904, deseoso de ampliar mis conocimientos de la anatomía humana, requisito básico para mi pintura, tomé un curso sobre la materia en la Escuela de Medicina de la ciudad de México. En ese tiempo leí algo relacionado con un experimento que me interesó grandemente. Un comerciante en pieles trató de mejorar en un suburbio de París las pieles de los animales mediante el uso de una dieta peculiar. Alimentó a sus animales, que daba la casualidad de que eran gatos, con carne de gatos. Con esa dieta, los gatos crecieron más y sus pieles se hicieron más firmes y lustrosas. [...] Al principio la historia del emprendedor peletero simplemente me divirtió, pero no me la podía quitar de la cabeza. Comenté el experimento con mis compañeros estudiantes de la clase de Anatomía, y decidimos repetirlo y ver si obteníamos los mismos resultados. Lo hicimos, y esto nos animó a ampliar el experimento y ver si implicaba un principio general para otros animales, especialmente los seres humanos, viviendo nosotros mismos sobre la base de una dieta de carne humana. Quienes de nosotros hicimos el experimento nos cotizamos para comprar cadáveres de la morgue de la ciudad, escogiendo los cuerpos de las personas que hubieran muerto por actos violentos − que hubieran sido recientemente asesinados y que no estuvieran enfermos o fueran viejos -. Prolongamos esta dieta caníbal durante dos meses y mejoró la salud de todos. Durante el período de nuestro experimento, descubrí que me gustaba comer las piernas y los pechos de las mujeres, porque, de la misma manera que en otros animales, estas partes son deliciosas. [...]. Lo que más me gustaba de todo eran los sesos de mujer a la vinagreta. [852]

Olivier Debroise said, "Rivera has got a new nickname. In Montparnasse Diego is known as le tendre cannibale, the tender cannibal."

Los cuentos de Diego le habían conseguido numerosos discípulos que escuchaban, divertidos, historias cada vez más des hilvanadas sobre el salvajismo, el canibalismo, las varias maneras de guisar la carne humana [Diego ya recurría a sus cuentos crueles que más tarde le valieron la fama de mitómano.] La intención provocativa era obvia: mezclando verdad y mentira, creando un juego de acertijos, un laberinto inextricable en el que el eventual investigador, el probable biógrafo, se perdería irremediablemente. Nadie tomaba al pie de la letra sus exageraciones aunque su aparente seriedad siempre dejara lugar a dudas. Poseía algo como un fluido, una intuición especial que le permitía enredar de un modo u otro a su interlocutor; numerosos fueron los que cayeron en las redes de ese encanto expresado en una mezcla de francés, ruso y español perfectamente comprensible, aunque fuera de toda regla gramatical de cualquiera de las lenguas. Así seducía a las mujeres... o a sus enemigos. Por aquel entonces, Rivera se ganó un nuevo apodo. En Montparnasse Diego sería le tendre cannibale, el tierno caníbal. [853]

Alfredo Cardona Peña is certain that Rivera's cannibalism was only a joke.

Yo lo oí decir, a un grupo de estudiantes del Estado de Puebla, "que la carne humana tiene un sabor ligeramente dulce, superior a la de cualquier animal comestible". Los estudiantes lo escuchaban espantados y él reía por dentro. [854]

Rivera stayed in Europe from 1907 to 1921. A problem that needs to be clarified relates to Rivera's prestige during his time in Europe. Was Rivera already a prestigious artist during his long stay in Europe, before he returned to Mexico to collaborate with Vasconcelos? Had he participated in the main artistic movements of

[852] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 37-39.
[853] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 40.
[854] Cardona Peña, Alfredo, *El monstruo en su laberinto*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1980, p. 11.

contemporary art, besides having contact with important leftist intellectuals who influenced his artistic and social ideas? How important was Rivera and the work he produced in Europe?

According to Rivera himself, he was a prosperous artist, well paid in Paris for his works. He says in an interview with Crispin, published in *El Universal*, July 10, 1923, that "In Paris I was paid for a portrait, this is, a figure, five hundred pesos."

> *[...] un retrato, esto es, una figura, me era pagado en París a razón de quinientos pesos − − − así se verá el maravilloso negocio que hago actualmente, negocio por el cual merezco los insultos de mis inteligentes compatriotas.* [855]

But according to Olivier Debroise, "shortly before his death, consulting some monographic work on cubism published in France, Diego had the unpleasant surprise of learning that he was not even mentioned":

> *En Europa, actualmente, los "críticos de arte" siguen desconociendo la obra de Rivera. Poco antes de su muerte, consultando alguna obra monográfica del cubismo editada en Francia, Diego tuvo la desagradable sorpresa de comprobar que ni siquiera era mencionado.* [856]

Siqueiros states that in France Rivera's work and his personality "were esteemed, but not placed in the front line."

> *"Don Diego", como lo llamábamos entonces en México, era ya el más famoso de los pintores Mexicanos. Durante catorce años − los años álgidos de la Revolución Mexicana − él había vivido y trabajado intensamente en París. Conocía los grupos más inquietos de la nueva pintura francesa, era amigo de Picasso, de Braque, de Salmon, es decir, de todos los maestros del nuevo impulso. Su obra y su personalidad eran estimadas, sin que se le situara en la primera linea.* [857]

It is often said that Rivera became friends with Picasso and Grisat this time. Rivera insisted that the relationship was real, but besides Rivera's testimony, there is little evidence of a friendship with Picasso. According to Rivera, he became friends with Picasso shortly after his arrival in Paris.

> *En mis primeros días en París fui primero discípulo de Picasso y luego su amigo.* [858]

Rivera calls Picasso "the great painter and my partner."

> *Picasso, el gran pintor y mi compañero.* [859]

Further: "In my cubist time I had the luck to be the student and friend of Picasso."

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[855] Interview with Diego Rivera, signed by Crispín, published in *El Universal*, July 10 1923.
[856] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, pp. 114-115.
[857] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 161.
[858] Rivera, Diego, "De la libreta de apuntes de un pintor Mexicano" [English translation by Katherine Anne Porter], *Arts*, Vol. 7, nr. 1, pp. 21-23, New York, January 1925. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 73.
[859] Rivera, Diego, "Edward Weston y Tina Modotti", *Mexican Folkways*, nr. 6, México, April-May 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 105.

En mi época cubista tuve la suerte de ser alumno y amigo de Picasso. [860]

According to Bertram D. Wolfe,

> *Diego never denied his debt to cubism, nor did he hesitate to acknowledge his gratitude for what Picasso taught him. In 1949, he told a reporter, "I have never believed in God, but I believe in Picasso."* [861]

But Octavio Paz says: "The exhibition that Apollinaire commented on was the Mexican painter's first and last in Paris."

> *En esos años Rivera se decía discípulo de Picasso. La exposición que comentó Apollinaire fue la primera y la última del pintor Mexicano en París. Es indudable que su carrera sufrió tropiezos en esos años y que esos tropiezos lo llevaron a dejar Europa y regresar a México después de catorce años de ausencia.* [862]

Octavio Paz continues, "Diego didn't hide his admiration toward Picasso in those years; there are no indications, on the other hand, of Picasso admiring Diego."

> *Diego no ocultaba en aquellos años su admiración hacia Picasso; no hay indicios, en cambio, de la de Picasso hacia Diego. A veces Picasso habló con elogio de otros artistas; por ejemplo, de Lam. Otras se burló con mezquindad de sus amigos: "¿Braque? Es mi mujer..." No consta que Picasso se haya burlado de Rivera o lo haya elogiado.* [863]

Paz continues, "It is certain that they met each other—and nothing more."

> *También se ha hablado de su gran amistad con Picasso y de la actitud ambigua del pintor español, al que estorbaba la figura de Diego. En ninguna de las memorias de la época figura Rivera entre los íntimos de Picasso o, siquiera, en el número de sus amigos. Es indudable que se conocieron − y nada más.* [864]

To confirm this non-relationship, Paz relates the following little story. In 1946 Octavio Paz lived in Paris. Together with the playwright Rodolfo Usigli, and thanks to friends in Picasso's entourage, Paz was granted an interview with Picasso. He asked Picasso about Rivera. Picasso's answer was: "I don't know Mexican painting well. We are so far away… The war and everything, the rest. Silence [...]"

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[860] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 124.
[861] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 107.
[862] Paz, Octavio, "Apollinaire, Atl, Diego Rivera, Marius de Zayas y Ángel Zárraga", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista, Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 192.
[863] Ibid p. 196.
[864] Ibid, pp. 195-196.

Me atreví a preguntar:

− ¿Y de Diego Rivera?

El mismo murmullo pero ahora más lejano e incomprensible, como el bufido de un toro en una plaza fantasmal. Enseguida, con una sonrisa ancha:

− No conozco bien a la pintura Mexicana. Estamos tan alejados... La guerra y todo lo demás...

Silencio [...] [865]

Paz insists: "Diego Rivera lived many years in Paris. Between 1910 and 1920. He was a good friend of many of your friends." [...] "I had a Mexican friend that I liked very much. An intelligent, fine man, cultured. A very kind and excellent person. He was also a painter". Picasso was in the end glad to give Paz a name: Angel Zárraga.

Volví a la carga:

− Diego Rivera vivió muchos años en París. Entre 1910 y 1920. Fue muy amigo de muchos amigos suyos. Modigliani le hizo un retrato y...

Me interrumpió:

− Tuve un amigo Mexicano que quise mucho. Un hombre inteligente, fino, culto. Muy amable y excelente persona. También era pintor.

− ¿Quién era? ¿Cómo se llamaba?

Alegre al fin de poder dar un nombre, Picasso contestó:

− Angel Zárraga. [866]

In his memoirs, Siqueiros also describes a meeting between Rivera and Picasso. However, the testimony of Siqueiros is not always trustworthy. According to Siqueiros Picasso said to Rivera, regarding a painting Rivera had seen in Picasso's house: "I painted that painting in l906 and as you see, the principles of the cubism can already be guessed in it." Without giving him time to stop me, I (Rivera) gingerly pulled up a chair, I climbed on it until I reached the painting, I passed my hand over it... and the painting was fresh. " Really In 1906, yes?" I said to the maestro, showing him my daubed hand."

El brasileño Araujo, pintor de gran prestigio en su país y sumamente apreciado en Europa, me invitó a la casa de Picasso. Rivera, mi compatriota, muchas veces me ofreció lo mismo, pero no sé por qué causas nunca llegó a cumplir su oferta. Ya para llegar a la casa de Picasso, una o dos calles antes, encontramos a Rivera, quien saludándonos, nos dijo: "Vengo de la casa del maestro [así lo llamaba siempre Rivera] y lo acabo de agarrar en una "volada". Sucedió que al quedármele viendo yo a un cuadro colgado bastante alto en la pared, Picasso me dijo: "Ese cuadro lo pinté en l906 y como usted ve, ya se adivinan ahí los principios del cubismo". Sin darle tiempo para impedirlo, acerque cautelosamente una silla, me trepé en ella hasta alcanzar el cuadro, le pasé la mano... y la pintura estaba fresca. "Conque en 1906, ¿no?", le dije al maestro enseñándole mi mano embadurnada". [867]

Siqueiros paid a visit to Picasso and told him what Rivera had said to him: "Picasso, turning to face me, said: Your countryman Rivera will always be the same. It is true that I told him that I had painted that painting in 1906 and that it already contained all the elements of what would later be my cubism. But everything, all the rest, is totally false". In turn Picasso climbed on to a chair, lowered the work and came closer, and said to us: "Smear your hands, please."

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[865] Ibid, pp. 195-200.
[866] Ibid.
[867] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 139-140.

Después de la presentación de rigor, muy sonriente, Araujo le dijo a Picasso: "Nos encontramos a Rivera casi en la puerta y sin preámbulos nos espetó una curiosa historia sobre un cuadro de usted, supuestamente pintado en 1906, pero que al pasarle la mano se encontraba fresquecito". Picasso, volviendo la cara hacia mí, me dijo: "Su compatriota Rivera será siempre el mismo. Es verdad que yo le dije que ese cuadro lo había pintado en 1906 y que tenía ya todos los elementos de lo que más tarde sería mi cubismo. Pero todo lo demás es completamente falso". A su vez Picasso se trepo en una silla y bajando la obra nos la acercó, diciéndonos: "Embárrense las manos, por favor". [868]

One of Rivera's many versions of the origin of his interest in mural painting is that Picasso supposedly said, "without fail go toward mural painting."

[…] *a Picasso le gustó mi tela, la encontró un buen retrato y agregó: − Va sin remedio hacia la pintura mural. Dese prisa en aprender a dibujar de memoria, sin lo cual no hay pintura mural posible. Dentro de poco todos harán eso que ahora atacan. Pero de ahí no pasarán en años. No sé adónde irá usted, pero seguramente a otra parte.* [869]

According to his own autobiographical data, in 1908-1909 Rivera traveled through France, Belgium, Holland, and England.

As said by Bertram D. Wolfe:

Next he took a long tour of France, Belgium, Holland, England, seeking the solution of a problem whose terms he had not been able to define. In London he made his first contact with an industrial civilization, observing with fascinated revulsion the spectacle of poverty in the heart of the then workshop of the world. [870]

During this time, Rivera's political consciousness was awakened. He describes his trip to London in 1909: "And I saw the strikes and the police attacks; I heard the long sermons and the violent speeches at Marble Arch, and with this great lesson I opened up, to study with all the care and the passion of which I was capable, Carlos Marx's first books."

Y vi las huelgas y las cargas de la policía; oí los largos sermones y violentos discursos en el Arco de Mármol, y con esta gran lección abrí, para estudiar con todo cuidado y la pasión de que fui capaz, los primeros libros de Carlos Marx. Allí mismo, en una dependencia de la biblioteca donde había trabajado el maestro para construir los cimientos del puente por donde habría de pasar la humanidad, como por el puente de Londres, pero para entrar en la otra margen del río, en la historia, saliendo de la prehistoria. Ese puente que ahora cruzan, a pesar de todos los piratas y todos los bandidos de todos los Londres, Washington y Wall Street, 900 millones de seres humanos, para llegar a la historia. [871]

Rivera returned to Mexico in 1910, but one year later, he settled in Paris. Angelina Belloff's version:

Nos conocimos y nos enamoramos en 1910. Cuando, poco después, Diego me propuso que viviéramos juntos, me dio miedo; me parecía demasado exótico para mí. Le dije que primero tenía que volver a su casa, a México, y estar allí durante un año, y regresar después a París conmigo. Si descrubríamos que todavía estábamos enamorados uno del

[868] Ibid.
[869] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 124.
[870] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 55.
[871] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 110.

otro, aceptaría con gusto su proposición. Diego volvió a mí, de acuerdo con lo convenido, en 1911. [872]

In 1910, Rivera exhibited his work for the first time – in the *Societé des Artistes Indépendants*. In his autobiographical data he states: "1908-1909. Viajó por Francia, Bélgica, Holanda e Inglaterra. Exhibe con Los Independientes en París."

According to Olivier Debroise, "it is generally admitted that Diego Rivera exhibited in the *Salon des Artistes Indépendants* [...] but Diego Rivera figures only in the years 1912 and 1913."

Se admite generalmente que Diego Rivera expuso en el Salón de los Independientes, pero al consultar los catálogos de este Salón – periodo 1910-1920 con interrupción entre 1914-1918 –, no aparece mención alguna de Rivera. Por el contrario, en los catálogos del Salón de Otoño − mismo periodo − Diego Rivera figura en los años 1912 y 1913 [873]

In August 1910, Rivera traveled to Mexico. He exhibited works on November 20 in San Carlos's Academy.

The autobiographical data reads:

Octubre de 1910. − Vuelve a México donde permanece hasta junio de 1911. Asiste al principio de la Revolución Mexicana en los estados de Morelos y México, y el movimiento zapatista, no pinta nada pero en su Espíritu se definen los valores que orientarán su vida de trabajo hasta hoy. [874]

According to Bertram D. Wolfe,

The week Diego's exhibition opened, Francisco Madero declared that Díaz had stolen the recent presidential elections, and, from the United States, launched a call for revolt. [875]

Wolfe continues:

Diego lost interest in his exhibit when the insurrection began. Bursting with excitement, he watched the swift flow of events from close by in the State of Morelos. He forgot to paint, even to make sketches; but everything he saw, heard, and imagined was etched in his memory, destined to serve as a notebook for his future frescoes. Though he never was to admit or become fully aware of it, the admiration conceived for Zapata was to become the core of his Revolutionary philosophy for the rest of his life. [876]

Rivera tells us that during his casual return to Mexico in 1910 to make an art exhibition, the Revolution broke out:

[…] *organicé una exposición de pinturas que se inauguró el 20 de noviembre de 1910, día mismo en que estalló la rebelión, y de conformidad con ciertas esperanzas que*

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[872] "Declaración de Angelina Belloff". In apéndice, Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 229.
[873] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 41.
[874] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100.
[875] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 62.
[876] Ibid.

abrigábamos fundadas en cierto material explosivo escondido por Urquidi en la caja fuerte de la escuela. [877]

Rivera says, "Perhaps because I was bored and upset, I hatched a conspiracy."

Tal vez porque estaba aburrido y disgustado, fragüé una conspiración con Lebrija y con el arquitecto Eduardo Hay, añadiéndole a la exposición una finalidad de mayor importancia. Nos proponíamos nada menos que el asesinato de Díaz, con el que creíamos salvar la vida de muchos valerosos Mexicanos que luchaban por la Libertad. [...] Mis amigos, los funcionarios de la Escuela, movieron sus hilos para hacer que Díaz fuera a la inauguración. [878]

Diego Rivera was obviously trying to impress with his account of his failed attack against the dictator Porfirio Díaz. Soon after Rivera returned from Europe, he invited Díaz to the inauguration of an exhibition. A box with explosives had been placed inside the small safe that contained the funds of the school. However, according to Rivera, there was no occasion to open the steel safe. Instead of Díaz, Díaz' wife came to the exhibition and bought Rivera's most important painting.

Antes de retirarse, la señora Díaz me felicitó con un amable sonrisa aristocrática. Pero yo estaba en realidad desilusionado; no había habido ocasión de abrir la caja fuerte de acero. Tal vez el jefe de policía era más inteligente que nosotros. Prefiero pensar que la señora Díaz era más inteligente que él y que los hombres qua habían pensado asesinar a su marido. [879]

According to Suárez, with this frustrated "participation," "Diego Rivera positioned himself among the practical but ineffective precursors of the Mexican Revolution."

Diego Rivera se sitúa entre los precursores prácticos, aunque frustráneos, de la Revolución Mexicana. [880]

According to Gladys March, after his exhibition of 1910 in Mexico, he joined the peasants in favor of Zapata in the South, where he lived for "six months as an active rebel."

Según Rivera cuenta que después de su exposición de 1910 en México él se unió a los campesinos partidarios de Zapata en el Sur, donde vivió "seis meses como rebelde activo" [881]



Figure 59. José Guadalupe Posada: engraved portrait of Zapata, 1911. [882]

According to Rivera, he was "denounced in the month of June 1911, and an order for my arrest and immediate shooting was issued against me. I managed to escape thanks to the warning given to the architect Antonio Rivas Mercado, director of San Carlos, and to my father."

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[877] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 111.
[878] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 69-70.
[879] Ibid, p. 71.
[880] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 30.
[881] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 72.
[882] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 17.

Yo me quedé en México y empecé el trabajo clandestino para colaborar en la relación de nuestras organizaciones secretas de la ciudad con los núcleos que se formaban en el inmediato sur, estados de Morelos y Puebla. Denunciado hacia el mes de junio de 1911, librada orden de aprehensión y fusilamiento inmediato contra mí, pude escapar gracias al aviso dado al arquitecto don Antonio Rivas Mercado, director de San Carlos, y a mi padre, [...] Volví a París al final del verano de 1911. [883]

Rivera's tales of fighting with the Zapatistas cannot be substantiated.

As for participating in the early battles of the Mexican Revolution, recent research would seem to indicate that he did not. Although he was in Mexico for a time in late 1910-early 1911, his tales of fighting with the Zapatistas cannot be substantiated. [884]

Rivera returned to Europe in 1911, and "soon after my arrival in Paris, and already completely in 1911, I began to travel the road that must lead me to the Party":

Tiene contacto con el anarco-comunismo, de cuyas primeras enseñanzas se despoja luego para armarse del Marxismo-Leninismo en Francia, mas no sin acentuar ya un antecedente Mexicano en el aspecto ideológico, pues se encarga de decirnos que "desde poco después de mi llegada a París, y ya completamente en 1911, empecé a marchar por el camino que me habría de llevar al Partido" [885]

In 1912, Rivera stayed in Toledo with the Mexican painters Zárraga and Best Maugard. He returned to Paris in September and settled with Angelina at 26 Rue du Départ. A pre-cubist period began.

In 1913 Rivera participated in a collective exhibition at the gallery of Bernheim Jeune.
He sent pictures to the Société des Artistes Independants. He stayed in Toledo from April to August. He exhibited his first cubist paintings in the Salon d'Automne.

According to Guadalupe Rivera Marín, "The sale of Rivera's cubist work was null and in April 1914, poverty forced him to open a new exhibition in a little room near Pigalle."

La venta de la obra cubista de Rivera fue nula y en abril de 1914 obligado por la pobreza, abrió una nueva exposición en un cuartito cerca de Pigalle. El escándalo, que ya desde entonces lo seguía, volvió a ocurrir cuando estalló de ira al descubrir, en la presentación escrita por la propietaria de la galería, Berthe Weill, ciertos insultos a su "maestro Picasso". [886]

And she continues, "the result was almost to cost him the life, because he hardly sold a painting; in consequence, he almost died of hunger, not a literary hunger but a real one."

El resultado estuvo a punto de costarle la vida, pues por poco no vende ni un cuadro; en consecuencia, se hubiera muerto de hambre, no literaria sino realmente. En pocas palabras, la posición de Rivera no era bien recibida en Francia por ser Mexicano y en México, por haberse convertido en francés. Famosas últimas palabras. [887]

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[883] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, pp. 111-112.
[884] Downs, Linda, *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, Introduction, p. 17.
[885] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 31.
[886] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras, Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 91.
[887] Ibid.

According to Octavio Paz, in 1914, when war broke out, "[Rivera] thought for a moment of enrolling as a volunteer in the French army: a strange decision for a Revolutionary!"

> *Como todos los otros Mexicanos residentes en Europa, Diego habrá seguido con emoción y angustia los sucesos de México pero sin mostrar ninguna inclinación política y social definida. En 1914, cuando estalló la guerra, pensó por un momento alistarse como voluntario en el ejército francés: ¡extraña decisión para un revolucionario! Tampoco, durante el primer año de su regreso a México mostró tendencias ideológicas afines al Marxismo.* [888]



Figure 60. Diego Rivera: *Zapatist Landscape*. Oil, 1915/16 [889]

A picture painted by Rivera in 1915, 1916, or even 1917, would later become the subject of much comment as a work that showed his revolutionary attitudes (**Figure 60**). Antonio Rodríguez believed Rivera had found something important: "Since his *Zapatist Landscape* realized the ideal of finding, in the bowels of the nation and in the living roots of the past, the essence of national art."

> *[...] nadie negará que Diego Rivera desempeña un papel decisivo en la creación de la Escuela Mexicana de Pintura que desde su "Paisaje Zapatista" puso en práctica el ideal manifestado por él de encontrar, en las entrañas de la nación y en las raíces vivientes del pasado, las esencias del arte nacional.* [890]

Antonio Rodríguez continues: "This formidable painting constitutes an innovation in the tradition to which it belongs and is an early example of the topics that he would paint on his walls."

> *Esta formidable pintura constituye una innovación dentro de la corriente a que pertenece y un síntoma temprano de los temas que habría de tratar en sus muros. De Zapata, de Villa y de todo lo que aquí sucedía hablaba con ese entusiasmo tan suyo, siempre acorde a su enorme proclividad para teñir la realidad de fantasía, con sus amigos de Montparnasse: Max Jacob, Illya Ehremburg y Elie Faure y desde luego que también con Amadeo Modigliani, que con todo y su carácter taciturno y su estilo de vida típicamente bohemio, compartía con Diego las ideas de Lenin y de Trotsky, quienes preparaban desde su exilio la Revolución de Octubre.* [891]

Wolfe's description:

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[888] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 34.

[889] Paisaje Zapatista (*Zapatist Landscape*), oil on canvas, 145.00 X 125.00 cm, Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p.17.

[890] Rodríguez, Antonio, *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 110.

[891] *Guía de los murales de Diego Rivera en la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Presentación y texto de Antonio Rodríguez, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Cultura, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1984, p. 8.

[...] the cubist painting later Christened Paisaje Zapatista, a sombrero, a rifle, a sarape, volcanic peaks, broken up and put together in cubist fashion – pure Mexico. [892]

The *Zapatist Landscape* is also known as *The Guerilla Fighter.* The titles cannot be confirmed; and the title *Zapatist Landscape* may refer to a subsequent construction. The idea for *Paisaje Zapatista* may be related to the fact that Porfírio Diaz died in París in 1915 at the age of 85. Rivera himself called it "my Mexican trophy."

Rivera tells Gladys March that *Zapatist Landscape* "is probably the most faithful expression of the Mexican Spirit that I have ever achieved."

Incluso los paisajes que hice de la vida en Europa son esencialmente Mexicanos de sentimiento. Recuerdo haber hecho por ese tiempo un autorretrato con el propósito de enfocar la más recóndita verdad acerca de mí mismo. La revelación más clara vino; sin embargo, de una tela cubista, Los zapatistas, que pinté en 1916. Mostraba el sombrero de un campesino Mexicano colgando sobre una caja de madera detrás de un rifle. Ejecutado sin ningún bosquejo preliminar en mi taller de París, es probablemente la más fiel expresión del Espíritu Mexicano que yo haya logrado jamás. [893]

For Wolfe, the picture was the beginning of a new phase for Rivera:

But suddenly, in 1915, he produced an exotic cubist painting of which the component parts were elements of the agrarian Revolution going on in his homeland, the colors the warm, bright colors of Mexico and the background Mexico's mountains. He called it Paisaje Zapatista. More than he realized, it foreshadowed a turning point in his life and thought as man and painter. [894]

For Armando Torres Michúa, the painting is a "penetrating metaphor of *Mexicanidad*."

Penetrante metáfora de la Mexicanidad, el Paisaje Zapatista comprueba la actitud nada pasiva que Diego Rivera asumió, por lo regular, frente a estilos e influencias, los que empleó siempre para su provecho. [895]

Wolfe again:

The painting was entitled Paisaje Zapatista [...]. The colors, the mixture of poetic elements, cubist and noncubist, and, above all, the subject itself, tell more of the nostalgic landscape of Diego's spirit at the moment than they do of Paris painting or the Mexican Revolution. It is a fall from cosmopolitan-Parisian grace, a ballad in cubist language to the Mexican agrarian Revolution, a cry of longing for home and country. Its title foreshadows the protagonist of some of the most poetic passages in Diego's future murals: Emiliano Zapata. [...] In Rivera's frescoes the most frequently repeated figure is Emiliano Zapata. [896]

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[892] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 113.
[893] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 90
[894] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 98.
[895] Torres Michúa, Armando, Torres Carmona, Leticia, *La pintura de caballete: una crónica plástica de la Mexicanidad*, *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 47.
[896] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 417.

In 1916, Rivera constructed *la chose*, an optical apparatus that allowed him to carry out cubist paintings.

> *Rivera claimed to have found the secret of the fourth dimension. For convenience in demonstration he built a curious machine, a sort of articulated plane of gelatin. His French scientific vocabulary was modest. He called the apparatus la chose, which, in his Castilian-Mexican accent he pronounced la soje. This made his comrades mock, whereupon he would enter into comical furies. That is all I remember of l'affaire Rivera.* [897]



Figure 61. Diego Rivera: *Marinero almorzando*, oil, 1917, Museo Casa Diego Rivera. [898]

In the spring of 1917, Rivera had a dispute with the poet and art critic Pierre Reverdy. As a result of that dispute Rivera would then have abandoned Cubism. **Figure 61** shows an example of Rivera's work at that time. This incident is known as *L'affaire Rivera.*
It started in the poet André Salmon's book, *L'Art Vivant*, under the title of *"L'affaire Rivera*". Rivera was following Picasso's trend and felt that he would never be like him. He decided to find his own style by going back to a more realistic way of painting. The most prominent critic of the time, Pierre Reverdy did not appreciate Rivera's change of style, and neither did Léonce Rosenberg, his art dealer.

According to Rivera, the origin of *"L'affaire Rivera"* had to do with economics: "Although I was hardly in the period of technical training, my works already broke out of the capitalist mold."

> *Aunque se encontraba apenas en el periodo de capacitación técnica, mis trabajos rompían ya con el marco capitalista. Esta situación llevó al poeta André Salmon a escribir un capítulo corto sobre "el caso Rivera" en uno de sus libros, lo que además le dio la oportunidad de exhibir su gran agudeza mental en pro de la causa del "effort moderne", una sociedad de la cual fui enérgicamente excluido y prescrito.* [899]

According to Rivera, Salmon declared that Rivera had moved away from cubism because he didn't like the expression *school*, and also because Picasso and Braque completely dominated the cubist movement, leaving no important place for Rivera.

> *Salmon declaraba que me había apartado del cubismo porque esa escuela de expresión había dejado de gustarme, y también porque Picasso y Braque dominaban tan completamente el movimiento cubista que no había en él un lugar importante para mí.* [900]

Rivera's response to the accusations of envy on his part reads: "I have always felt proud not only that Picasso has been my teacher, but that he is a very dear and honest friend of mine."

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[897] Ibid, p. 107.
[898] Rivera: *Marinero almorzando*, oil, 1917, Museo Casa Diego Rivera. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 18.
[899] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 124-125
[900] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 92.

En cuanto a que yo estuviera envidioso de Braque o de Picasso, puedo decir esto: reconocí y acepté desde un principio la maestría de Picasso en el cubismo. Abiertamente me declaré su discípulo. No creo que ningún pintor posterior a Picasso no haya sido influido por éste de algún modo. Siempre me he sentido orgulloso no sólo de que Picasso haya sido mi profesor, sino de que sea mi amigo muy querido y sincero. [901]

However, the whole story is not known. Even Wolfe says, "Neither from Diego nor his opponents was I able to reconstruct the affaire. André Salmon, cubist poet and prophet, wrote mockingly of *L'affaire Rivera* in a book of 1920, *L'art vivant.* [902]

Wolfe says that Rivera "was beginning an open break with the cubist school."

He had already quarreled with Picasso, whose intimate friend he had been until then, and with most of the cubists, and was beginning an open break with the cubist school. [903]

Olivier Debroise states, "Considered from then on as a humbug, Rivera was eliminated from among the "serious" cubists and later anthologies or critical works of cubism did not even mention him."

[...] la "mitomanía" y la exuberancia de Rivera que no provocaba más que la risa de los críticos y de los pintores; l'affaire Rivera cristalizó el enfriamiento entre Diego y muchos de los artistas, mecenas y compradores de pintura de Montparnasse. Las dificultades de Diego se agudizaron, una suerte de boicot se empezó a sentir impidiéndole el acceso a los medios de difusión: galerías y salones, periódicos y revistas. Considerado desde entonces como un farsante, Rivera se vio eliminado de entre los cubistas "serios" y ni siquiera posteriores antologías u obras críticas del cubismo lo mencionan. El "riverismo", escuela tan efímera como el propio periodo cubista de Rivera, estaba ya por desaparecer. [904]

Octavio Paz goes further: "It has been said that his Revolutionary convictions led him to abandon cubism and that he was victim of a conspiracy of critics and art-dealers who were opposed to socialism, among them the poet Pierre Reverdy. A hasty judgement: in those years Diego was not communist and nobody in Paris talked about social art."

Los años de Diego Rivera en París han dado origen a suposiciones extravagantes hijas del furor ideológico. Se ha dicho que abandonó el cubismo por convicción revolucionaria y que fue víctima de una conspiración de críticos y marchands enemigos del socialismo, entre ellos el poeta Pierre Reverdy. Presunción temeraria: en esos años ni Diego era comunista ni nadie hablaba en París de arte social. [905]

The art community had abandoned Diego, which left him in absolute poverty because no one would buy his paintings. This decision proved costly to his reputation as a modernist, but not to the evolution of his aesthetics. The situation, however, forced Diego to go back to Mexico in July 1921.

Octavio Paz says, "It is more probable to suppose that, facing the difficulties he found in Paris, he thought of a return to his homeland as an escape route."

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[901] Ibid.
[902] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 107.
[903] Ibid, p. 100.
[904] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, pp. 89-90.
[905] Paz, Octavio, "Apollinaire, Atl, Diego Rivera, Marius de Zayas y Ángel Zárraga", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 195.

Favela y otros ven en este incidente y en la disputa con Reverdy, tres años después, el origen de una conspiración de los pintores, los críticos y las galerías en contra de Rivera. Exageran. La verdad es que su pintura, aunque no carente de interés y mérito, no podía interesar demasiado: no abría nuevos caminos. Rivera era un seguidor tardío del cubismo. No menos erróneo es decir que Diego, movido por sus convicciones revolucionarias, rompió en esos años con las galerías y con "el arte burgués". Es más verosímil suponer que, ante las dificultades que encontraba en París, haya pensado en el regreso a su patria como una vía de salida. Fue una fortuna: el retorno a México fue otro recomienzo − el definitivo. [906]

Again and again, Rivera fell back upon a past, probably imagined, where he met characters such as Posada, whom he put in the role of his teacher. Posada was practically unknown before Charlot discovered him as a local artist. However, Rivera decided, in the same way that he decided to use other characters from the artistic or political scene, to use the character of Posada to justify important decisions in his life. Rivera says, "in my fight to move away from cubism I had repeated failures. But I didn't give myself up as beaten. It was as if an invisible force pushed me forward. During the worst hours, I found comfort in the precept of Posada, my old Mexican teacher: "to paint what he knew and he felt". And I realized that what I knew best and I felt more deeply for was my own homeland: Mexico."

En la lucha por apartarme del cubismo tuve repetidos fracasos. Pero no me di por vencido. Era como si una fuerza invisible me empujara hacia adelante. Durante las horas peores, me sentía reconfortado con el precepto de mi viejo maestro Mexicano, Posada: "pintar lo que conocía y sentía". Y me daba cuenta de que lo que conocía mejor y sentía más hondamente era mi propia patria: México. [907]

Rivera states, "Posada, with no more material in his hands than a small leaf of zinc, can be seen as the elder brother of today's Mexican painters."

Posada, sin más material en sus manos, que la pequeña hoja de zinc, puede ser considerado como el hermano mayor de los pintores Mexicanos de hoy. [908]

Rivera tells us, "I spent hours in the store-studio of Posada, the notable engraver, absorbed in his chat. I got excited hearing him talk about Flores Magón and his anarchist comrades who preached Revolution." [909]

También pasaba horas en la tienda-estudio de Posada, el notable grabador, absorto en su plática. Me entusiasmaba oírlo hablar sobre Flores Magón y sus camaradas anarquistas que predicaban la Revolución. [910]

Rivera saw himself as an informal but very devoted pupil of Posada:

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[906] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 32.

[907] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 91.

[908] Rivera, Diego, "Genius of America", *Committee of Cultural Relations with Latin America*, New York 1931, pp. 88-94. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 153.

[909] (Figure **59**), p. 345, which shows Zapata, made by Posada.

[910] Rivera, Diego, *Das Werk Des Malers Diego Rivera*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin 1928. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 122-123.

También tuve la suerte incomparable de ser, junto con José Clemente Orozco, discípulo informal, pero devotísimo, del más grande pintor revolucionario de America y uno de los más grandes del mundo, por cuyo buril de acero habló la voz de todo un pueblo e hirió con él diecisiete mil veces en diecisiete mil placas grabadas, a la tiranía José Guadalupe Posada. [911]

Rivera further on Posada: "He taught me to be a politically-based man."

Él me enseñó a ser políticamente un hombre de pie, y objectivamente el camino de los clubes revolucionarios, la cárcel por delito político en favor del pueblo y contra los ladrones en el poder, como sucede hasta hoy y el combate en la calle. Por ese camino pude llegar en Europa al que me llevó a tener la suerte de estudiar a Marx y Engels, después de mis propias experiencias y a causa de ellas, y a escuchar ávido la palabra viva del constructor práctico, teórico de la historia, para que saliera la sociedad humana de la prehistoria: Lenin. [912]

Bertram D. Wolfe confirms Rivera's view of Posada.

The greatest of Diego's "instructors" was not on the faculty: his real master, he was to claim later, was the popular engraver of illustrations for broadsheet ballads, José Guadalupe Posada. His little shop was near the art school, at Number 5 Santa Inez, now Calle de la Moneda, in the carriage entrance just off the Church of Saint Inez. Each afternoon the boy stood, nose flattened against the dirty pane, gazing at naive, dynamic engravings hanging in the window. They appealed to something in his spirit, for Posada was a great artist of the people, the greatest that Mexico has produced – indeed one of the greatest folk artists in the world. Only two or three times in his life was Diego to feel the same intense sensation: before a window in Paris where he saw his first Cézanne; before a crumbling wall in Italy where his heart filled with the resolve to become a muralist, painting in public places. [913]

Bertram D. Wolfe continues:

[911] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 77.
[912] Ibid.
[913] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 33-35.

The awakening artist and the imaginative Mexican lad reinforced each other as Diego gazed into the window of the little shop to see the latest drawing there, alongside one unchanging picture, an engraving of Michelangelo's Last Judgment. In the boy's eyes there was no incongruity. One day Posada took notice and called him in.

"Do you like those pictures?"

"Indeed. I like them all."

"How is that possible?" asked the engraver. "One is by Michelangelo, and the rest by your humble servant."

"They are alike precious," said the boy. "They are different, yet the same."

"Now will you please tell me where you see any similarity between Michelangelo and this?"

"Movement," said Diego, who had learned his master's lesson. "Can't you see, señor, in one as in the other the figures move? They move about together and they astonish one because they seem more alive than people passing in the street."

"Imagine, little boy," said Posada, flattered, "no one else in all the world but you and me knows this thing!" And a friendship sprang up between them.

Every afternoon thereafter the fat little boy could be seen standing at the elbow of the fat little man, watching him work, listening to humble aesthetic wisdom or political criticism of the apostate Liberal, Díaz, and his regime. For Posada, in addition to his folk-ballad illustrations, drew caricatures for obscure papers which were preparing the popular mind for stormy years to come. [914]

In this way, Rivera settled on a connection with Posada, and through him, on a connection with the *Mexican Revolution*, though most probably in fact Rivera took no part in the *Mexican Revolution*.

Octavio Paz states: "In its first years, between 1921 and 1924, the years that gave it its character and physiognomy, mural painting didn't have the uniform ideological coloration that it would have later and that would end up petrifying it in a rhetoric of Revolutionary commonplaces."

Debo mencionar ahora otro olvido, mucho más grave, de varios críticos e historiadores: en sus primeros años, entre 1921 y 1924, que fueron los que le dieron carácter y fisonomía, la pintura mural no tuvo la uniforme coloración ideológica que tendría después y que acabó por petrificarla en una retórica de lugares comunes revolucionarios. [915]

Rivera frequently tried to claim popular roots, with multiracial and *Revolutionary* references when necessary. In May of 1953, the Bolivian Society of Sociology in La Paz granted Rivera honorary membership. According to Raquel Tibol, Rivera "had [finally] found the formula to establish a kind of indirect familiarity with the admired protagonist of the agrarian Reformation, whom he never knew personally."

[914] Ibid.

[915] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 38.

En aquella oportunidad Diego Rivera les contó a los bolivianos que había sido su padre quien le enseñó las primeras letras al líder agrarista Emiliano Zapata. ¡Al fin había dado con la fórmula para establecer una especie de indirecta familiaridad con el admirado promotor de la reforma agraria, a quien nunca conoció personalmente y cuya lucha comenzó a exaltar en los círculos artísticos de París antes de regresar a México después de quince años de estancia en Europa! ¿Cómo habría ido a dar don Diego padre a Anenecuilco, en el estado de Morelos, y cómo tuvo la suerte de contar como discípulo justamente a Emiliano entre los diez hijos de un matrimonio pueblerino? [916]

Saying that his father had taught Zapata the alphabet letters reinforced both his multiracial and *Revolutionary* credentials.

This subject takes us to one of the main myths connected with Rivera, that is, the myth of Rivera as a *Revolutionary*. Beyond the fantasies Rivera told to several biographers, there is no trace that suggests any kind of *Revolutionary* past; in fact, quite the contrary is true.

Rivera tells us that in Paris he "began to live among the Russian exiles."

Empecé a vivir entre los desterrados rusos. Tuve la fortuna de que entre ellos se encontraban muchos de los más grandes valores de la Revolución, y gracias a esta suerte principió mi educación política. [917]

In the *Modern Quarterly* Rivera wrote that "in 1921, instead of going to Russia where I had been invited by the Commissariat of Education, I went to Mexico to try to create something of the art that I had been proposing."

[...] en 1921, en lugar de ir a Rusia a donde había yo sido invitado por el Comisariado de Educación, fui a México para tratar de crear algo del arte que yo había estado exaltando. Este esfuerzo personal tenía algo de sabor de la aventura porque en México había un régimen proletario. Estaba en el poder, en aquel momento, una fracción de la burguesía que necesitaba la demagogia como arma para mantenerse en el poder. Nos dio paredes y nosotros los artistas Mexicanos, pintamos temas de carácter revolucionario. Pintamos, de hecho, lo que quisimos, incluyendo hasta un cierto número de pinturas que ciertamente eran de carácter comunista. Nuestra labor consistió primero en desarrollar y volver a hacer las pinturas murales en relación a las necesidades del proletariado, y segundo, constatar el efecto que dicha pintura mural podía tener sobre los proletarios y los campesinos de México, de manera que pudiéramos juzgar si esa forma de pintura podía ser un instrumento efectivo del proletariado en el poder. [918]

According to Luis Suárez, "He is attracted to the military, or at least the Revolutionary military. In his later years, he managed to spread the unproven idea that he had been a colonel in the Red Army."

A él le gusta lo militar, pero lo militar revolucionario. En sus años adultos aludía a sus antecedentes dejando crear una cierta imprecisa condición militar con el grado de coronel del Ejército Rojo. [919]

Maybe this was just a question of rivalry vis-à-vis Siqueiros, who had really been a colonel.

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[916] Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 16-17.
[917] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 106.
[918] Rivera, Diego, "El espiritu revolucionario en el arte moderno", Published in Modern Quarterly, Vol. 6, nr. 3, pages 51-57, Baltimore, autumn 1932. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 167.
[919] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 27.

Luis Suárez notes, “All his European movements – Spain, France, Belgium, London, Italy – were full of missions, contacts, and Revolutionary appearances. His name appears in the black lists of people that should be shot by the Germans when occupying Paris, during the First World War.”

> *Todo su trasiego europeo – España, Francia, Bélgica, Londres, Italia − está pleno de misiones, contactos y eclosiones revolucionarios. Su nombre aparece en las listas negras de personas que debían ser fusiladas por los alemanes al ocupar París, durante la I Guerra Mundial.* [920]

Luis Suárez states: “[Rivera] revealed to us that he had a Revolutionary mission to complete in Paris: a report for “the master” on the Mexican Revolution. Who was “the master”? Diego never pronounced his name when he told the story, but he planted enough indications in the story to deduce that it was Lenin; similarly, when refering to a conversation he had had in a Paris café, he also led us to believe that it was with Vladimir Ilich.”

> *[...] en París entra en decidido contacto “con los desterrados constructores del orden nuevo revolucionario”. Nos descubre una misión revolucionaria que habría de cumplir en París: un informe para “El Maestro” sobre la Revolución Mexicana. ¿Quién era “El Maestro”? Jamás Diego pronunció su nombre al contar la historia, pero sembró en el relato indicios suficientes para deducir que se trataba de Lenin, lo mismo que cuando se refiere a una conversación tenida en un café parisino, en que nos conduce también a pensar que se trataba de Vladimir Ilich.* [921]

Regarding the encounter of Rivera with Lenin in Paris and the report that Rivera talked to Lenin about the Mexican situation and had documents on the political work exercised in Mexico, see Loló de la Torriente. [922]

Even Horacio Espinosa Altamirano tells us some aspects of the encounters of Rivera with Lenin. According to Rivera, Lenin told him in Zurich, “Diego, your work is not in Russia where the Revolution has begun, but in Mexico, door and frontier of the new imperialistic strength destined to displace the old Europe and England of the markets; you are a theoretician but dangerous, and it is better that you transform the Mexican bourgeois Revolution into a proletarian Revolution. Your place is in that trench. – Because it was an order from Vladimir Ilich Ulianof Lenin, I disciplined myself against my will and I returned to Mexico to direct the Revolution...”

> *A principios de mil novecientos diecisiete, en Zurich, un señor chaparrito y calvo, de manos que nada tenían que ver con el trabajo industrial, agrario, minero o marino, me indicó, de manera categórica “Diego, tu labor no está en Rusia donde ha empezado la Revolución, sino en Mexico, puerta y frontera de la nueva fortaleza imperialista destinada a desplazar a la vieja Europa e Inglaterra de los mercados; tú eres un teórico muy peligroso y es mejor que transformes la Revolución burguesa Mexicana, en Revolución proletaria. Tu lugar está en esa trinchera. − Como era una orden de Vladimir Ilich Ulianof Lenin, contra mi voluntad me discipliné y tuve que venir a México a dirigir la Revolución...* [923]

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[920] Ibid, p. 31.
[921] Ibid.
[922] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, pp. 351-352.
[923] Espinosa Altamirano, Horacio, *El inconmensurable, inaudito, inverosímil e inusitado Diego Rivera*, EDAMEX, Mexico 1990, p. 121.

Diego told Rodríguez, in an article of the magazine *Hoy*, in 1949 about Obregón appointing him to be an auxiliary general. According to Rivera, Obregón ordered a pass and one office for the civilian Diego Rivera to serve the Army and the country in the capacity of an auxiliary general.

> *"En virtud del Art (ilegible) de la Ordenanza Militar y de las disposiciones constitucionales que lo apoyan, el Presidente de la República, como jefe nato del Ejército Nacional está facultado para nombrar, con calidad de auxiliar del Ejército Nacional a cualquier ciudadano civil con el grado y comisión que el Jefe del Ejecutivo juzgue útil para el servicio. Según lo cual ordeno se expida un pase y despacho al ciudadano Diego Rivera en calidad de general auxiliar asimilado para el servicio del Ejército y del país. El pase especificará que el titular de él puede tomar cualquier tren del sistema de ferrocarriles nacionales en el punto que le convenga, sea estación regular o de bandera, o de cualesquier punto del recorrido del FF.CC. Puede igualmente hacer detener los trenes en el punto que necesite par su servicio y requerir escolta, monturas y carruajes con semovientes pertenecientes al Ejército Nacional o las autoridades civiles en donde no haya destacamento. "Y así provisto — dice Rivera — empecé el recorrido de México que me había de dar el material para 38 años de trabajo. "También por esto empecé la pintura mural en México, como un argumento, ante mis colegas del Congreso Paralelo.* [924]

These characters exist in the murals of Rivera and in the collective imagination. It does not matter whether Rivera knew these people or not. They have their own lives in the murals.

According to Rivera, when he returned to Mexico, "the only official painting commissioned by Vasconcelos [was Xavier Guerrero's painting of the signs of the Zodiac] as my painting activity was ordered and paid for by my boss Obregón, as I had been seconded into the National Army. I was paid a general's salary, that is to say $20.00 a day, from which I paid the cost of the materials and the salary of the assistants. That reduced my take home pay to about four or six pesos per day."

> *"En el año de 1921 empezó a pintarse la ex iglesia de San Pedro y San Pablo, con ornamentos Mexicanos tomados de las bateas de Michoacán por el pintor decorador chihuahuense, perteneciente a toda una familia de pintores populares Xavier Guerrero y el pintor popular jalisciense, modesto y habilísimo, Ermilo González, como "ayudantes" que le ayudaban a hacer todo a Roberto Montenegro quién hizo un pequeño boceto, a la gouache, para el gran muro del centro, que representa un árbol genealógico con las diferentes ramas de la pintura y una fila de musas de las artes y de las ciencias, formadas cerca de las luces del proscenio. "Xavier pintó una interesante bóveda de una capilla con los signos del Zodíaco. Todo esto se pintaba al temple de cola y naturalmente se descacaró pronto a causa de la humiadad y el salitre. "Esta era, por entonces la única pintura oficial encargada por Vasconcelos ya que la mía era impuesta, apoyándose en mi jefe Obregón, por el asimilado al Ejército Nacional que había resultado yo. "Cobraba sueldo de general, es decir $20.00 diarios, de los cuales salía el costo de los materiales y el sueldo de los ayudantes. Lo que reducia mi "chivo" unos 4 o 6 pesos diarios.* [925]

In 1919**,** David Alfaro Siqueiros met up with Rivera in Paris and spoke enthusiastically to him of the promising situation that Mexico seemed to offer to create art with a social function, now that the Revolution had ended. According to Siqueiros, "for Diego Rivera, my arrival in Paris was as a rediscovery of his homeland and at the same time a serious reason to repraoch himself for having remained in Europe so long."

> *"Pero qué país", decíamos casi a coro. "Ahí se puede recorrer en ferrocarril el territorio de un extremo a otro y en cada estación se puede comprar un producto particular de arte popular. Las canastillas de popotillo, en Irapuato; los encajes de aguja, en*

[924] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 35.
[925] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 36.

Aguascalientes; las figuras portentosas de hojas de maíz seco, en Michoacán; en fin, y los dulces, siempre con figuras de borregos, de chivos, de ranas, de sapos, y los panes, polícromos, y el color de las gentes, pero ¡qué color!, con sus variaciones del altiplano a la costa y del desierto a la selva" Los tejidos: "Un resumen − decía Rivera − de los tejidos griegos, egipcios, algo así como la síntesis de las virtudes plásticas del tejido de todos los países y de todos los tiempos". ¡Cómo habían perdido el tiempo Atl, Montenegro, Téllez, Ponce de León, Ruelas, queriendo beber la estética de Europa, con abandono de nuestras propias fuentes nativas!, gritábamos a coro. Para Diego Rivera, mi llegada a París fue como un redescubrimiento de su patria y a la vez grave motivo de autocrítica por haber permanecido tanto tiempo en Europa. [926]

For Raquel Tibol, "that meeting was decisive in the life of both artists and in the development of Mexican national art":

Conoce a Diego Rivera, por aquel entonces figura prominente en la cosmopolita vanguardia montparnasiana. Aquel encuentro fue decisivo en la vida de ambos artistas y en el desarrollo del arte nacional. Siqueiros fue para Rivera el mejor mensajero de la Revolución Mexicana; Rivera fue para Siqueiros el maestro de muchas revelaciones; su profundísimo conocimiento del arte europeo de todos los tiempos ayudó a Siqueiros a dar el primero salto desde un punto de vista provinciano a una concepción estética universal. [927]

The meeting with Siqueiros awakened in Rivera a great interest for Mexico. The meeting coincided with the invitation that Vasconcelos issued to Rivera, via Alberto Pani, to work on the campaign that the Secretary of Public Education had begun.

According to Alicia Azuela de la Cueva, "Before this petition, Rivera was reluctant, and he asked to be allowed to visit Italy, a request that Vasconcelos considered justified."

Ante esta petición Rivera se mostró renuente y pidió antes visitar Italia; idea que Vasconcelos consideró acertada ya que, por un lado podría poner a Diego en contacto con estilos más accesibles que los que éste manejaba en París y, por otro, obtener un estudio serio de los murales italianos del Cuatrocento. [928]

The subject of Rivera's visit to Italy before he returned to Mexico is one more controversy involving the artist. According to Olivier Debroise, it is unclear where the impulse for the first mural painting came from. "Who had the original idea? Siqueiros? Rivera? Or maybe José Vasconcelos?"

De quién fue la idea original?, ¿de Siqueiros?, ¿de Rivera?, ¿o acaso de José Vasconcelos? Después del caos de los primeros años de la Revolución, surgían en México nuevas ideas, nuevos hombres. José Vasconcelos, entonces Rector de la Universidad de México, proyectaba con el apoyo de Álvaro Obregón crear lo que debía ser un "renacimiento" cultural y artístico apoyándose en los cambios sociales recientes y un plan educativo a largo plazo. El ideal humanista de Vasconcelos coincidió con los proyectos de los pintores de Paris. Cuando Diego se enteró del plan de Vasconcelos por medio del

[926] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 157.
[927] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, pp. 17-18.
[928] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 63.

embajador de México, el arquitecto Alberto J. Pani, pidió inmediatamente audiencia con él. Pero Diego no dejaría Europa sin antes viajar a Italia. [929]

We know Vasconcelos's role was decisive. Rivera's situation in Paris left him few options for artistic statement, so he decided to join the initiative of Vasconcelos. Another reason why Rivera abandoned Europe in the early 1920s was that he had problems with his wife of the time (the Russian painter Angelina Beloff; their baby son died in a flu epidemic in the summer of 1918), and with his mistress (Angelina's friend Marevna Vorobev; Diego and Marvena had a girl called Marika just after the death of Angelina's baby). Rivera's love life was always eventful and tumultuous.[930]

Nevertheless, Olivier Debroise believes Rivera was also getting tired of his production. "The idea of capturing a Revolutionary message on the walls of Mexico seemed to be, in theory, a quite tempting goal for Rivera who began to adapt his style of painting with this aim in mind. Little by little a plan began to germinate."

Rivera se estaba cansando de su producción, ya que su pintura no constituía ninguna investigación a pesar de ciertas búsquedas formales. [...] La idea de plasmar un mensaje revolucionario sobre los muros de México parecía ser, en teoría, una meta bastante alentadora como para que Diego buscase transformar su pintura en función de este ideal. Poco a poco un plan comenzaba a germinar. [931]

However, Rivera did not acknowledge Vasconcelos as the originator of the idea; on the contrary, he told many versions of the story in defence of another explanation. According to Rivera, it was Alberto Pani, then ambassador of Mexico in France, who helped him to go to Italy before returning to Mexico. Wolfe claims that he himself introduced Alberto Pani to Rivera:

Later I introduced him to Alberto Pani [engineer by profession and subsequent financier and politician of prominence in Mexican life]. Pani, an amateur of art, was swift to recognize that he was in the presence of an enormous talent. He urged Diego to return to Mexico to paint for the new regime; said it could be arranged by him. Diego answered that he was not ready, but he was plainly tempted. [932]

This statement of Wolfe's is difficult to understand, since in the same book he claims that he met Diego in 1922:

I met Diego in 1922. He had just returned from a decade and a half in Europe to a Mexico plowed up by twelve turbulent years of formless uprisings [933]

Wolfe continues:

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[929] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 105.

[930] Rivera's love life after his return to Mexico was somewhat complicated. He had promised to send for both Angelina and Marevna but once back in Mexico he married Guadalupe Marin, a Mexican model, who bore him two further children over the next five years. During this time, he began an affair with the Italian photographer and Revolutionary Tina Modotti. In 1929, Rivera married his third and best-known wife, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, then 22-years-old and, after their divorce, he remarried her in 1940. Frida died in 1954, and Rivera married Emma Hurtado, his art dealer. The year after that he went to live with his former lover Dolores Olmedo. Besides that, there were also many other affairs with his models and assistants and with Paulette Goddard, Louise Nevelson, and Kahlo's younger sister Christina.

[931] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 104.

[932] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 101.

[933] Ibid, p. 3.

The money for the trip came from the engineer, Alberto Pani, then Ambassador to France, who commissioned a portrait of himself and his wife, and purchased The Mathematician. Pani was to help him many times in the future, until their quarrel over the murals in the Hotel Reforma in 1936. It was Pani, too, who encouraged him, after the seventeen months in Italy, to return to Mexico for good. [934]

Loló de la Torriente states, "Diego knew, through the eminent poet José Frías, murdered in Mexico by the local sheriffs, Alberto Pani, then minister from Mexico in Paris and a man who was interested in painting". Further: "Pani was the brain and the axis of the movement needed to change the order of things in Mexico, a movement to correct the errors made in international politics by Carranza."

Al regresar a París, desde Perigueux, Diego hizo conocimiento, por intermedio del alto poeta José Frías, asesinado en México por los esbirros de una comisaría, con Alberto Pani, entonces ministro de México en París y que se interesaba por la pintura. Pani quería hacer una colección de maestros antiguos. Era la guerra y sobraban las ocasiones favorables para tal propósito. El pintor acompañó al ministro en su iniciación por el laberinto de los "honorables" tratantes en cuadros y objetos de arte. Como Pani, por entonces, no dominaba la lengua francesa − dice Diego − "le serví de intérprete en algunas cuestiones personales y aun políticas". Se trataba de aprovechar el germanofilismo de Carranza, de cuyo gobierno Pani era ministro, para liquidar el error fatal de estar con quienes iban a la derrota y entrar en tratos para adquirir la buena voluntad de los aliados mediante el petróleo Mexicano proporcionado en condiciones que valieran a México su amistad hasta el punto de hacer viable, sin peligro de intervención de Estados Unidos, la realización de un movimiento necesario para hacer cambiar el orden de cosas en México liquidando el error de la política internacional de don Venustiano. Pani era el cerebro y el eje de este movimiento y su posición muy difícil porque, rodeado de carrancistas en la Legación su trabajo tenía que realizarse en el mayor secreto y clandestinidad. Era en verdad apasionante y, por entonces, ocurrió el asesinato de Zapata por orden de Carranza e intermedio de Pablo González, y sus secuaces. [935]

During this time, Zapata was murdered by order of Carranza. From a testimony to Loló de la Torriente we learn that, "it was difficult to imagine the concentrated rage that Diego felt in the face of the death of the man who was, for him, the highest positive expression of the democratic agrarian Revolution of Mexico."

Era difícil imaginar la rabia concentrada que Diego sentiría ante la muerte de aquel que era, para él, la más alta expresión positiva de la Revolución agrario-democrática de México. No demoró Pani en comprender el estado de ánimo del pintor e inmediatamente adquirió confianza para emplear, su persona y su casa, como medios de contactos, a cubierto de la vigilancia policíaca que se ejercía sobre él, con los líderes del movimiento en México, del triunvirato Obregón-Calles-De la Huerta que con tanto éxito habría de dar el golpe de Agua Prieta. Este contacto y el servicio, poco, pero utilísimo que prestó, echaron las bases para realizar los propósitos que Diego ya tenía definidos y planeados de volver a México en condiciones que le permitieran intentar pintar en los muros las pruebas que necesitaba en apoyo a su posición mantenida en el I Congreso de Escritores y Artistas, en París. Con este mismo propósito quería ir a Italia antes de volver a su tierra. El bello país hervía en Revolución. Los campesinos empezaban a tomar las tierras y los obreros las fábricas, mientras el fascismo abría sus poderosas fauces. Diego expuso su criterio a Pani y en respuesta el ministro le compró, a buen precio, para entonces, El Matemático, que había pintado paralelamente al retrato de Elie Faure. También le encar-

[934] Ibid, p. 112.
[935] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, pp. 83-84.

gó el retrato de su esposa y, en muestra de gratitud, le pintó el suyo para ofrecérselo. Mientras Diego iba a Italia, Pani regresaría a México. El ministro retardaba su salida en forma que impacientaba al pintor. Al fin llegó un cable de Obregón. Decía: "Ven inmediatamente. Hasta que llegues no muevo un alfiler". Pani sonrió y dijo: "Es hora de volver". Con admirable calma todavía pasó unos cuatro o cinco días más, mientras le empacaban sus objetos. Todavía no salía para México cuándo Diego partía para Italia. Era enero de 1920. [936]

Octavio Paz has no doubts on the origin of the contacts and the intention of Rivera to visit Italy before returning to Mexico: "Soon after, [Pani] fixed him a trip to Italy, commissioned by the University of Mexico, that is to say, by José Vasconcelos, who was then the rector."

En este momento, cuando todo se tambaleaba, el destino aparece: en 1920 conoce a Alberto J. Pani, Ministro de México en París. Pani amaba el arte, protegió a Zárraga y a otros pintores y rehizo nuestra Misión en el estilo art-deco [dañada por sucesores bárbaros]. Diego pintó su retrato y Pani le compró El matemático, uno de sus mejores cuadros. Poco después, le arregló un viaje a Italia, comisionado por la Universidad de México, es decir, por José Vasconcelos, que era entonces el rector. En Italia Diego se enfrenta con los mosaicos bizantinos de Ravena, medita en la lección del Quattrocento y estudia a los maestros de Siena. Al año siguiente, llamado por el gobierno, regresa a México [...] Creo que esta atropellada relación da una idea de su compleja evolución. [937]

According to Guadalupe Rivera Marín, "Ever since the time he planned another trip to Italy, he foresaw his return to Mexico. He spoke with Pani of that possibility and the minister offered to serve as mediator with Vasconcelos – then rector – to achieve it. It was essential to advance his projects for painting big murals for the people."

Desde tiempo atrás tenía planeado otro viaje a Italia previo a su regreso a México. Habló con Pani de esa posibilidad y el ministro se ofreció servir de intermediario con Vasconcelos – entonces rector – para lograrlo. Era un requisito necesario para llevar adelante sus proyectos de pintar grandes murales para el pueblo [938]

Guadalupe Rivera Marín also quotes Rivera as saying: "Do me the favor of giving thanks to Vasconcelos. [...] It would be magnificent for me if Vasconcelos's offer was carried out":

Hágame el favor de darle las gracias a Vasconcelos. [...] Sería magnifico para mí si se realizara enseguida lo que ofrece Vasconcelos [939]

Without doubt, Vasconcelos made the offer:

El rector ofreció enviar recursos para hacer posible el viaje de estudio de Rivera, aconsejando al joven maestro estudiar a los pintores muralistas Italianos en su propio medio, le envió dos mil pesos oro en concepto de viáticos que fueron recibidos con gran complacencia. El presidente Obregón tuvo vela en este entierro. Mediante un decreto autorizó la suma necesaria para que el favorecido ciudadano Diego M. Rivera cumpliera

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[936] Ibid

[937] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 35.

[938] Letter from Rivera to Alfonso Reyes, Paris, 3 November 1920, Capilla Alfonsina, Mexico City. In Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras: Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 121.

[939] Ibid.

la misión de relacionar la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes con instituciones similares en Francia y en otros países. [940]

In an important letter to Vasconcelos written from Venice on January 13, 1921, Rivera says, "I am thankful for your expression of concern regarding my work and desires. I also desire to carry out something … that can bring a real benefit, thanks to which, as a painter, I can now achieve the most important goal in my life. During all these years, all my efforts were guided by the desire to obtaining as much knowledge as possible, to the limits of my own powers, so that when I am back there with you and our people, I will try to be productive."

El 13 de enero de 1921, Diego Rivera escribió a José Vasconcelos desde Venecia en los términos siguientes: Estoy agradecido por lo que Ud. expresa respecto a mi trabajo y deseos. Yo también deseo realizar algo [...] que pueda justificar un activo y efectivo beneficio, gracias al cual, como pintor, estoy ahora encontrando la más importante meta de mi vida. Durante todos estos anos todos mis esfuerzos fueron encaminados para obtener los conocimientos posibles, hasta el límite de mis propias fuerzas, por ello cuando haya regresado allá con Ud. y nuestra gente, trataré de hacerlo productivo [...] [941]

Through his contact with Alberto Pani, Diego received José Vasconcelos's invitation to participate in the cultural campaign that the Secretary of Public Education had begun. The trip to Italy was approved; Rivera would study the different manifestations of public art existing in Italy. His stay would have great importance for his work; the study of Renaissance painting, the frescos, and the mosaics of Ravenna and Pompeii would add knowledge to the service of a realistic art of didactic character, as Vasconcelos wanted. In addition to studying the history of painting, Rivera made three hundred and fiftydrawings. [942]

Nevertheless, it is easy to confirm that Rivera did not travel in Italy during seventeen months, as Wolfe has claimed. According to Olivier Debroise, "Rivera didn't cross the north peninsula to the south during seven or seventeen months, as he declared later to his biographers; he visited, for about three and a half months the northern regions."

Rivera no cruzó la península de norte a sur durante siete o diecisiete meses, como lo declaró más tarde a sus biógrafos; visitó, en tres meses y medio aproximadamente, las regiones norteñas. Con la excepción de algunas cartas y de varios dibujos, no existen documentos que permitan reconstruir los pormenores de su expedición Italiana. No obstante, las principales etapas pueden deducirse de sus confusos relatos y de un análisis de sus influencias más evidentes. Coinciden, además, estrictamente, con el itinerario esbozado por Elie Faure en el capítulo sobre el Trecento Italiano de su monumental Historia del arte. [943]

And Olivier Debroise explains why Rivera could not have been in Italy longer.

Elie Faure comenta a Charles Péquin, en una carta con fecha del 9 de agosto de 1920, que Rivera planea viajar a Italia a finales de septiembre, pero, el 29 de noviembre aún se encontraba en París [carta de Rivera a Alfonso Reyes conservada en la Capilla Alfonsina]. En una carta de agradecimiento a José Vasconcelos [por los mil dólares que le

[940] Ibid.
[941] Ibid.
[942] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100.
[943] Debroise, Olivier, "La gran reconstrucción y la tierra fecunda [La evolución de Diego Rivera, 1917-1920]", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 150.

permitieron realizar ese viaje] el 13 de enero de 1921 apenas llegaba a Venecia. El 25 de marzo de 1921, realizó en París una venta pública de sus cuadros a la que seguramente asistió. Quizá viajó directamente de Italia a Ginebra para presenciar la exposición colectiva de la Escuela de París, que se inauguró el 20 de este mismo mes [entrevista personal con Simon Mondrian, 1977]. [944]

The mistakes are repeated, and once again, it is Rivera who gives this data to his biographers; the mistakes are perpetuated but have, as already noted, their own logic. Exaggerating the time of Rivera's stay in Italy gave greater importance to Rivera and less to Vasconcelos, in terms of who was first to develop the idea of muralism in Mexico.

On October 5, 1920, Vasconcelos wrote to Reyes that he would send a thousand dollars to Rivera, to be disbursed "in monthly parts during six months so that he can work."

[...] para que se le entreguen en partidas mensuales durante seis meses y pueda trabajar [945]

Surprisingly, or maybe inevitably, Rivera later had a controversy with Pani. Desmond Rochfort writes:

Persuaded by Alberto Pani, the Mexican Ambassador to Paris, and Jose Vasconcelos, Rector of the University of Mexico, to study the frescoes of the Renaissance, Rivera travelled to Italy in 1920. Like Siqueiros' own pilgrimage in the same year, the visit formed a final and most significant stage in Rivera's development in the years preceding the birth of Mexican muralism. [946]

According to Jean Charlot, Riveras's trip to Italy was proposed and financed by the University of Mexico whose rector was then José Vasconcelos. Diego's mission was to establish cultural relationships between Mexico and Italy.In a letter to Alfonso Reyes dated 13 May, 1921 Rivera says:

"Thanks to you and to the friends in Mexico I have taken a stupendous trip to Italy":

Gracias a usted y a los amigos de Mexico he hecho un viaje estupendo por Italia. [947]

"Friends in Mexico" refers above all to José Vasconcelos.

Dr. Atl, Montenegro, and Siqueiros had been in Italy before Rivera and were also strongly influenced by this experience. Jean Charlot:

In Italy, Siqueiros, having come through the narrow door of Carrá, knelt at the spatial shrine of Masaccio. The Brancacci Chapel was his personal revelation, as Ravenna was Rivera's. His homecoming was urged by Vasconcelos, who was shrewdly casting nets for more muralists. The archives of the Ministry of Education preserve the correspondence exchanged between the Secretary and Siqueiros that speeded the latter's return. It begins with a letter from the painter, written on September 29, 1921, wherein he expresses a fear that the monthly sum of three hundred pesos that Carranza had once granted him was soon

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[944] Ibid.
[945] Letter from May 13 1921. In the archives of Alfonso Reyes. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 407.
[946] Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 25.
[947] Letter from Diego Rivera to Alfonso Reyes of May 13 1921. Capilla Alfonsina, México. Quoted in Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 105.

to be withdrawn. The Secretary answered on October 22: José Vasconcelos greets his esteemed friend, Señor Alfaro Siqueiros, and states that it will give him much pleasure to extend the allowance during the whole coming year, so as to allow him to continue the study of painting in Europe. He also states that, if at any time Siqueiros wishes to come back, he can rest assured that there are here ways of progressing and of advancing his position, and doubtless better ones than he could hope for in these tired countries. The good will of the Secretary notwithstanding, the successive departments of the Ministry through which his orders filtered were exceedingly slow.

To speed his plea, the painter asked a common friend, the Mexican Minister to Honduras, Juan de Dios Bojórquez, to intercede:

Tegucigalpa, November 9, 1921

To Sr. José Vasconcelos, President of the National University.

[...] Alfaro tells me that he has a studio in Paris, and that his first exhibition will open this coming March [...] Siqueiros also states that he would be very grateful to the Government for one or two more years of subsidies, and that he feels able to add luster to Mexico's name in foreign parts [...] I earnestly beg you not to forsake Alfaro Siqueiros, ex-captain of the Revolution, great dreamer, and a future national glory. [948]

Siqueiros had met Rivera some time before in Paris, and he had spoken to him about the artistic climate in post-*Revolutionary* Mexico. In spite of a lack of proof, we cannot totally exclude the possibility that Siqueiros had written his *Tres Llamamientos* influenced by Vasconcelos's ideas for change, and that he was already aware of Vasconcelos's intentions. At this time, Roberto Montenegro had already painted in San Pedro y San Pablo, as we know. Siqueiros says in his memoirs:

Después fue posible para mí expresarme teóricamente en un manifiesto que redacté en Barcelona el año de 1921 y que fue publicado en la revista Vida Americana, fundada por mí en la capital catalana. El manifiesto lo escribí yo. Yo lo organicé y le di forma [...]. Expresión aún infantil de la teoría correspondiente al nuevo método que proclamábamos, ese manifiesto es sin embargo el primer programa teórico de nuestro movimiento. Constituye la primera redacción, inarticulada aún, de lo que durante varios años habíamos hablado en México. [949]

For Desmond Rochfort,

The importance of the manifesto must thus be limited to its representation of Siqueiros' initial ideas rather than a defined focus of action for mural painting around which the nascent mural movement in Mexico gathered. Indicative of this fact are the delays and excuses Siqueiros made to Vasconcelos about returning to Mexico from May 1921 until his eventual return in August 1922. As late as November 1921, when Rivera was already back in Mexico and about to begin his first mural in the Bolivar Amphitheatre, the Mexican Minister to the Honduras, Juan Dios de Bojorquez, wrote a letter on Siqueiros' behalf to Vasconcelos, indicating Siqueiros' eagerness to remain longer in Europe. Siqueiros eventually returned to Mexico, but only after repeated urgings by Vasconcelos. [950]

According to Olivier Debroise, "Rivera had bought a train ticket without a mileage limit, and he slept traveling in order to avoid hotel expenses". But, "finally [Rivera] had to shorten his stay: serious events

[948] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 198-199.
[949] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 163.
[950] Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 31.

shook the Italian countryside; a certain Benito Mussolini, at the front of an army of volunteers dressed in black shirts undertook a march toward Rome."

> *Había comprado un boleto de tren sin limite de kilometraje y dormía viajando para evitarse gastos de hotel. Sin descansar nunca, dibujaba incansablemente, tomando centenares de apuntes, de croquis, estudiando el colorido, las composiciones; reuniendo fórmulas extrañas de la alquimia del fresco. Fue un viaje fértil, entusiasta. Como antes había dedicado todo su tiempo y energía al cubismo, ahora se volcaba en el arte prerrenacentista. Finalmente tuvo que acortar su estancia: graves acontecimientos sacudían la campiña italiana; un tal Benito Mussolini, al frente de un ejército de voluntarios vestidos con camisas negras emprendía una marcha hacia Roma.* [951]

Rivera says to Luis Suárez, "With mural painting in mind, I left Italy. For this purpose, it could not have been a better time. The Fascists fought against the communists and socialists. I had to see as much as I could, although I did not have the right to be armed."

> *En mente la pintura mural, partí a Italia. Para este propósito no podía haber tiempo mejor. Peleaban los fascistas contra los comunistas y socialistas. Yo debía ser testigo de todo lo que más pudiera, sin derecho a estar armado.* [952]

At the end of the trip to Italy, Rivera wrote to Reyes: "I can tell you that the trip marks a new period of life; I am thankful to have material for years of work."

> *El viaje marca el comienzo de un nuevo periodo de vida. Me encuentro gracias a él con material para algunos años de trabajo. Nada como aquello para aclarar y humanizar. Allí no hay diferencia entre la vida de las gentes y la obra de arte. Los frescos no se acaban fuera de las puertas de las iglesias, viven en la calle, en las Casas, por dondequiera que uno vuelva los ojos todo es familiar, popular, los pintores más linajudos son pintores de pulquería. Todo es llano, casero, popular y aristócrata, nada es viejo, nada, aparte El Renacimiento y el "art nouveau" 1900. Las acerías, minas, arsenales van a maravilla con templos, campaniles y palacios. Los frontones en Sicilia son el retrato de las colinas y las Casas aldeanas se levantan por los simples albañiles bajo la misma armonía.* [953]

During his visit to Italy, Diego Rivera, like other painters, accomplished, to use Jean Charlot's expression, a "spiritual retreat."

> *The period just preceding the mural Renaissance was used by many painters for a severe reassessment of contemporary art in the light of the past. Though none admitted to a premonition of things to come, their intense study amounted to a kind of spiritual retreat.* [954]

Upon his return from Italy to Paris, in May of 1921, Diego Rivera went to visit his friend Elie Faure, who reports:

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[951] Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 105.
[952] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 128.
[953] Unpublished letter from Diego Rivera to Alfonso Reyes of May 13 1921. In this letter, written in Paris, Rivera announces his return to Mexico June 7. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 392.
[954] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 76.

Rivera acaba de regresar de Italia, cargado de dibujos, de sensaciones, de ideas, hirviendo de nuevos mitos, flaco, ¡Sí!, y radiante. Dice que va a regresar pronto a México, pero no le creo una palabra. [955]

When Diego Rivera returned to Mexico in 1921, after fourteen years of residence in Europe, he hardly knew his homeland. By the time of his return, muralism had already been initiated by Vasconcelos. Typically, Rivera minimized the work accomplished before his return. According to Rivera's biographer, Bertram Wolfe, when Rivera came back to Mexico he had a "highly sophisticated technique and sensibility" as well as a rich background and a desire to believe in the Revolution:

He [Rivera] brought back an undigested mixture of Spanish anarchism, Russian terrorism, Soviet Marxism, Mexican agrarianism, and Paris studio Revolutions. He also brought back with him a highly sophisticated technique and sensibility, memories of a thousand great works he had seen in the cathedrals, palaces, and galleries of Europe, love for his native land, a determination to build his art on a fusion of his Paris sophistication with the plastic heritage of his people, and to paint for them on public walls. When I got to know him, he was beginning the first of those walls. [956]

Of his stay in Europe, Rivera says, "I was there, one of so many, among the thousands of victims, painters from the Americas, who wasted time in Paris fervently following the fashions of European painting":

Había estado yo 16 años en Europa. Fui allí una de tantas, entre las miles de víctimas, pintores de las Américas que perdían el tiempo en París siguiendo fervorosamente las modalidades de la pintura europea. [...]Volví a México para pintar lo que quería, murales, que respondieran a mi nuevo sentir personal libertado. [957]

Rivera could not have spent sixteen years in Europe. He went to Europe in 1907 and returned to Mexico in 1921, making a total of fourteen years, and that without taking into account his visit to Mexico in 1910-1911.

However, in a letter dated May 1921, Rivera announced that he will return to Mexico on July 7. Again, he thanks all the friends, especially Pani and Vasconcelos, who made his return possible:

Anticipa que el 7 de julio saldrá para México dando nuevamente las gracias − por conducto del ya para entonces ministro de México en París − a todos los amigos, especialmente a Pani y a Vasconcelos, que hicieron posible su regreso. [...] En París se encontró ya preparada su salida a México. Alfonso Reyes, encargado por Pani, le facilitó todo, en tanto sus servicios eran requeridos con urgencia por el gobierno revolucionario. [958]

We have seen that Vasconcelos was responsible for Rivera's trip to Italy and his return to Mexico. Vasconcelos financed his return to Mexico, and it is necessary to notice Rivera's humble tone. His gratitude toward Vasconcelos is manifest: "Do me the favor of thanking Vasconcelos on my behalf":

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[955] Letter from Elie Faure to Jean Richard Bloch dated May 12 1921. In Debroise, Olivier, *Diego de Montparnasse*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Lecturas Mexicanas, nr. 83, Mexico 1992, p. 105.
[956] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 3.
[957] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 273-274.
[958] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras: Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 122.

Hágame el favor de darle las gracias de mi parte a Vasconcelos. Pani me ofreció para dentro de algunos meses encontrarme la manera de ir a trabajar a México en condiciones posibles para hacer algo sin dificultades materiales. Creo, sin falsa modestia ni sobrada pretensión, que por poco que pudiera realizar siempre llegaría a hacer algo interesante, espero también poderles servir de algo aunque muy poco. [959]

Once again, we must consider the origins of muralism in Mexico. According to Rivera, Vasconcelos's participation was null. Rivera claimed that he had already started thinking about mural painting, during his visit to Mexico in 1910.

Hacia 1921 ya existía entre los pintores Mexicanos, incluyéndome yo, el proyecto y la ansiedad de crear pintura mural; sabíamos en qué lugares se podría realizar. Desde mi visita de 1910-1911, pasé horas contemplando los muros del cubo de la escalera monumental del patio central del Palacio Nacional, ya con la ambición clara de pintar allí lo que más tarde habría de hacer. Incluso lo comuniqué a uno de mis antiguos maestros, don Félix Parra, y con él estuve mirando el muro y diciéndole lo que allí ambicionaba pintar. [960]

Rivera told Luis Suárez, "Pepe Vasconcelos has wanted to attribute to himself – it is necessary to note that he could not act differently – a stellar role, of patronage, in this matter. The real truth is this: I came to Mexico under the auspices of Alberto Pani and Alvaro Obregón; automatically, I was also connected with Calles."

Pepe Vasconcelos se ha querido atribuir − ha que advertir que porque no podía hacerlo de otro modo − un papel estelar, mecénico, en este asunto. La verdadera verdad es esta: Vine a México auspiciado por Alberto Pani y Alvaro Obregón, por lo cual mecánicamente quedaba también en conexión con Calles. [961]

Rivera believed his return was more complicated than simply returning to start painting murals. [962] He came back to Mexico "to establish a system of cultural trains of civic propaganda."

Vine también previamente de acuerdo, desde París, con el ingeniero Pani y por medio de éste con el general Obregón para establecer un sistema de trenes culturales de propaganda cívica [963]

However, "according to his own words, he was not able to impose his idea upon the minister":

[...] pero, según sus propias palabras, no logró imponer al ministro su idea de organizar trenes de propaganda política y cultural copiados de las caravanas de agit'prop decoradas por los pintores de vanguardia rusos en los primeros meses de la Revolución de Octubre. [964]

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[959] Letter from Diego Rivera to Alfonso Reyes, dated November 3 1920, Capilla Alfonsina, México.
[960] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 130.
[961] Ibid, p. 133.
[962] Concerning Rivera's return to Mexico, the meetings with Pani and with Vasconcelos; Lunacharsky, Marxism, capitalism, etc., see de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, pp. 133-137. See Appendix X.
[963] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 33.
[964] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II p. 155.

According to Rivera, "For that reason, when coming to Mexico, my purpose was favored by President Obregón, his minister Pani, and Calles, and I knew colleagues of a similar political persuasion, among which, as everybody knows, was not exactly Pepe Vasconcelos."

> *Por eso, al venir a México, mi propósito se encontró auspiciado por el Presidente Obregón, sus ministros Pani y Calles, e hice conocimiento con sus colegas de posición política similar, entre los cuales, como todo el mundo sabe, no estaba precisamente Pepe Vasconcelos [...]* [965]

His criticism of Vasconcelos continues in a sarcastic tone: "The proverbial political ingenuousness of Pepe, abreast of his genius as narrator of fantasies, made him think, first, that I was a messenger of Lunacharsky and, second, that I would believe that he was almost a Bolshevik and sympathetic to the Revolution [...]"

> *La ingenuidad política proverbial de Pepe, a par que su genio de narrador de fantasías, le hacían pensar, primero, que yo era un enviado de Lunacharsky y, segundo, que yo lo iba a creer casi bolchevique y simpatizador de la Revolución [...]* [966]

Rivera's attitude of total confrontation and public humiliation started the moment Vasconcelos fell out of favor. The culmination of these attacks was when Rivera ridiculed Vasconcelos in a representation of him in a panel at the Secretariat of Public Education, a building Vasconcelos had ordered built and had asked Rivera to decorate. Vasconcelos never forgave Rivera this kind of public humiliation.

Rivera returned to Mexico in July 1921. Charlot says:

> *A slow boat landed him at Vera Cruz before July 19, 1921, the date of his first Mexican interview.* [967]

As usual, the dates for his arrival vary. In one text, Rivera asserts that he arrived in June. However, Rivera came "with my head populated with projects. The first of them, I should declare, was not, for then, the one of painting murals, but of creating a Polytechnic Institute that should be called the School of Master Builders."

> *"Volví a México el 20 de junio de 1921, con la cabeza poblada de proyectos. "El primero de ellos, debo declararlo, no era, por entonces, el de hacer pintura mural, sino él de crear un Instituto Politécnico, que debería llamarse Escuela de Maestros Constructores.* [968]

According to Siqueiros, Rivera returned to Mexico in 1922:

> *[...] así se produjo el regreso de Rivera a México en el año 1922 y el mío seis meses más tarde en razón de mi posición oficial que me impedía volver al país sin que se agotaran los trámites correspondientes.* [969]

Sometimes Wolfe also asserts that Rivera returned to Mexico in 1922:

> *Whatever Lenin may have said of the duty of his followers to be "professional Revolutionaries," Diego was a professional only in painting. In politics, he was an amateur and a passionate dilettante. In Spain and France he had been an anarchist. When he returned to Mexico in 1922, he was caught up by the Mexican Revolution, becoming,*

[965] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 134.
[966] Ibid.
[967] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 131.
[968] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 33.
[969] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 166-167.

> *insofar as we can define the subject matter of his murals in political terms, a Mexican national Revolutionary, a populist and Indianist, hostile to the Spanish and European element in Mexico's [and in his own] culture. With this vague assortment of feelings and ideas, Diego joined the Mexican Communist Party, at that moment more a painters' party than anything else.* [970]

Esther Acevedo says, "He arrived in Veracruz in June 1921**,** and, almost immediately, he began to collaborate with José Vasconcelos."

> *Llegó a Veracruz en junio de 1921 y, casi de inmediato, empezó a colaborar con José Vasconcelos. En enero de 1922 escaló los andamios de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria.* [971]

Rivera compares his return to Mexico in 1921 to a rebirth:

> *Mi regreso al hogar me produjo un regocijo estético que es imposible describir. Fue como se hubiera vuelto a nacer; a nacer en un mundo nuevo.* [972]

According to Roberto Barrios, Rivera "expressed his intention to study and to analyze some characteristics of the pre-Hispanic art, to gain inspiration from those "original sources" of Mexican art that "[would give] a new and broad sense to [his] Works."

> *Diego Rivera sabía a lo que venía. En sus discusiones con Elie Faure, en su correspondencia con Alfonso Reyes y José Vasconcelos y en las entrevistas que concedió a la prensa a su llegada, expresó su intención de estudiar y analizar algunas características del arte prehispánico, de inspirarse en las "fuentes originales" del arte Mexicano que "[darían] un nuevo y amplio sentido a [su] obra"* [973]

If we believe what Siqueiros says, the return of Rivera had to do with a plan they had conceived together. David Alfaro Siqueiros tells us that he had to remain in France for military obligations while Rivera went by boat to Mexico and that "Rivera was charged with … telling me how he found the country and whom we could count on to begin our projected muralist movement."

> *Rivera tenía inclusive la comisión, resuelta por común acuerdo, de decirme cómo había encontrado a la tierra y con quiénes se podía contar para iniciar nuestro movimiento muralista proyectado.* [974]

In addition, Siqueiros continues ironically, "My partner had surely been shipwrecked; since then he was a person of unknown name, the cable agencies had not considered it convenient to concern themselves with such an anonymous fellow."

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[970] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 383-384.
[971] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 133.
[972] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 97.
[973] Barrios, Roberto, "Diego Rivera pintor", *El Universal*, July 28 1921. Quoted in *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 148.
[974] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 171.

> *Seguramente mi compañero de proyectos había naufragado, sólo que siendo entonces una persona de nombre desconocido, las agencias cablegráficas no habían considerado conveniente ocuparse de tan anónimo sujeto.* [975]

If Siqueiros and Rivera were friends and had collaborated in a common project, their friendship and shared goals disappeared with time. Siqueiros describes Rivera later as "the Latin American intellectual who resided fourteen years in Paris, then contributed his mental tourism to the movement."

> *Rivera era el latinoamericano intelectual radicado catorce años en París que aportaba su turismo mental al movimiento.* [976]

Rivera had many disputes with Siqueiros, and these disputes had their starting point in Rivera's own contradictions.

Rivera told one journalist that he lost money by returning to Mexico:

> *[...] Diego Maria Rivera tells me with thinly veiled melancholy: "I wish I did not have to return to Paris; I wish I could stay here and paint forever – but it is impossible."*
> *"Why?"*
> *"Because I do not make as much money here as I do there."* [977]

Rivera sought to participate in the movement in gestation in Mexico, without knowing exactly how. In spite of what Rivera frequently said, it is not certain that he planned to devote himself to mural works. A foreigner in his own homeland, he illustrated some magazines sporadically, and he completed some drawings and oils.

When Rivera arrived in Mexico, Vasconcelos named him consultant and designer of the *Departamento de Bibliotecas*, the Department of Libraries. According to Charlot, Vasconcelos
hesitated to back Rivera's "certain projects," and, as a try-out, he let Rivera illustrate the October number of his pet review, El Maestro:

> *Vasconcelos hesitated to back Rivera's "certain projects." "On arrival he asked me for a job. I was prejudiced because he painted cubism and, in my opinion that was not compatible with works of State − his head was full of Picasso." As a test, he let Rivera illustrate the October number of his pet review, El Maestro. The vignettes are indeed in the cubist manner [...].* [978]

Rivera's first collaboration with the Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos was in the number 1, volume 2 [October of 1921] edition of *El Maestro*, Revista de Cultura Nacional, founded by the minister and edited by Enrique Monterde and Agustín Loera y Chávez. Rivera drew the cover, heads, and vignettes, and he illustrated Gabriela Mistral's *El poema de la madre*.

Raquel Tibol also points out that "the first plastic contribution of Rivera to the *vasconcelian* cultural Revolution was not a mural painting but graphic design and illustrative drawings."

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[975] Ibid.
[976] Ibid, p. 212.
[977] del Sena, Juan, "Diego Rivera en el Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria", *El Universal*, April 6 1922. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 140.
[978] "Vasconcelos, in a manuscript written especially for this book.", Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 131.

[...] la primera aportación plástica de Rivera a la Revolución cultural vasconceliana no fue la pintura mural sino el diseño gráfico y el dibujo ilustrativo. [979]

When Rivera drew vignettes in the cubist manner for the October 1921 issue of *El Maestro,* he seemed convinced that certain European innovations were perfectly accessible for the Mexican public.

Figure 62. Diego Rivera: *El reparto de tierras*. Illustration for a pamphlet by Lombardo Toledano, 1922. [980]



Diego Rivera. Ilustración para el folleto *El reparto de tierras*, 1922

Besides his career as a muralist and easel painter, Diego Rivera had a rich career as an illustrator. He even made biblical illustrations. An illustration of Christ (**Figure 62**) appeared in Rivera's work as early as 1922 in a pamphlet by Lombardo Toledano, *El reparto de tierras*. The text for the illustration reads, "The allotment of lands to the poor doesn't oppose Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Mother Church's teachings. The Mexican people fought and suffered ten years wanting to find Our Lord Jesus Christ's word".

Vasconcelos looked for ways to expose artists and intellectuals to the reality of the country. Soon after Rivera's return from Europe, Vasconcelos invited him to join the cortege that accompanied him on a trip to the southeast to visit the Mayan cities of Chichén-Itzá and Uxmal. The party included Best Maugard and Roberto Montenegro. The trip represented for Diego Rivera his first contact with a reality of his country that was new to him. For a day, he could adopt the restlessness and the ideals of his countrymen and familiarize himself with the Mexican landscape and traditions again.

José Vasconcelos and the artists who followed him suddenly "discovered" the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. They wanted to find, inside the national borders, an indigenous space and thus a source for the national style that would later spread throughout the country.

As Nicola J. E. Coleby says: "From the perspective of Modernism, the group of the *Athenaeum* already had previously declared the tropical areas of the country, especially Tehuantepec in the isthmus of Oaxaca, as a paradigm of the paradise. From this perspective the group proposed to integrate the Mexican to culture, through the lens of exoticism."

Desde la perspectiva del Modernismo el grupo del Ateneo había ya anteriormente declarado las zonas tropicales del país, en especial Tehuantepec en el istmo oaxaqueño, como un paradigma del paraiso. Desde esta perspectiva el grupo se propunga integrar al Mexicano a la cultura, a través de la lente del exotismo. [981]

Diego Rivera's return to Mexico allowed him to discover a world that he did not know completely until he was thirty-five years old. Because he had lived for fourteen years in Europe, Rivera was a foreigner in his

[979] Tibol, Raquel, *Diego Rivera Ilustrador*, SEP, Mexico 1986, p. 36. Quoted in Mejorada, Alícia Sánchez, "Un buen libro sobre Rivera", *Artes Plásticas*, Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. 2, nr. 6, December 1987, p. 84.
[980] Picture reproduced in *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 71, and in Charlot, Jean, *El Renacimiento del Muralismo Mexicano, 1920-1925*, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1985, p. 42.
[981] Coleby, Nicola J.E., *La construcción de una estética: el Ateneo de la Juventud, Vasconcelos, y la primera etapa de la pintura mural posrevolucionária, 1921-1924*, UNAM, Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras, Mexico 1985.

own homeland. Vasconcelos's description reads: "Diego Rivera, when he arrived here, in 1921, was a Frenchified painter who didn't know anything about his country. To put him in contact with the Mexican reality and to have him learn how to know the Indian, I sent him to Tehuantepec where he spent several months."

> *Diego Rivera, cuando llegó aquí, en 1921, era un pintor afrancesado que no conocía nada de su país. Para ponerlo en contacto con la realidad Mexicana y para que aprendiera a conocer al indio, lo mandé a Tehuantepec, en donde estuvo durante varios meses.*
> *- A su regreso le di un nombramiento de albañil o de maestro, no me acuerdo bien, y le encargué la decoración de la Preparatoria.* [982]

When he accompanied Vasconcelos to Yucatan, Rivera had the opportunity to soak up that "national reality" that he so much wanted to rediscover after his return from Paris. Mexico's beauty shocked him, as he says in the autobiographical data: "September 1921. – Return to Mexico. Oils in Yucatan and Puebla; drawings under shock at the beauty of Mexico. Finally, the painter's personality emerges."

> *Septiembre de 1921. – Vuelve a México. Óleos en Yucatán y Puebla; dibujos al choque con la belleza de México. Aparece al fin la personalidad del pintor.* [983]

Charlot describes the expedition as follows:

At the end of November the newly created Secretary of Public Education left for Yucatan, a land that seems remote even to Mexicans and that reciprocates the feeling. Following his Medici-like habit, Vasconcelos took Rivera on the trip, along with his usual artist-courtiers, Best and Montenegro. Whatever emotions Rivera felt at the Vera Cruz landing were intensified by contact with a quasi-mythical people, proud of ruins matched only by those of Egypt, and whose social reforms were more extreme even than those of the Mexican plateau. The party landed at Progreso on November 26, reached the capital Merida the next day: "The station was jammed [...] Conspicuous were the many banners of communists and socialists." [...] Radical leader Felipe Carrillo Puerto, a tender green-eyed giant who claimed descent from the Mayan king Nachi-Cocom, acted as host at a state ball given in Revolutionary style: instead of "Spanish" society ladies, the guests' partners were mestizas clad in the traditional loose white huipiles, dancing on sandaled brown feet. [984]

And Charlot continues:

> *On December first and second, the party visited Chichen Itzá, the Mecca of Mayan antiquity, with its astronomical observatory, colonnades, pyramids, and ball court still standing. The men slept in hammocks wrapped in mosquito nets. The next morning, Rivera stood in awe inside the precious inner chamber of the Temple of the Tigers, still ablaze with twelfth-century frescoes. Those best preserved combine complex geometric planning with lively anecdotic storytelling. To the Paris painter, still fresh from cafe talks of subject matter versus pure plasticity, this Sistine Chapel of the Americas acted as an Indian reminder of the classical postulate that both ingredients may blend to perfection.* [985]

Rivera was dazzled by the tropics. The country impressed him deeply. The trip was fruitful not only in emotional experiences but also in the great number of pencil drawings that he would use for his mural

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[982] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", Hoy, February 19 1949. Typewritten original in CENIDIAP.
[983] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 100.
[984] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 134.
[985] Ibid.

paintings, watercolors, and easel paintings. The trip made him conscious of the greatness of the indigenous past and their culture; he found the past still present in the population's survival and in countless demonstrations and an atmosphere of *Revolutionary* political effervescence. He also met the leader of the southeast, the Yucatec governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto, who appears in two posthumous portraits in the murals of the Secretariat of Public Education and in others in Palacio National.

He was impressed by Mayan sculpture, by the women's clothing, and by the popular art, particularly the paintings of the altarpieces, the portraits, and the paintings executed on the internal and external walls of the *pulquerías*.

Soon after his return to the capital, Rivera began to paint his first mural. José Vasconcelos, his *maecenas*, determined the topic. Rivera should paint The Creation, starting with Adam and Eve as natives. The *vasconcelist* philosophy held that thanks to the *mestizaje*, to miscegenation, to education through art, to the practice of the virtues taught by the Judeo-Christian religion, and to the mastery of nature through the wise use of science, mankind could be redeemed. Accordingly, Rivera began to paint his first mural in the encaustic technique.

2) Diego Rivera and first mural: The Creation, Anfiteatro Bolívar, 1922 [986]

There is a widespread idea that Rivera started the mural movement in Mexico with *The Creation* in 1922.

In 1942 Rivera said:

> *Apenas había empezado yo a pintar en el anfiteatro de la preparatoria, cuando muchos otros pintores quisieron también hacer murales. A petición de ellos, trabajaron como ayudantes míos, Fermín Revueltas, Fernando Leal, Juan Charlot y Carlos Mérida. A petición mía Javier Guerrero que era hábil maestro obrero pintor decorador y que fue de una gran utilidad técnica para mí* [987]

As already demonstrated, Rivera did not begin the mural program. However, that is the common assumption: that Rivera was the first to paint murals in Mexico in modern times. What precedes *The Creation* often passes unnoticed, or is relegated as "unimportant".

In previous chapters, we saw that the mural *The Creation* was commissioned by José Vasconcelos and that it was part of the group of murals for the National Preparatory School which were entrusted to several young painters by the same minister. Roberto Montenegro initiated the program the previous year with his decorations for the old church of San Pedro y San Pablo.

> *Aquí, [El Salón de Actos de San Pedro y San Pablo] fué verdaderamente en donde se inició la pintura mural y cabe a Roberto Montenegro el mérito de haber realizado esa obra con un tema goethiano que le dí.* [988]

Diego Rivera pretended to be the one who began the program of muralism with *The Creation*. He clearly looked down on the work of his predecessors, particularly Roberto Montenegro's efforts, but also other work

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[986] Technical data: Encaustic (wax colors fused by heat) and gold leaf, experimental fresco. Total surface: near 110 m2. Situation: Justo Sierra 16, Mexico City. This building, built in 1902-1910, was the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, National Preparatory School number 1 of the UNAM.

[987] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 274.

[988] Rodríguez, Antonio, "¡Diego bailó al son que le toqué! Dice Vasconcelos", *Hoy*, February 19 1949. Typed copy in the CENIDIAP.

done at the same time by Charlot, Leal, and others. He used several methods of criticism, claiming for example that it was he who first used the "true" technique, in order to reduce the legitimacy of the previous work by his colleagues.

Rivera said repeatedly that he had already thought about painting murals long before Vasconcelos instituted the program. At the same time, he affirmed his intention of painting *Revolutionary* murals when he came back to Mexico. *The Creation* was only a piece in a much more complicated puzzle.

In subsequent discursive constructions, Rivera asserted that this mural was part of a vast program on philosophy. A series of contradictions on the part of Rivera leads us to conclude that Rivera seldom spoke the truth; instead, he used controversy to construct his own myth and soon the myth of Mexican mural painting in general. Vasconcelos had no doubts about Rivera at that time: "Diego Rivera was the one that docilely and submissively painted what I ordered."

> *Cuando yo fui Ministro, Diego Rivera pintó ahí [en el Anfiteatro Bolívar, La Creación] las Tres Virtudes Teologales. Y estoy seguro que si mañana tuviéramos un gobierno católico él pintaría la Santísima Trinidad. [...] Y las pintó porque yo, el mecenas de entonces, se le ordené. [...] Y no crea usted – aclaró el antiguo Ministro de Obregón –, que pintó a regañadientes. Nada de eso. Diego Rivera fue el que más dócil y sumisamente pintó lo que le mandé. Y no sólo aceptó el tema que le di, sino que, tuvo la docilidad de presentar sus proyectos a mi aprobación.* [989]

And Vasconcelos continues, "Diego Rivera follows the *Maecenas* law. With me, as I have already told you, he painted the Three Theological Virtues, with Calles − a gentleman that spoke much of the Revolution to hide his millions − he painted the Mexican ballad of the Revolution."

> *Diego Rivera sigue la ley del Mecenas. Conmigo, como ya le he dicho, pintó las Tres Virtudes Teologales, con Calles – un señor que hablaba mucho de la Revolución para esconder sus milliones –, pintó el Corrido de la Revolución.* [990]

Vasconcelos again: "Diego Rivera, who at that stage wasn't painting monkeys for the politicians, had asked me if he could be the one who took charge of the *hispanoamericanizante*, *hispanizante* mural."

> *Diego Rivera, que todavía no pintaba monos para los políticos, me había pedido ser él quien se encargase del mural hispanoamericanizante, hispanizante.* [991]

According to Charlot, Vasconcelos had had doubts about Rivera early on in their relationship:

> *His first doubts lifted by this daily intercourse with Diego's potent personality, Vasconcelos yielded. "I put him to work on a mural with a universal theme for the Preparatoria – in the auditorium. This was in December."* [992]

According to Rivera, he had the idea of painting the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* in 1910. When he came to work in Mexico, "In 1921, the Palacio's wall, the main objective of my campaign, was still clean". But he "preferred to begin with the Amphitheater of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* because the problem was not new for me" and "From that moment I chose the History of Philosophy beginning with Pythagorism and

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[989] Ibid.
[990] Ibid.
[991] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 214.
[992] Unpublished manuscript. Quoted by Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 135.

finishing with dialectical materialism. I kept, from then on, the blue-prints of the architecture, and the first sketch for the bottom wall is in my book of notes of Italy."

> *"En 1921, seguía limpio el muro de Palacio, principal objetivo de toda mi campaña. Pero preferí empezar por el Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria porque el problema no era nuevo para mí. "Efectivamente, en 1910, el arquitecto del Anfiteatro, Daniel Chávez había propuesto a los pintores, por conducto del Dr. Atl, la decoración de aquel local, con la historia de la Cultura. El Dr. Atl nos convocó. Tuvimos muchas reuniones y llegamos, finalmente, a un total desacuerdo. Entonces Atl propuso que cada uno estudiara el proyecto que más tarde pondríamos uno al lado del otro, o escogeríamos uno de ellos, o varios, y coordinaríamos el trabajo. "Desde ese momento escogí la Historia de la Filosofía empezando por el Pitagorismo y terminando con el materialismo dialéctico. "Guardo, desde entonces, las copias azules de la arquitectura y el primer boceto para el muro del fondo está en mi libro de notas de Italia.* [993]

Rivera started a controversy with Antonio Rodríguez on the topic of the Amphitheater, which Rodríguez explains below. In my interview with Rodríguez in 1991, he was still bitter about this question.

> *The Creation is a poetic and philosophic medley of Christianity and paganism; symbols of knowledge and wisdom, constellations, haloes and angels' wings alternate in it with the Muses and the Three Cardinal Virtues. Rivera explained that it had been his intention to paint the whole history of philosophy. He even insisted that he had worked out the whole plan of the series, which was going to be published in the bulletin of the Secretariat of Public Education, but nobody ever saw it. Rivera was so much on the defensive about this work that he never forgave me for mentioning this dubious ideological attempt in the monograph published by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his artistic activity. In his memoirs, dictated to the Cuban writer Lolo de la Torriente, he returns to this matter, deploring that I had not been able to see '[...] the sequel to the series, which had started with Pythagorism and humanism and should have had its climax in dialectical materialism.' As a matter of fact, Creation, with its biblical Cardinal Virtues and symbolic figures of 'Prudence', 'Justice', 'Fortitude' and 'Conscience', in no way indicates a possible sequel which might culminate in Marxism. The spirit and concept of the mural and the character of the forms are hardly in keeping with the meaning which the painter tries to make us see in it.* [994]

In a text published in 1951, *Sobre la Técnica de la encáustica y del fresco, relatada a Juan O'Gorman*, Rivera insists that "the theme must be understood in the following order: in the niche of the organ, Pythagorism; in the lower part of the wall that surrounds it, Humanism; and starting from there, in the different painted walls, and in chronological historical order, the other philosophies; finishing in the lobby with Dialectical Materialism, this lobby being the one closest to the street, that is to say, to the current reality and the lobby that the public would encounter first."

> *Así pinté más tarde el mural en el Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria. Este mural, cuyo plan fue publicado en el Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación cuatro o cinco meses después de realizado el contrato para su ejecución, tenía como asunto la historia de la filosofía de acuerdo con la función del edificio donde se encuentra. El asunto debería exponerse en el orden siguiente: en el nicho del órgano, el Pitagorismo; en el muro que lo rodea en el fondo del escenario, el Humanismo; y a partir de allí, en los diferentes muros pintables y en orden histórico cronológico, las demás modalidades filosóficas hasta terminar en el vestíbulo con el Materialismo Dialéctico, por ser el vestíbulo el lugar más*

[993] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 36.
[994] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 167-167.

cercano a la calle, es decir, a la realidad actual y lo que primero entraría en contacto con el público. En el fondo, y como fondo histórico, lo más lejano a él. Sólo se pintó el fondo de la escena del anfiteatro, pues el ministro Vasconcelos pidió que se pintara el edificio recién construido para el Ministerio de Educación, y como me interesaba mucho más como función social y posibilidades estéticas esta nueva empresa, que me permitiría emplear como material directo la realidad ambiente de México, pospuse la continuación de la decoración del anfiteatro, que nunca se concluyó dentro del plan inicial. El carácter de este mural es de una definida influencia italo-bizantina, que debería emplear según el plan ideado por mí de acuerdo con el asunto. El estilo debería evolucionar gradualmente hasta llegar en el vestíbulo al realismo monumental que correspondería al Materialismo Dialéctico. [995]

According to Wolfe, these were simply afterthoughts from Rivera.

Later Rivera attempted to apologize for the work and assimilate it to his subsequent philosophy by explaining the wall as an allegory of Pythagoreanism and Humanism, and maintaining that he had intended to complete the auditorium with side walls reflecting the entire history of Philosophy, culminating in Dialectical Materialism. However, these are afterthoughts. [996]

According to what Rivera told Loló de la Torriente, "Diego had studied, for ten years, practically and continually, the possibilities of painting the Amphitheater of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*."

Diego había estudiado, desde hacía diez años, práctica y continuamente, las posibilidades para pintar el anfiteatro de la Preparatoria del que siempre había llevado los planos. También el cubo de la escalera del Palacio, pero quería empezar por el primero. Planeaba pintar allí la historia de la Filosofía empezando por el pitagorismo, en la concha tras el órgano, seguido por el humanismo y las sucesivas escuelas filosóficas hasta concluir, en el vestíbulo, con el materialismo dialéctico por ser el vestíbulo el recinto inmediato a la calle, es decir, la vida actual. [997]

And Rivera reveals more details to Loló de la Torriente, saying that "when that poor devil Bertram D. Wolfe reached this point in the book [*Diego Rivera: his life and times*, New York] which he wanted to be a "biography" of me, he didn't take the trouble of looking for the plan in the files and he invented a ridiculous theory saying that I had "invented the plan later."

Más tarde – dice Diego – "cuando el pobre diablo de Bertram D. Wolfe en el libro [Diego Rivera: his life and times, New York] en que quiso hacerme una "biografía" tocó este punto, no se tomó el trabajo de buscar la exposición del plan en los archivos e inventó una teoría ridícula diciendo que yo había "inventado después el plan". Esta falsificación de Wolfe, al que con razón física y psicológica, llamábamos en México "el fideo", es típica de toda su complicada psicología que pretendía crear, de sí mismo, un "santo" laico. En realidad, Wolfe no pudo hacer de mi "biografía" otra cosa que hilvanar, malamente analizados con teorías, hechos a propósito para su conveniencia personal de arribista que buscaba, no el éxito económico, que realmente despreciaba, si no la fama y el poder político que, naturalmente, nunca obtuvo, dado su falso método de acción. [998]

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[995] Rivera, Diego, "Disertación de Diego Rivera sobre la técnica de la encáustica y del fresco, Relatada a Juan O'Gorman", *Diego Rivera, 50 años de su labor artística*, INBA, Mexico 1951, pp. 269-73.
[996] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 135.
[997] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, pp. 164-165.
[998] Ibid.

And Rivera continues, referring to Antonio Rodríguez: "But the curious fact of the case is that men who come to letters and to the art of critic after a life of Revolutionary action full of sacrifices have, when writing on this same matter of the amphitheater, copied the calumnious error of Wolfe."

> *Pero lo curioso del caso es que hombres venidos a las letras y a la crítica de arte después de una vida de acción revolucionaria llena de sacrificios, [El pintor se refiere a Antonio Rodríguez] al escribir sobre el mismo asunto del anfiteatro, hayan copiado el error calumnioso de Wolfe, a pesar de habérselo hecho notar yo, dando crédito a la invención del programa a posteriori como si no hubiese tenido ojos para ver la secuencia iniciada en pitagorismo y humanismo y que requería la culminación del desarrollo dialéctico de ella. Esto es un ejemplo admirable de lo que puede, para falsificar los hechos, el aserto de un mentecato con oportunidad para imprimir libros ilustrados con el trabajo de los otros para adorno y aumento del valer de su insignificante producción para la que, usa, como material explotable y redituable en royalty, de la vida de un hombre que ha trabajado hecho algo.* [999]

Rivera's attitude is connected with the founding of the Sindicato de Obreros, Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores (Union of Workers, Technicians, Painters and Sculptors). This organization proposed a public, monumental art "of education and combat". Trying to accommodate his work to that new position, Rivera tried to justify the spiritualistic and allegorical tone of this mural by claiming that it was only the beginning of a project, depicting the history of philosophy from the beginning through to dialectical materialism, that he would complete on the rest of the walls of the amphitheater.

Rivera on *The Creation*: "In these terms and under these conditions, this Union is painting on the walls of those buildings the history of the Mexican people."

> *En estos términos y bajo estas condiciones, este Sindicato está pintando en las paredes de esos edificios la historia del pueblo Mexicano. Comenzando con el mural "Creación", en el cual traté de mostrar, en una figura que ha sido llamada simbólica, [¡Sin embargo, no hay abstracción en el arte Mexicano!] todos los ingredientes básicos de esta raza; de allí hemos seguido simplemente fieles a todas las fases de la vida Mexicana, a través de La Conquista hasta el presente, mediante sus guerras, sus religiones, su trabajo, sus fiestas y sus sufrimientos.* [1000]

In *The Creation,* Vasconcelos wanted Diego Rivera to represent the creation of *La raza cósmica*, the Cosmic Race, which was predestined to form the fifth race, combining all the peoples that until then had gone through history, scattered and incomplete. Alicia Azuela de la Cueva says, "The mural would represent the different racial types that have been given to Mexico thanks to the miscegenation. Types that at the same time would embody all the virtues and the arts, the road to found the Cosmic Race."

> *Debía ser este mural una oda a América Latina en donde finalmente llegaría a su fin la dispersión y se consumaría la unidad por el triunfo del amor. En el mural habían de estar representados los distintos tipos raciales que se han dado en México gracias al mestizaje. Tipos que al mismo tiempo encarnarían a las virtudes y a las artes, camino para fundar La raza cósmica.* [1001]

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[999] Ibid.

[1000] "El espíritu gremial en el arte Mexicano", *Survey Graphics*, Vol. 5, nr. 2, pages 174-178, New York, May 1th 1924. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 67.

[1001] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 68.

The Creation was the result of the classic, oriental, and Judeo-Christian ideas of Vasconcelos expressed through the experience of Diego in front of the mosaics of Ravenna and the frescos of the *Quattrocento* from his trip to Italy.

Rivera says, "All (our paintings) have the marked character of Catholic religious painting, although the painters felt themselves as "Revolutionaries."

> *En todos nosotros (anfiteatro de Rivera, primer piso del patio de la preparatoria de Orozco, escalera de Siqueiros, en esa escuela la Virgen de Guadalupe, de Revueltas y el desembarco y erección de la cruz, por Ramón Alba de la Canal en el zaguán de la misma, como el templo de Montenegro en San Pedro y San Pablo, tienen marcado carácter de pintura religiosa católica, a pesar de que los pintores se sentían "revolucionarios") toda esa pintura se realizó en 1922.* [1002]

And further on, "The Mexican tradition, independently of our will, is perfectly religious."

> *Es cierto, como dice Siqueiros, que la pintura revolucionaria empezó siendo en algunos casos religiosa. Siqueiros pintó un ángel que bajaba del cielo y un San Cristóbal, santo que simboliza el que trae a Cristo y que puede aplicarse al conquistador, quien nos traía a Cristo. Yo hice en la Preparatoria el símbolo de las filosofías y esto es también religioso. Revueltas, en la Secretaría de Educación, pintó una bella Virgen de Guadalupe de cuatro metros: Alva, en la misma Secretaría, la llegada de la Cruz a tierra Mexicana. ¿Por qué hacíamos esto? Porque la tradición Mexicana, queramos o sin quererlo, es perfectamente religiosa. Y nosotros los comunistas no olvidarnos la dialéctica ni los antecedentes históricos.* [1003]

Rivera describes Vasconcelos as being, at this time, "devoted to black and white magic, and he called himself a Hindustani."

> *Vasconcelos, en esta época, se dedicaba a la magia blanca y a la negra y se declaraba indostánico.* [1004]

The work that Rivera realized later, when Vasconcelos was no longer responsible, had another social and political meaning, and represented a break with this early work, as will be discussed later. But in the beginning, Vasconcelos's plans included the collaboration of Rivera. Vasconcelos recognized the gaps in Rivera's artistic education; that is why he sent him to Italy. But he knew Rivera was already a relatively prestigious artist, and Rivera was indispensable for the national art that Vasconcelos wanted to create.

The plans Vasconcelos defined in 1920 found a favorable echo immediately among the painters. The artists were prepared to respond to the call of Vasconcelos, who saw them as the elite dedicated to educate the great masses. For the realization of these ideas he requested the collaboration of painters who were in the country as well of those who were abroad. Among these artists were Roberto Montenegro, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera.

According to Jorge Alberto Manrique, "The unitary sense of the school, especially at the beginning, didn't prevent the big personalities who constituted it from having different personalities, and they manifested them in their work."

[1002] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 275-276.
[1003] Datos Biográficos [de Rivera]. In Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 438.
[1004] Ibid.

El sentido unitario de la escuela, sobre todo en sus inicios, no impide que las grandes individualidades que la forjaron tuvieran personalidades diferentes y las manifestaran en su obra. Rivera es el artista de temperamento clásico, en el que predomina el sentido analítico del dibujo. Su cercanía al grupo de los cubistas y su admiración por Cézanne lo llevan a un sintetismo de formas geometrizantes especialmente patente en sus primeras obras murales [Anfiteatro Bolívar, Secretaría de Educación] [1005]

Vasconcelos wanted to pass from reflection to practice, popularising aesthetic activity and creating communication circuits between the artist, the work, and the public. The Mexican artists to whom he commended mural projects were willing to end the split that traditionally existed between aesthetic production and daily life.

Vasconcelos attached fundamental importance to the teaching and enjoyment of art inside the new educational system. He included this concept in all schools, regardless of their specialization, believing that art has "the capacity to take us to a complete active understanding, intellectual and aesthetic, and to a communion with the highest values of the spirit."

[…] la capacidad de llevarnos a la comprensión total activa, intelectiva y estética o comunión cabal con los más altos valores del espíritu. [1006]

Antonio Rodrigues summarizes the importance of *The Creation*:

A few months after his return to Mexico, Rivera was faced with the task of painting his first mural. He embarked on this undertaking with a firm belief in his own ability and experience and carried it out with assurance under the astonished gaze of those who, because of his fame, his behaviour, and even his physical appearance, looked on him as a kind of monstrous demigod. Initially, however the knowledge he had acquired through studying the works of great masters, the intercourse with contemporary painters, and an intimate knowledge of the artistic trends of this century, acted as a brake. Still dazed by the impact of all he had seen in Italy, and burdened by hundreds of sketches and designs he had made of Pompeian, Byzantine and Renaissance masterpieces, Diego Rivera started painting on the limited surface of the walls as if guided by another hand. Instead of the Mexico he had just discovered – like Gauguin, but in his own native country – he began his mural painting activities by producing on the walls of the Escuela Preparatoria an encaustic painting with the hackneyed subject of Creation, which he handled with consummate skill. Mexico is already there, but only in the facial traits of some of the people, in the monumentality of the painting and, occasionally, in its power; but the tragedy whose bloodstained memories had not yet vanished is barely indicated. [1007]

Rivera's first fresco bears witness to the *vasconcelist* program, although the painter later claimed that the mural was a part of an entirely non-vasconcelist program emanating from the Communist Party.

The Creation synthesized ideas from Greek philosophy, from the Old and the New Testament, and from the Christianity of the Middle Ages. The "original energy" in its masculine/feminine duality (Adam and Eve) is

[1005] Manrique, Jorge Alberto, "El proceso de las artes, 1910-1970", *Historia General de México*, Vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1366.
[1006] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinsón a Odiseo*, Editorial Constancia, Mexico 1952, p. 50. Quoted in Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 60.
[1007] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 167-167.

the source of the arts and of theological and moral virtues. The Byzantine and Renaissance pictorial solutions were evident. Spanish types and *mestizos* prevailed, but the native also appeared.

According to José Joaquín Blanco,

> *Vasconcelos quería poner como ejemplo a las masas imágenes ideales y un tanto divinas de lo indígena, como en La creación de Rivera o en los frescos de Montenegro en la actual Hemeroteca Nacional.* [1008]

For Blanco, "Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera were the opposite poles of the same indigenismo."

> *Vasconcelos y Diego Rivera fueron los polos opuestos del mismo indigenismo, aunque Rivera surgió de Vasconcelos y gracias a él [Vasconcelos le dio toda la libertad que necesitaba, e incluso lo defendió ante la prensa por cosas, como signos comunistas, que él por supuesto no compartía] logró incluso oponérsele.* [1009]

According to Wolfe,

> *Diego, for his part, began to idealize everything Aztec: daily life, ritual, cosmogony, way of waging war, even human sacrifice. Among his papers I found many unpublished fragments written in the early 1920's. Some deal with indigenous life before the Conquest, as Diego conceived it.* [1010]

Keen speaks of Rivera's "failure to depict the evils that darkened the life of ancient Mexico."

> *A critic who subscribed to Rivera's Marxist outlook might complain of his failure to depict the evils that darkened the life of ancient Mexico: the monumental scale of human sacrifice, the growing burdens of the tributary peoples, the oppression of the mayeque class, the constant warfare. These omissions reflect Rivera's indigenismo, but they also seem to reflect a deliberate design to use the immense constructive achievements of the ancient Mexicans to inspire pride in the cultural heritage of Mexico and persuade his countrymen to have confidence in themselves and their future.* [1011]

However, the subject matter of his first murals, in the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* as well as in the Secretariat of Public Education, were mythological allegories and representations of popular life.

The values of the country became more important, because they were considered as more genuine and purer than those influenced by Europe and the Academies. The country artists recaptured the vocabulary of popular culture to create a national art that was based not only on urban life but also on rural life. They looked for the foundation of the national ideal in a wider sector.

Paz, has no doubts about this issue:

[1008] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, pp. 98-99.
[1009] Ibid, p. 99.
[1010] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 147.
[1011] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 525.

> *Su [Rivera] primer mural, La Creación [1923], en el Anfiteatro Simón Bolívar, es una composición alegórica con motivos mitológicos y religiosos.* [1012]

Far from showing the impact that the daily life of the Indians in southeast Mexico made on him, *The Creation* showed Rivera's own identification with the ideas of the Secretary of Public Education. The theme of Creation focused on the idea of the unity between humanity and the creative principle of the universe through art and religion, in a vision similar to that put forward by Vasconcelos in his *Monismo estético*.

Rivera's first mural, *The Creation,* exalted the birth of a future universal culture, which amalgamated European and American elements harmoniously, into a New World raised from the peaceful encounter of the races and the cultures. Their personifications of the Mexican man's beauty evoked the vasconcelistic theories in *La raza cósmica*, as program and as goal.

David Alfaro Siqueiros says of Vasconcelos: "We are, nevertheless, an atrocious mixture of a vital race with a decrepit race; nevertheless that atrocious miscegenation, a terrible race, a new one which won't be able to be except through long centuries of the stupidest night that any people has ever known.."

> *Autor de la filosofía del cosmos, filosofía cosmogónica, una especie de panteísmo de origen hindú que le había servido de base para elaborar su literatura, más que sus principios, pues éstos, careciendo totalmente de todo método, no pueden considerarse como tales, decía, fundamentando su lema, más o menos lo siguiente: "Somos, no obstante nuestra atroz mezcla de una raza vital con una raza decrépita, no obstante ese mestizaje atroz, una raza bárbara, por nueva y la cual no podrá encontrarse sino a través de largos siglos de la más estúpida noche que pueden haber conocido todos los pueblos."* [1013]

The year before Rivera painted *The Creation,* Roberto Montenegro had initiated the symbolic-allegorical line in the decorations of San Pedro y San Pablo old church. Rivera's recent experience of the Italian Renaissance frescos connected his plastic imagination with monumentality. The linking of the monumental style and architecture together with his negative experience of the art market seemed to have aroused in him a desire to break with the market system that prevailed in European art.

At the age of thirty-six, after questionable success in an avant-garde career in Europe, Rivera faced the task of painting the apsidal wall of the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*. Everything was new for him. In the beginning of 1922, Rivera climbed the scaffolds of the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* and began work.

The Creation was the thematic chosen for the decoration of the *Anfiteatro Bolívar*, the first of Rivera's works but not the first work of the muralist movement. It was characterized by the formal eclecticism and the mixture of symbols from Christian iconography [bull, lion and winged man, eagle of Pátmos] with scientific allegories [primary energy, original cell]. The contradiction is obvious: spontaneous origin of life, or creation.

Some Mexican features are visible in a group of feminine figures that represent the arts and the virtues, a muffler and details of timid faces, almost camouflaged in the conception and the European execution.

For Esther Acevedo: "To represent Mexico, the painter, like Roberto Montenegro and Jorge Enciso, appeals to the paraphernalia of the European fin-de-siècle oriental: the odalisques reclined in the lintel of the doors, in spite of Tehuan gear and the stylization that contracts them, are clearly derived from Ingres."

[1012] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 34.

[1013] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 183.

Para representar a México, el pintor, así como Roberto Montenegro y Jorge Enciso, recurre a la parafernalia del orientalismo decimonónico europeo: las odaliscas recostadas en el dintel de las puertas, pese a atavíos tehuanos y la estilización que las contrae, remiten evidentemente a Ingres. [1014]

For the various metaphors in his mural at the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* Rivera used well-known and recognizable women such as Lupe Marín, Carmen Mondragón, Lupe Rivas Piece, and Amalia Castle Ledón, as models.

I will now briefly describe the mural. The program and the identification of the elements that compose the mural can be seen in Appendixes XI and XII. [1015]

Diego Rivera's first work is the result of two confluent currents: the Italian religious frescos, from the Byzantine until Michelangelo, and the delight in Greek and Latin allegories shown by his old colleagues at the *Athenaeum*, who in 1920 occupied key positions in education and national culture.

In this first fresco, Rivera was concerned with a number of technical problems, such as the harmony between the mural and the architecture of the building, the permanency of the colors, and the guarantee of longevity of the work, which he did with the encaustic technique.

The forum consists of a great platform in whose bottom, like the central motive of decoration, was a tubular organ housed inside a blind arch approximately a meter deep. It was, in fact, on the front wall that Diego Rivera painted the mural *The Creation*.

Diego Rivera based his design on the sustained architectural structure, and he integrated it to the tubular organ of the center. He began the development of the theme in the upper half of the central wall, under the stone of the arch that limited the wall, with a deep blue semicircle surrounded by a rainbow in whose center is represented the primitive energy or eternity, symbolized by a golden half-sun with three rays that finish in three hands, a vertical one and two toward both sides. The hand with the index finger and the middle finger points toward the earth while the other two remain bent, signifying father and mother or the origins.

In the niche of the Amphitheater in Rivera's mural, a concave surface, the artist painted the *Tree of Life*, from which a man emerges with his arms outstretched: the PANTOCREATOR. While the area behind the Pantocreator is a golden color, according to the customs of Byzantine mosaics, an exuberant forest, that could almost have been painted by Henri Rousseau, surrounds the symbols of the evangelists. The vertical hand points toward the *Tree of Life* where the man rises represented with his arms outstretched , a man with clear brown skin and only half of his torso visible. The position of his arms is a clear reference to the Crucifixion and thus to the Christian religion.

In the upper half of the central wall one can see a blue semicircle, and in its center is the Primitive Primordial or Energy, from which three rays emerge as if from a rainbow. Between the rays one can see a constellation; the right-hand side forms the figure of a pentagon, the masculine principle, and the left a hexagon – the feminine principle. The lateral hands point toward the two principles: man and woman, represented by two naked figures seated at the level of the Earth, in the lowest part of the sides of the niche.

On the lower right, the male is sitting down, turned to the spectator, with his face turned toward a group of figures, who represent the emanations of the masculine spirit. He is conversing with them; the first of them is explaining something to the man. She represents KNOWLEDGE, a figure wrapped in an indigo blue cloak with a hood of blue cobalt and a diadem of gold; her face is dark; after her is FABLE, whose skin is

[1014] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 134. Note: I believe that the reference of Acevedo to Ingres has to do with the accentuation of the characters outlines.
[1015] The description that follow is based on the program of the mural, according to Rivera, and showed in Appendixes XI and XII.

greenish, dressed in a yellow tunic and a blue cloak trimmed with gold, and up to the right, one can see EROTIC POETRY, embodied by a woman with green eyes, who hides her hands. She has a white complexion and golden hair, is dressed in a cloak of dark ocher that covers her gray tunic; to her right appears TRADITION, a native with her hands in her lap. Her attire consists of a vermilion blouse and a muffler of earth red, and above this group, covering her face with a mask of pain, appears TRAGEDY.

The emanations or spiritual creations of man are represented according to the vasconcelist philosophy, for in the arts, both means and ends must allow man to reach the absolute both as an individual and on the societal level. There follow the virtues that, according to the same perspective, will give man total control of himself; Science is the last term of the series, embodied in an Anglo-Saxon woman.

On the next higher level are four standing figures from the right side to the center, in the following order: WISDOM, a Creole dressed in a green tunic, looking at the man in the center; she converses with JUSTICE, a native with dark skin, a pure Indian type; STRENGTH, with a deep, rich red shield with the sun, the symbol of the divinity in its center; she carries a dagger in her hands; and she wears armor that protects her from temptations; her clear eyes watch the distance; and MODERATION, dressed in a greenish-gray tunic, with her veiled face, head, and hands covered by a cloak of light violet, closes the group. The group of the four virtues betrays a strong Byzantine influence in the form and above all in the use of halos. Far above with her head almost touching the arch of the vault, sitting in the clouds near the central symbol, is a figure with her head inclined looking toward the figures below. She represents SCIENCE.

Rivera wanted to introduce a direct allusion to the Mexican race, and he chose a series of "types" representative of the national ethnic variety, from the pure autochthonous to the Spanish, to the *mestizo*; in addition, two Indian women embody TRADITION. According to Charlot,

> *In recognition of his debt to ancient art, Rivera introduced in his first mural, "Creation," a figure symbolizing "Tradition," an Indian woman of the working class, with crimson skirt, rebozo of red earth, hands at rest in her lap.* [1016]

To the left Rivera painted the emanations of the feminine spirit. First, a woman with her arms lifted in the air; this is DANCE; near to the left, with wavy black hair like the branches of a vine, MUSIC blows a double flute of gold; sitting to her side is SONG, with her hands in her lap. Standing up and topping the previous group: the smiling figure of COMEDY.

In the plane immediately above on both sides we find the THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES. First on the left is CHARITY, wrapped only in her reddish hair. She has the right hand open and the left on her chest, as if she were breastfeeding; next to her is HOPE, with hands united on her chest and her face in profile looking up directly at the blue semicircle; then FAITH is to her side. In an equivalent position to SCIENCE, WISDOM unites the group around the central focus; she is dressed in a blue cobalt tunic, she looks down and with her two hands she makes the expression that means MICROCOSMS, MACROCOSMS, and INFINITE.

The pictorial discourse of the mural is close to the intellectual project of the members of the *Athenaeum*, a group of liberal intellectuals around the *Youth's Athenaeum*, including Alfonso Reyes, Antonio Caso, and Pedro Henríquez Ureña and close to the aim that Vasconcelos was identified with, to redeem the people by means of cultural elevation. [1017]

[1016] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 76.
[1017] See for this period the work that Nicola Coleby presented in the Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras of the UNAM to obtain the master grade in History of the Art, Coleby, Nicola J.E., *La construcción de una estética: el Ateneo de la Juventud, Vasconcelos, y la primera etapa de la pintura mural posrevolucionária, 1921-1924*, UNAM, Faculdad de Filosofia y Letras, Mexico 1985.

In an interview on April 6, 1922, given to Juan del Sena, Rivera attacks the academies, saying, "It is necessary to see as a child again, to become a child again when one paints. This is the way of Giotto and Michelangelo, although nobody believes it. For that reason, I chose for this decoration a banal matter."

> […] *echar a perder el instinto, creador de obras maestras. Después de que le han enseñado a uno todo en las academias, hay que olvidar lo aprendido a costa de esfuerzos constantes, hay que volver a mirar como un niño, volverse niño al pintar. Así Giotto y el mismo Miguel Ángel, aunque nadie lo crea. Por eso, elegí yo para esta decoración un asunto banal* [1018]

Although he declares that he had chosen a "banal matter," he felt the necessity to "explain," after having finished it, the significance of his first mural, whose reading he did not find immediately accessible for a public unfamiliar with a pictorial symbolism.

Two years after the conclusion of the mural, in 1925, in the text *Las pinturas decorativas del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria*, published in *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, núm. 4, p. 4, Mexico, September 1925, Rivera says that he chose an abstract topic: "Man's relationship with the Elements,' that is to say, the origins of the Sciences and Arts, in a certain way, a kind of an abbreviation of Man's essential history."

> *EL ANFITEATRO DE LA ESCUELA NACIONAL PREPARATORIA*
>
> *Para tener la mayor libertad plástica posible y crear una decoración de acuerdo con el ambiente del lugar [el Anfiteatro está destinado principalmente para actos universitarios, conferencias científicas, conciertos de alta música, etc.] el autor escogió un tema abstracto "las relaciones del Hombre con los Elementos", es decir, los orígenes de las Ciencias y Artes, en cierto modo, una especie de abreviatura de la historia esencial del Hombre.*
>
> *Sólo se ejecutó la primera composición de esta obra, "La Creación".*
>
> *Adaptándose a la Arquitectura de la manera más íntima y orgánica posible, aprovechó el autor la bovedilla y muros del nicho que alberga el órgano para pintar en ella la Célula original, conteniendo vegetales y animales en torno al Árbol de la Vida entre cuyo follaje están EL TORO, EL QUERUB, EL LEÓN y EL ÁGUILA − signos del Verbo, principio de todo − y de cuya cúspide emerge EL HOMBRE, entidad anterior al masculino y al femenino.* [1019]

Rivera's exposition continues:

> *En el sitio de la clave del arco que limita en lo alto el muro del fondo del escenario, se pintó un semicírculo azul ultramar limitado por arco iris y en cuyo centro se significó LA ENERGÍA PRIMERA por una luz que emerge en tres direcciones, rodeada de constelaciones, una de ellas en disposición de pentagrama y de exagrama la otra, acompañadas respectivamente de UNA estrella sola y DOS en PAR; fuera del arco iris las emergencias de la ENERGÍA se materializan en tres manos − índice y dedo del corazón extendidos − que, verticalmente, hacen surgir el HOMBRE del Árbol de la Vida, y lateralmente, de un lado el MACHO y del otro la MUJER, representados por desnudos sedentes a ras de tierra, y los cuales el pintor trabajó por hacer que se sintieran en contacto todavía con esa Tierra participando de su esencia y calidad por su forma y estructura.*
>
> *Desde el Hombre y la Mujer empiezan a elevarse hacia la energía original de las actividades de ellos; del lado del Hombre, la SERPIENTE, el CONOCIMIENTO, la*

[1018] del Sena, Juan, "Diego Rivera en el Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria", *El Universal*, April 6 1922, pp. 26-47.
[1019] Rivera, Diego, "El Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. 4, p. 4, September 1925. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 82-84.

FÁBULA, la TRADICIÓN, la POESÍA ERÓTICA, y culminándolas, la TRAGEDIA, en rango inmediato superior, y de pie, la PRUDENCIA, la JUSTICIA, la FORTALEZA, y la CONTINENCIA, y más arriba, entre este grupo y EL CENTRO, LA CIENCIA. [1020]

And, further:

Del lado de la Mujer, desde el suelo con los brazos en alto, elévase la DANZA, sentada están la MÚSICA y el CANTO; de pie, tras de ellas, la RISA − o la COMEDIA -, en rango superior la CARIDAD, la ESPERANZA, y más alto, entre estas virtudes y la ENERGÍA, la SAPIENTIA.

La abundancia de ornamentación en la arquitectura, que encuadra las superficies pintables, y el promedio de la disminución perspectiva, dadas las distancias entre el muro del fondo de la escena y las primeras y últimas filas de asientos para los espectadores − puntos de vista obligados y fijos − impuso la talla de los personajes y la simplicidad de su estilo.

Este trabajo fue el primero que el pintor tuvo ocasión de ejecutar en tan importante escala, y también fue la primera vez que a la pintura moderna actual − no se habla de la falsa pintura oficial y burguesa que llena los muros de palacios y alcaldías en todas partes del mundo − tuvo ocasión de emplearse en su verdadero oficio y papel, es decir, la gran decoración.

Esta obra, a pesar del esfuerzo del pintor por expresar en los personajes la belleza genuina Mexicana, se resiente aún en su ejecución y aun en su mismo sentido interno de influencias europeas, demasiado fuertes y que, paulatinamente, van desapareciendo en los subsecuentes trabajos que ha ejecutado. [1021]

Rivera tells Katherine Anne Porter, "With the cooperation of José Vasconcelos, Secretary of Education, we were hired as a Union to decorate the walls of the Preparatory School and the building of the Secretary of Education."

Con la cooperación de José Vasconcelos, Ministro de Educación, fuimos contratados como Sindicato para decorar las paredes de la Escuela Preparatoria y el edificio de la Secretaría de Educación. [1022]

Rivera: "Our Union became a legend immediately."

Nuestro Sindicato se convirtió inmediatamente en una leyenda. Se decía que éramos pagados con grandes cantidades por nuestras pinturas; que nos estábamos volviendo ricos con los fondos para las escuelas públicas. [1023]

According to Rivera, it was he who organized the Union. He asks himself, "Why did I organize my Union of painters and sculptors in Mexico?"

¿Por qué organicé mi Sindicato de pintores y escultores en México? Creo que no es tanto el que lo haya organizado, como que evolucionó de sí mismo mediante fuerzas e

[1020] Rivera, Diego, "El Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. 4, p. 4, September 1925. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 82-84.
[1021] Ibid.
[1022] "El espíritu gremial en el arte Mexicano", *Survey Graphics*, Vol. 5, nr. 2, pages 174-178, New York, May 1th 1924. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 63-67.
[1023] Ibid, p. 68.

> *influencias que trabajan secretamente con el Espíritu de los mismos artistas. Mi papel fue más bien, el de un iniciador, ya que mi plan de trabajo cooperativo por revivir el viejo arte de la decoración mural en México, fue el que logró acercar y concentrar los diversos poderes de los jóvenes artistas Mexicanos, quienes hasta entonces habían dispersado sus energías individuales al tratar de trabajar solos. [...] Existía el gremio, pero todavía no tomaba su forma definitiva.* [1024]

In the article ¿hay crisis en la pintura Mexicana?, published in 1945, Rivera is ambiguous about the Union's character: "The 'Union' in fact didn't disintegrate, among other reasons because it was never integrated as such."

> *El "Sindicato" en realidad no se desintegró, entre otras razones porque nunca estuvo integrado como tal; en cambio los miembros que pudieron integrarse al movimiento revolucionario social lo hicieron; los que no, tomaron su lugar en donde estaba el adecuado para ellos. La ideología del "Sindicato" jamás impuso limitaciones, era un llamamiento al trabajo para gentes que pensaban y sentían en una dirección común la ¡Revolución,!, la de los trabajadores, no la de nuestra "familia revolucionaria".* [1025]

There is, as in almost all of the works of Rivera, and many times for reasons directly related to the artist, some doubt about the beginning and finalization of *The Creation*. *The Creation* was started early in 1922, and it was officially completed and inaugurated in March 1923. For the inauguration, José Vasconcelos received the following orange-colored broadsheet.

[1024] Ibid, pp. 63-67.
[1025] Moyssén, Xavier, *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 30.

INVITATION
to the fiesta which the
Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors
Will hold on Tuesday 20 of this month in honor of
DIEGO RIVERA
Beloved comrade and master of the shop
On the occasion of completing the work of decorating the Auditorium of the National Preparatory School, a work which resurrects monumental painting not only in Mexico, but in all the world, beginning thus in our country a new flowering which will be comparable to those of ancient times, and the great qualities of which: good craftmanship, wisdom in proportion and values, expressive clarity and emotional power (all within a purely organic Mexicanism free of unhealthy and fatal picturesqueness) mark the work as incomparable, and lovers of the profession of painting can obtain from it the science and experience here accumulated. [And in honor of]
LICENCIADO DON JOSE VASCONCELOS
and
DON VICENTE LOMBARDO TOLEDANO
intelligent initiators and generous protectors of this work and of all the noble effort made toward the development of plastic art in Mexico.
[And of]
LUIS ESCOBAR, XAVIER GUERRERO,
CARLOS MERIDA, JUAN CHARLOT,
AMADO DE LA CUEVA
expert assistants of the maestro Rivera.
All this to give thanks to the Lord who kept them from terrible and horrible falls from the scaffold in nearly a year of most painful labor at the height of almost ten meters. 12:30, at Mixcalco 12, Tres Guerras Cooperative Shop of Painting and Sculpture. Five pesos without fail in the pocket.
Very important note: So that the honorees be not accused of sponging, they also will pay for their meal. **1026**

In "Las pinturas decorativas del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria", in 1923, Rivera concludes his presentation of *The Creation*:

> *"La pintura ha sido ejecutada a la encáustica, con los mismos elementos puros y el mismo proceso empleado en Grecia y en Italia en la antigüedad, este procedimiento que el autor restauró por su propio esfuerzo, gracias a búsquedas hechas durante unos diez años, es el más sólido de los procedimientos de pintura, salvo el esmalte a fuego."* **1027**

In an interview given to Juan del Sena, Rivera explains the mural *The Creation,* telling him, among other things, "All this is nothing more than a big altarpiece."

> *Todo esto no es más que un retablo grande.* **1028**

1026 Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 139-140.
1027 Rivera, Diego, "Las Pinturas Decorativas del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria", *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Departamento editorial, tomo I, nr. 3, January 18 1923. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 45-49. According to the information in the CENIDIAP the article is of January 1, pp. 363-365.
1028 del Sena, Juan, "Diego Rivera en el Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria", *El Universal*, April 6 1922.

The newspapers of the day view Diego's painting at the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* somewhat differently. Some write about, "A CUBIST DECORATION in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*" or "Diego Rivera's DECORATION". Not only do the newspapers speak of "decoration". Rivera's own article had the title *Las pinturas DECORATIVAS del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria*. In the article, Diego speaks of "the significance of decoration as an allusion". At the inauguration of the mural, the journalist Renato Molina Enríquez describes the mural as an example of "the art that Vasconcelos with his prophetic vision predicted for the Americas, defining it as the true way forward in art."

> *[...] el arte que Vasconcelos con su clara mirada de vidente auguró para América, definiéndolo como el verdadero desarrollo artístico* [1029]

When *The Creation* was unveiled in March 1923, Antonio Caso spoke of it as the first "Americanistic" mural. [1030]

With its exuberant vegetation, its languid customs, and its richly adorned women, even including the supposed matriarchy, Tehuantepec provided characteristic and mainly spectacular elements, to serve as aesthetic models. Charlot confirms that it wasVasconcelos's suggestion that Rivera take a trip to Tehuantepec.

> *The Byzantine hue of the mural [La Creación] in the making had left Vasconcelos unconvinced. Rivera himself was beginning to look his own country in the face and to find her beautiful, and his Italian memories gradually faded [...] Says Vasconcelos: "Diego heard Best lecture on Mexican art. This perhaps inclined him toward national themes. To strengthen this tendency, I suggested and financed a trip to Tehuantepec [...]* [1031]

As stated by Charlot,

> *Rivera reached Tehuantepec toward the end of 1922. It is the birthplace of Vasconcelos and Mexico's most picturesque region.* [1032]

According to Charlot work on the mural was in two phases, with Rivera's trip to Tehuantepec marking the point of cleavage. The Byzantine hue of the mural in the making had left Vasconcelos unconvinced.

Started early in 1922, *The Creation* was officially completed by March 1923. In December 1922, Ortega, the art critic of El Universal Ilustrado, spoke of the work as finished, while Molina referred to it in January 1923 as "in the making".

According to Claudia Ovando Shelley and Alma Lilia Roura, Rivera, recently arrived from Europe, "was not able to transmit with his paintbrush that Mexicanidad that was almost a social and ideological imperative. Vasconcelos proposed another trip then to the "exotic and paradisiacal" region of Tehuantepec that accomplished its objective: the niche, the last part of *The Creation*, is populated by the isthmian forest although the symbols are still connected with the western tradition."

> *(Rivera) recién llegado, no lograba transmitir con su pincel esa Mexicanidad que era casi un imperativo social e ideológico. Vasconcelos le propuso entonces otro viaje a la "exótica y paradisíaca" región de Tehuantepec que sí cumplió su objetivo: el nicho,*

[1029] Molina Enríquez, Renato, "La Decoración de Diego Rivera en la Preparatoria", *El Universal*, March 22 1923.
[1030] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 146.
[1031] Unpublished manuscript. In Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 143.
[1032] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 143.

última parte de La creación, está poblado por la selva istmeña aunque los símbolos continuaban enlazados con la tradición occidental. [1033]

The Creation still shows the influence of Italian painting. Rivera says in 1926 in his *Datos Auto-Biográficos*:

1922. − Decoración del Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria. No logra hacer una obra autónoma y las influencias de Italia son extremadamente visibles. [1034]

The truth is that Italian influences are also visible in the works of the other painters who were working in the Preparatory at the same time, which indicates that this emphasis essentially came from Vasconcelos.

Wolfe confirms that Rivera was not satisfied with the work he produced:

Yet, even before it was finished, Diego was dissatisfied with the work. It was not, he knew, what he had meant to do, what he should have done. The theme was too abstract and allegorical, the style too imitative; though the types chosen gave it special reference to the Mexican scene and Mexican racial mixtures, there was too much of Italy in its technique and symbolism, and nothing of the Mexican land and the great social upheaval which, even as he painted under the Italianate spell, was already filling his thoughts. [1035]

The work that Rivera carried out in the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* in the National Preparatory School seemed untouched by the human dramas and social strife that had shaken the country during the Revolution and it was thus, according to Wolfe, "a valiant but false start". [1036]

The painters united around Rivera began their battle for a new art in Mexico. Rivera was pleased with the role his painting had played, but he was not satisfied with the painting itself. He did not press for the other walls at the auditorium. He considered the year's harvest mostly negative. Already his heart was set on something else.

According to Charlot, it was "The complete rerouting of Rivera's talent [that occurred] after his first mural [that] suggested to Bertram Wolfe that the Byzantino-cubist *The Creation* be labeled "a false start."

In spite of contemporaneous adverse criticism and the bypassing of their murals by tourists, the Dieguitos exerted a lasting influence both on the form and on the content of the Mexican mural Renaissance. The complete rerouting of Rivera's talent after his first mural suggested to Bertram Wolfe that the Byzantino-cubist "Creation" be labeled "a false start." In fact the nude or draped allegories brusquely gave way in Rivera's next work to folk themes steeped in Mexicanism, or rather in Indianism. This abrupt turnabout within a few months was made plausible by the spadework of the younger painters, who were facing Mexico squarely while the older master still squinted at Italian grandeur. It was Revueltas in his "Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe" who first used the hieratic, white-clad Indian and the women wrapped in stylized rebozos that soon became the accepted ciphers of a Mexican mural alphabet. The prototype of the courts of the ministry – filled with the depiction of folk festivals, pilgrimages, ritual dancers, with an accent on

[1033] Ovando Shelley, Claudia y Lilia Roura, Alma, "La herencia de los ídolos", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1989, p. 35.
[1034] Rivera, Diego, "Datos Auto-Biográficos", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. VIII, Page 3, Mexico, March-April 1926. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 99-100.
[1035] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 135.
[1036] Ibid, p. 140.

picturesque clothes and customs – is Leal's "Pilgrimage of Chalma," the ideation of which was simultaneous with the execution of the Italianate "Creation." [1037]

According to Antonio Rodriguez, it is understandable that *The Creation* has little to do with Mexico:

Diego Rivera has nothing to be ashamed of. It is quite comprehensible that the themes of his first mural have little to do with Mexico. He had just come from abroad and had had no opportunity of exploring Mexico. He had to 'rediscover' his own country, which he did after he finished decorating the amphitheatre and went on a trip with Lombardo Toledano through the south-east. As he said later, this supplied him with 'enough material for thirty-eight years of painting'. [1038]

Rivera's daughter, Guadalupe Rivera Marín writes that, "when Vasconcelos saw the mural, he realized the trap into which he had fallen, because the great Rivera, the Marxist Rivera, had developed as a theme the fundamental concepts of the Hebrew tradition, the knowledge summarized in the Tree of Life described in the Cabala, which he had learned about from Max Jacob in Paris, instead of the nationalist thought of the Mexican Revolution."

Cuando Vasconcelos vio el mural se dio cuenta de la trampa en que cayó, pues el gran Rivera, el Marxista Rivera, había desarrollado como temática los conceptos fundamentales de la tradición hebrea, el conocimiento resumido en el Árbol de la Vida de la cábala aprendido de Max Jacob, allá en París, en lugar del pensamiento nacionalista de la Revolución Mexicana. Ante este hecho, decidió mandar al pintor de viaje y no encontró mejor sitio que Tehuantepec, población sui generis de su nativa Oaxaca. Diego aceptó y se fue con todo y Lupe. [1039]

As seen in the previous chapters, the initiative and the program of *The Creation* came from Vasconcelos. It was part of a group of mural works at the National Preparatory School, which Vasconcelos commissioned from a number of painters. The themes were common to the painters, since it was Vasconcelos's ideas which sustained the initiative.

If one compares the first descriptions of Rivera's mural of the Amphitheater of the National Preparatory School with the later ones, it is evident that Rivera abandoned the ideas of Vasconcelos in favor of more dialectical and realistic representations; he progressed from a naïve or elementary utopian conception to a critical and realistic analysis, according to the new demands the Mexican state and its politicians placed upon him.

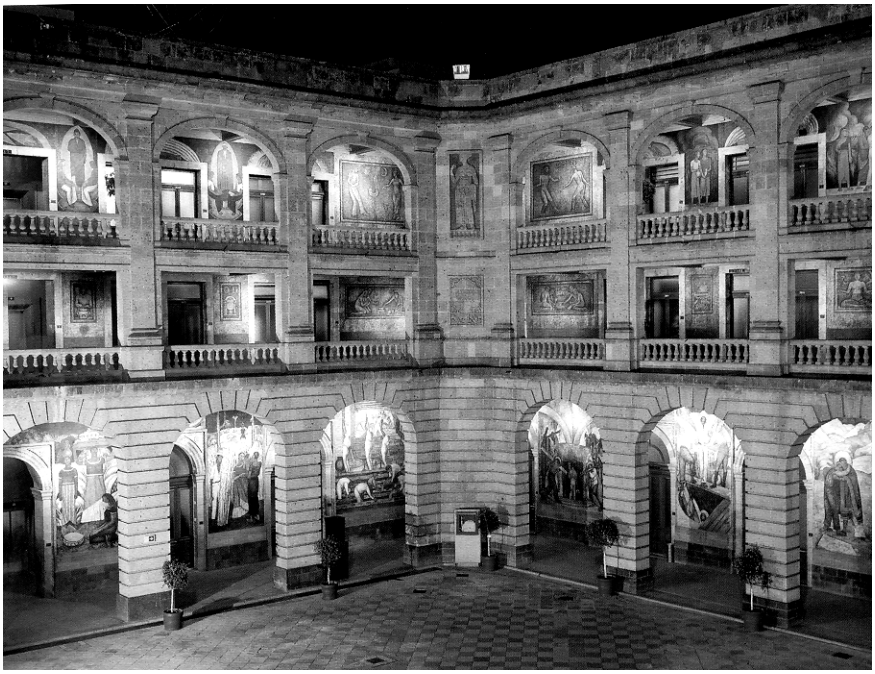
Despite this, *The Creation*'s program, based on the philosophy of Vasconcelos and the rediscovery of Mexico by Rivera, did not end here. After Vasconcelos's fall, one sees an ideological reorientation in Rivera's work. Yet Rivera continued Vasconcelos's ideas both in formal terms and as regards his main themes – especially the mythology regarding the racial aspects of Mexican culture.

[1037] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 154.
[1038] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 167.
[1039] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras: Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 139.

3) The project of the Secretariat of Public Education, 1923-1928 [1040]

When Rivera had finished the mural *The Creation*, Vasconcelos put him in charge of a second project – the most ambitious of all – in the courtyard of the recently inaugurated Secretariat of Public Education. These murals are sometimes referred to as *Visión Política del Pueblo Mexicano*, A Political Vision of the Mexican People. [1041]

Figure 63. General view of *Patio del Trabajo*. Secretariat of Public Education, Mexico City. [1042]



The Secretariat is divided into various parts that form a logical itinerary, from the entrance to the building leading up to the top floor. In this mural, Rivera painted the life of the Mexican people in its most important aspects: work, the fight for social improvement, the people's achievements, and the popular *fiestas*.

Vasconcelos: "As each building rose, the opportunities for mural painting increased. When the Secretariat of Public Education was inaugurated, I announced that its corridors would be decorated with [murals showing] the tasks of the Mexican people, in the *antepatio,* and their fiestas in the main patio. The stairway should reproduce the panorama of the land from the wild coasts to the highlands, with its refined architecture. Diego Rivera received the commission, because he was the first to present sketches."

> *A medida que se levantaba cada edificio, surgían las oportunidades de la pintura mural. Cuando se inauguró el de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, anuncié que sus corredores serían decorados con las faenas del pueblo Mexicano, en el antepatio; sus fiestas, en el patio mayor. En la escalera debería reproducirse el panorama de la nación desde la costa selvática hasta el altiplano, de refinada arquitectura. Obtuvo la obra, porque presentó los primeros cartones, Diego Rivera.* [1043]

Indeed, José Vasconcelos, when inaugurating the new building of the Secretariat of Public Education on July 9 1922, had pronounced a speech in which, in succinct but clear terms, he delineated his historical and cultural project: "For the decoration of the canvases of the corridor, our great artist Diego Rivera has already drawn figures of women with typical costumes from each State of the Republic."

[1040] Secretariat of Public Education. Street of República de Argentina, nr. 22, Mexico City. Technical data: Experimental fresco with nopal dribble and traditional fresco. Total surface: nearly 1585 m2.
[1041] This title has been put into question, for example by Raquel Tibol.
[1042] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 26.
[1043] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinsón a Odiseo: pedagogía estructurativa*, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, v. II, p. 1676. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 100.

Para la decoración de los lienzos del corredor, nuestro gran artista Diego Rivera, tiene ya dibujadas figuras de mujeres con trajes típicos de cada Estado de la República [...] [1044]

Originally Diego Rivera was entrusted with the first *patio* and Jean Charlot, Xavier Guerrero and Amado de la Cueva with the second. Carlos Mérida would decorate the children's library, Roberto Montenegro the main offices and Ignacio Asúnsolo would carry out a group of sculptures representing the four races. Charlot describes the original plans in which other artists besides Rivera were to participate in the decorations:

A skylight by Roberto Montenegro is to cap this ensemble, depicting an Indian shooting his arrow at the stars. The reception rooms will be decorated with fantastic drawings by Adolfo Best, and so on; each one of our artists will contribute in turn something to beautify this palace dedicated to knowledge and to art. [1045]

And Charlot continues:

The contract scheduled the beginning of the new mural work for March 23, 1923. The terms were Spartan: 760 square meters to be painted at eight pesos per square meter, materials and labor at the expense of the contractor, Diego Rivera. On February 18 de la Cueva, Guerrero, and I left our discarded workshop at the auditorium to join the master mason, Luis Escobar, and to grind pigment and prepare the walls of the ministry. [1046]

When Rivera undertook the task of painting the walls of the Secretariat, in March 1923, he was 37 years old and already had a new conception of public art. He had traveled through the various regions of Mexico, he knew the men and women of the country and their problems, he had been identified with the noblest ideals of the Revolution and, subscribing to the ideals of Vasconcelos, he was willing to serve his people with his art.

As soon as Rivera had finished work on the mural at the *Anfiteatro Bolívar*, he started to paint the patio of the Secretariat, using a fresco technique for the first time. [1047]

Rivera says: "I had never before painted al fresco and I learned the technique of my craft from the bricklayers and the painters of the thick brushes, since these itinerant artisans had kept the art of painting *al fresco* alive, from the remote pre-Cortesian times, when the whole surface and the sculptures of the temples of the old Indian architecture was covered *al fresco* with beautiful colors."

Nunca antes había pintado al fresco y aprendí la técnica de mi oficio de los albañiles y pintores de brocha gorda, ya que estos artesanos itinerantes habían conservado vivo el arte de la pintura al fresco, desde los remotos tiempos precortesianos, cuando toda la

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[1044] Vasconcelos, José, *Discursos 1920-1950*, México, Ediciones Botas, 1950, p. 40. Quoted in Debroise, Olivier, "La gran reconstrucción y la tierra fecunda [La evolución de Diego Rivera, 1917-1920]", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 149.

[1045] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 254.

[1046] Ibid, p. 255.

[1047] Fresco-painting is a method in which water-based colors are painted on plaster while this is still wet. The outlines of the various figures and forms of the cartoon are then reinforced with a darker color. Plaster is laid over the drawing in small sections, and color is applied to the wet plaster; for this the muralist often uses another sketch of the color scheme. As the plaster dries, the lime in the plaster reacts chemically with the carbon dioxide in the air to form calcium carbonate; this compound forms a film over the colors when the paintbrush passes over the colors and wets the lime, thus binding the colors to the plaster. The painting is then safe against water, and it will last as long as the plaster of the building itself.

superficie y las esculturas de los templos de la antigua arquitectura india, estaban cubiertos al fresco con hermosos colores. [1048]

With the help of Xavier Guerrero, who was familiar with the popular recipes employed in the decorations of *pulquerías,* and of Jean Charlot, who was an assiduous reader of the old manuals, Diego Rivera "fought" to elaborate his own technique; incorporating local materials in an attempt to *Mexicanize* his formula, he experimented with cactus sap as an agglutinant for the frescos.

Xavier Guerrero understood that a remedy had to be found to allay a mental crisis that threatened to wreck the job at the start. At this juncture, he felt that some change in the technique used might prove efficacious. My sources of fresco knowledge had been bookish, the treatises of Baudouin and Cennino Cennini. These had been tempered in practice by the common sense of master mason Escobar, not at all a bookish man. Xavier, speaking of Baudouin, said, "I never read that book," and approached the same problem afresh, rich in his family experience of similar undertakings. Father used to put up a coat of mortar, then on top a coat of plaster mixed with marble dust, then paint an imitation marble design, then iron the surface as smooth as glass. I started from there, changing the plaster for lime. I experimented a long time on portable samples with mortars of distinct contents. I made trips to Teotihuacán to compare my results with pre-Hispanic murals, then made matched mural samples in the Ministry. At last I made a successful sample and proudly showed it to Diego. Said he: "We will save this sample, embed it in the finished work, and next to it paint your portrait with the date of the discovery." I suggested that Diego let me take the sample out myself, as he is somewhat clumsy with his hands, but he insisted in doing it. He hammered the sample to bits, and the last rather large fragment to fall he crushed absent-mindedly under foot, and spoke no more of painting my portrait. [1049]

Rivera: "In the Secretariat of Public Education I tried out a procedure that belonged to Xavier Guerrero and according to his assertion, was part of the Mexican tradition."

En la Secretaría de Educación Pública ensayé un procedimiento que era de Xavier Guerrero y según él aseguraba, de tradición Mexicana. El repellado se hacía con un tercio de cemento y dos tercios de cal mezclados con la arena e igual para el aplanado fino. Para pintar se extendía sobre este aplanado, rápidamente y muy sobre fresco, una capa de lechada de cal muy remolida y bien apagada, a la que se mezclaba baba de nopal. Para pintar se empleaba también la baba de nopal, que se obtenía dejando en maceración las pencas de nopal machacadas hasta que se pudrían, es decir, hasta que entraba en cierto grado de fermentación la emulsión gluco-resinosa. Con esta solución mezclada a mayor o menor cantidad de agua, se pintaba. El empleo de la baba de nopal como aglutinante, ha sido siempre familiar para templar los colores, no sólo a todos los pintores populares sino también a los albañiles, seguramente desde el México pre-hispánico. El fresco así pintado era después bruñido a cuchara y al bruñidor. Más tarde, debido a ciertos inconvenientes que presentaba este procedimiento, volví al tradicional. [1050]

However, Rivera told Luis Suárez: "He [Ramón Alba Guadarrama] was in fact the one who taught me and the others – more than Xavier Guerrero [...] the Mexican way to paint *al fresco*".

[1048] Rivera, Diego, *Portrait of America*. With an explanatory text by Bertram D. Wolfe, Covici Friede Publishers, New York 1934. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 209.

[1049] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.

[1050] Rivera, Diego, "Disertación de Diego Rivera sobre la técnica de la encáustica y del fresco, Relatada a Juan O'Gorman", *Diego Rivera, 50 años de su labor artística*, INBA, Mexico 1951, pp. 269-273.

El [Ramón Alba Guadarrama] fue en realidad quien me enseñó a mí y a los demás − más que Xavier Guerrero [...] la manera Mexicana de pintar al fresco. [1051]

Jean Charlot tells of the painter's difficulties in mastering this new, complex technique, which actually was scarcely known in Mexico.

Xavier thus states the honest essentials of his experiments, but the Best cure for Rivera's heartache proved to be a more dubious "secret," mainly the invention of overeager reporters. As Rivera's difficulties were mostly mental, the publicity that accompanied the discovery of the "secret" renewed his faith in himself, and the Ministry work proceeded smoothly from then on. McKinley Helm came upon this secret while gathering material for his book, but it remained a secret for him: "They [Rivera and Guerrero] conducted experiments together and evolved a formula which was used in the newly built Ministry. Something untoward happened which both Rivera and Guerrero are now shy of discussing." Contemporaneous sources are less reticent. The secret is first alluded to on May 31, 1923, by Renato Molina, in El Universal Ilustrado: "A new reason must be added to bolster our thankfulness toward the painter Diego Rivera. He is now revitalizing fresco painting just as it was practiced by the ancient Mexicans, a technique reconstructed thanks to his own investigations and those of his assistant." [1052]

El Universal of June 19, 1923, discussed the subject at length.

DIEGO RIVERA DISCOVERS A SECRET OF THE MEXICA.

The artist painter Diego Rivera has rediscovered, in the opinion of certain technicians of painting, the process used by ancient Mexicans to produce their splendid frescoes, such as those we admire today in the monuments of San Juan Teotihuacán. This extremely important and transcendental discovery seems quite simple. From what is said, it consists in using the procedure current among our more humble artisans of painting, that of mixing nopal juice with the fresco preparation, completing the work with a special polish adopted after numerous trials by the helper of said artist Diego Rivera, Señor Xavier Guerrero [...] At a date not so remote, a French painter allegedly applied the fresco technique in Mexico, such as the Italians had known it, but with the modification of mixing cement with the classic mixture of lime and sand. Notwithstanding the fact that the work executed by this French artist seems to fulfill certain conditions of permanency, experts agree that within the next twenty years the causticity of the calcareous substances present in the cement will completely destroy what this artist achieved. [1053]

Xavier Guerrero had apparently "discovered a process that revives the manner of fresco-painting of the ancient Mexicans."

The painter Diego Rivera used the same technique that the Frenchman had used and which we have just described, to paint a single panel out of those with which he is decorating the Ministry of Education, but given the poor results, he switched to the technique referred to already, with most gratifying effect. Numerous artists flock to the Ministry of Public Education to admire the brilliant decoration of Diego Rivera which, it is prophesied, will last for a number of centuries, as have the frescoes of the ancient Mexicans. Crispin interviewed Rivera on the subject on July l0, 1923: " 'Who are your collaborators?' 'Xavier Guerrero, who, well knowing the craft of the painter in his noble approach to it as a laborer, discovered a process that resuscitates the manner of painting in fresco of the

[1051] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 131.
[1052] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.
[1053] Ibid.

ancient Mexicans. I use this technique,' added Diego modestly." El Abate Benigno invented a refrain:

Dipped in cactus juice authentic
Rivera's brushes in waltz time tick. [1054]

In the words of Charlot "the technique was boosted as being pre-Hispanic."

> *Even the technique was boosted as being pre-Hispanic. El Universal stated: "The artist-painter Diego Rivera has rediscovered the process used by ancient Mexicans to produce their splendid frescoes, such as those we admire today in the monuments of San Juan Teotihuacán."* [1055]

Charlot again:

> *The invigorated Rivera imposed his technique, as "head of the Plastic Crafts," on the painters at work in the second court, de la Cueva and myself. It consisted, in practice, of slices of nopal leaf left* [...] *to rot in the bucket of water in which we dipped our brushes. A cynical attitude toward the secret of the Mexicans and an abhorrence of the stink of the decomposed nopal stumps kept but few leaves in our two buckets, enough for inspection, and made us change the water surreptitiously.* [1056]

According to Charlot, "time has helped transform the incident into a soothing myth. Rivera stated in 1942 that "there has never been through the last four centuries any decorator in Mexico master of his office who has not been master also of fresco painting."

> *The secret, first tried in the Tehuantepec scenes – "Dyers," "Weavers," etc. – was last used on the "Potters." Time has helped transform the incident into a soothing myth. Rivera stated in 1942 that "There has never been through the last four centuries any decorator in Mexico master of his office who has not been master also of fresco painting. I feel proud to have learned this office from such men and not from any European." Frederic W. Leighton wrote a description of the first court in the making, as it was in mid-1923, which explains, better than later reports, Rivera's original plan, before the introduction of decorative monochromes and symbolic tableaux: The right-hand wall as one enters the building is dedicated to two typical industries of southern and tropical Mexico: the raising of sugar and the weaving of cloth. The peasant cultivates and harvests the cane, works in the primitive mill where the juice is pressed and boiled and poured into rough molds to form the crude brown sugar or panela used from end to end of the land.* [1057]

In 1923 Diego began to paint the walls of the first patio of the Secretariat of Public Education; his long stay in Europe left Rivera with an idealized vision of Mexico, adapted to Vasconcelos's vision thanks to the trip they made together to the Isthmus.

Although still marked by the neo-Byzantine tendencies of the mural of the Amphitheatre, the first panels, dedicated to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec differ from the allegories in *The Creation*, which were painted with strong contours against a monochromatic background. The stylized figures, located now in a characteristic landscape, which is more suggested than described, are no longer occult or allegorical representations, but

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[1054] "Vals al Fresco", *El Universal llustrado*, July 22, 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.
[1055] "Diego Rivera descubre un secreto de los Mexicanos," *El Universal*, June 19 1923. Quoted in Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 11.
[1056] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.
[1057] Ibid.

are more realistic and are closer to the cultural and social dimensions of the people to which he belonged. Starting with the mural paintings of the Secretariat of Public Education, begun in 1923 and concluded in 1928, Rivera began to change topics, meanings and style. He wanted to deal with topics that related to the Mexican people; he wanted to have a dialogue with the people through his work.

In 1923 Carlos Pellicer Cámara says that "Mexico has begun its *Mexicanization.*"

> *La belleza creada por Rivera está muy lejos de ser la de la clase media y rica [...] es una creación del obrero genial, del pintor popular en la Secretaria de Educación Pública, ha pintado las obras de labor esencial de la República [...] Sólo el pueblo legítimo o los refinados superiores gustan de estas gigantescas decoraciones [...] México ha empezado su Mexicanización.* [1058]

Here, Diego Rivera, acting as a teacher, presents the whole history of Mexico, transforming the walls into a public history lesson. Rivera knew how to express what the ruling classes wanted and what the people wanted to see and to understand. For the first time Mexico appears as an idealized country. In the words of Ida Rodríguez Prampolini: "The walls of the Secretariat of Public Education are an extended sociology lesson."

> *Los muros de la Secretaría de Educación Pública son una detenida lección de sociología* [1059]

The cycle of murals in the Secretariat is often designated as one of Rivera's best works. Octavio Paz opines that "possibly, only the chapel in Chapingo surpasses it".

> *A un paso de San Ildefonso, en la Secretaría de Educación Pública, podíamos ver los frescos de Rivera, una de sus obras más logradas. Sólo la supera, quizá, la capilla de Chapingo.* [1060]

Rivera made an interpretive painting of the Mexican landscape rising from the sea and extending up to the mountains, plains, high peaks and volcanoes. Linked to this representation of the landscape is a symbolic vision of man's progress. Allegorical figures represent different stages in the upward movement of social evolution through the popular Revolutions, progressing from a primitive society to the liberated and fully social order of the future.

Wolfe:

> *It was this series in the Education Building that made the Mexican art movement suddenly known throughout America and Europe and made the name of Rivera famous through the Western world. It initiated a revival of mural painting, decadent since the late Renaissance, a revival felt first in Mexico and then in the United States.* [1061]

[1058] Pellicer Cámara, Carlos, "El pintor Diego Rivera", *Azulejos*, December 1923. Quoted by Acevedo, Esther, "Las decoraciones que pasaron a ser revolucionarias", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 198.
[1059] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 320.
[1060] Paz, Octavio, "Repaso en forma de preámbulo", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 26.
[1061] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 168.

4) Riveras's Murals at the Secretariat of Public Education

The huge building of the Secretariat of Public Education has two adjacent courtyards, each with two floors. Here, Rivera painted panels *al fresco* that covered 1585 square meters. He named the larger courtyard *Patio de las Fiestas* and the smaller *Patio del Trabajo* in accordance with the themes of the murals.

I will present, chronologically, the general theme of the work, looking at certain panels of particular relevance to my theme in more detail. For the entire program of all the paintings see Appendixes XIV and XV. I use the titles found in the *Catálogo General*, [1062] although one cannot be sure that these are always correct. Most likely the titles were given afterwards, according to a *Revolutionary* logic which the titles changed the value of the representations and conditioned the reading of the work.



Figure 64. José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera together at a political meeting in Chapultepac Park in 1923. [1063]

A major issue here is that, despite what Rivera, Vasconcelos and others later claimed, it seems evident that the program for the decorations of the Secretariat, was approved by the minister personally until his resignation in July 1924. In the subsequent period until the conclusion of the mural in 1928, important modifications were made.

In the words of Paz: "Also, his [Rivera's] first frescos in the Secretariat of Public Education [1923] don't reveal an ideological tendency. Only in 1924, in the same building, does he begin to paint revolutionary topics."

> *Asimismo, sus [Rivera] primeros frescos en la Secretaría de Educación Pública [1923] no revelan una tendencia ideológica. Sólo en 1924, en el mismo edificio, comienza a pintar temas revolucionarios.* [1064]

In 1923 Rivera was grateful to Vasconcelos and acknowledged his role: "But the fact was that only thanks to the support of some of yesterday's Revolutionaries, today in power, the first one being Vasconcelos who wielded authority as Secretary of Public Education – did the painters have the opportunity to work, and they worked in a form which they had not known before."

[1062] *Diego Rivera: Catálogo General de Obra mural y Fotografía Personal*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, INBA, CENIDIAP, Mexico 1988.
[1063] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 20.
[1064] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 34.

> *Pero el hecho fue solamente que gracias al apoyo de ciertos revolucionarios de ayer, hoy en el poder, el primero en obrar fue Vasconcelos sirviéndose de su autoridad de Ministro de Educación Pública − los pintores tuvieron ocasión de trabajar y trabajaron algo en forma que no habían hecho antes.* [1065]

Rivera: "And when this is said I leave in this land the word not to the public official but to José Vasconcelos, a man who won't permit me to lie."

> [...] *Y dicho esto dejo en este terreno la palabra no al funcionario público sino a José Vasconcelos, que es hombre que no me dejará mentir.* [1066]

When Vasconcelos resigned in July 1924, his friends and his old colleagues at the ministry gave him a farewell banquet, during which Diego Rivera made a speech thanking the former minister for having given the artists full freedom to paint, despite the "imbeciles" who were close or far from him. [1067]

Vasconcelos: "And in the first floors of the first patio of the ministry are the works that made him famous: *The Miner, The Sugar Mill, The Weavers, the Teacher teaching the students to read."*

> *Y han quedado en los primeros pisos del primer patio del ministerio las obras que le dieron fama: El registro del minero, La molienda de la caña de azúcar, Los tejedores, la maestra que enseña a leer.* [1068]

And Vasconcelos continues: "When I left the Secretariat, the primitive plan was abandoned, and the walls began to be filled with shameless apologies for the political characters in vogue and with vile cartoons of those of us who were no longer in power."

> *Al salir yo de la Secretaría se desistió del plan primitivo y comenzaron a llenarse los muros con Apologías descaradas de los tipos políticos en boga y con caricaturas soeces de quienes abandonábamos el poder.* [1069]

There are strong reasons to believe that Vasconcelos was on the same wavelength as Rivera at this stage. Consequently the titles and the interpretations of the murals that were made later can mislead, and can lead one to believe that Rivera had contradicted the minister's ideas from the very beginning. These later interpretations redefine the paintings as *Revolutionary* and alter Vasconcelos's ideas, which are usually seen as esoteric and imprecise.

Besides, as Charlot says, there were architectural and other reasons for the change in Rivera's work after his first mural, *The Creation*:

> *A striking difference sets apart the frescoes of the first court of the Ministry from the earlier encaustic of the auditorium. The latter tended toward generalities: its symbolical figures were nude or clad in vaguely neoclassical drapes; their geometry edged toward the balanced semi-abstractions of Byzantium. In contrast, the Ministry frescoes allow for a*

[1065] Rivera, Diego, "Dos años", Azulejos, tomo II, nr. 2, pp. 26 y 41, December 1923. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 53.
[1066] Rivera, Diego, "Sobre Arquitectura", *El Universal*, April 28 1924. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 60.
[1067] *Excélsior*, July 5 1924. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 401.
[1068] Vasconcelos, José, *De Robinsón a Odiseo: pedagogía estructurativa*, Obras Completas (4 vol.), Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1958, v. II, p. 1676. Quoted in Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 100.
[1069] Ibid.

leisurely description of folk types and customs, and include a wealth of local details – from sombreros to sandals – set in localized surroundings. This drastic change may have been suggested in part by the new architectural postulate. The Ministry lacked the basilical overtones of the auditorium. Its paintable surfaces, mostly narrow upright panels, were half hidden by pilasters and arches, and the surface continuity was further split apart by doors. Such a setting did not admit of a single major and centralized focus. As the spectator walks along the narrow corridors he can appreciate each detail, but not the elusive ensemble. As he proceeds on his way, the appearance of new panels and subjects lends itself to anecdotal narration instead of to the simultaneous balance of parts featured in the auditorium. Mexican roots affirm themselves at last. The subject matter is all-Indian, or if another race is introduced, it is only as a foil to the former. Such is the role of the Yankee and the Spanish overseers who embitter the Indian's lot in mine and hacienda. Overdoor verses from pre-Hispanic literature emphasize the Indian hue. [1070]

Ground floor − *Patio del Trabajo*

On the East wall of the ground floor of the Patio del Trabajo, begun in March 1923, Rivera painted the following themes: *Entrance to the mine*, *Leaving the mine*, *Northwest Landscape*, *Mining populations of the northwest*, *The hug*, *Peasants*, *The foreman*, *Landscape*, *Potters*, *Biblical scene*, *Palms* and diverse *Náhuatl* poems. On the South wall he painted: *To work bent double*, *Radiant sun*, *The foundry – Opening the oven*, *Mining*, *The peon's liberation*, *Landscape of the north illuminated by the Revolution*, *The rural teacher*, *Northern Landscape*, *Shepherd with sling*, *Symbols of the struggle*, *Work*, *The foundry − Emptying the glass* and various symbols.

The pre-Hispanic theme begins to appear for the first time, in the *Náhuatl poems*. Claudia Ovando Shelley and Alma Lilia Roura state: "In Rivera the treatment of the pre-Hispanic takes on new dimensions; on the one hand, he approaches it from the standpoint of communist militancy, with its sudden changes of direction, and, on the other, from a vast nationalist project sponsored by the State and accepted by artists starting from diverse historical needs and conjunctures."

La concepción de lo indígena en Diego Rivera se inscribe en la problemática de un país conformado por la fusión forzada de dos razas que permea toda la historia Mexicana. Ésta implica el cuestionamiento del mundo antiguo como raíz legítima y la integración del indio contemporáneo al ámbito nacional, uno de los grandes retos aún no resueltos. En Rivera el tratamiento de lo prehispánico cobra nuevas dimensiones; por una parte, lo aborda desde una posición de militancia comunista llena de vaivenes y, por otra, desde un vasto proyecto nacionalista patrocinado por el Estado y asumido por los artistas a partir de diversas necesidades y coyunturas históricas. [1071]

The independent panels are connected by a landscape, the upper part of which providing geographical continuity. In one of the frescos Rivera painted a rural teacher at her mission, surrounded by her students, with armed peasants standing guard.

Charlot says that "Every picture is a bead on a rosary of the life of native Mexico."

The Indian works at the primitive hand-loom making the cloth for women's blouses and skirts, dyes the fabric in earthen jars, coloring it with home-grown indigo of the precious

[1070] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.
[1071] Ovando Shelley, Claudia y Lilia Roura, Alma, "La herencia de los ídolos", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1989, p. 33.

> *Tyrian purple laboriously extracted from the sea-sought cochineal. On the forward end wall for the patio are shown representative industries of the tableland of Mexico – mining, farming and pottery making. The miner descends to his obscure work and ascends in the evening twilight to be searched by the foreign mine-boss; he embraces the land-working peasant as a symbol of the fraternity of those who labor. Farther on may be seen the peasant men and women sitting patiently by their sown fields and the artisan who with infinite art fashions the decorated and shapely pottery that is used everywhere in Mexico. On the left wall are to appear labors of the north – the smelting of metals, farming and shepherding. Every picture is a bead on a rosary of the life of native Mexico* [...]. [1072]

In their attempt to create myths destined to ennoble the spirit, these frescos, like their predecessors, display aspects of the philosophy and aesthetics of José Vasconcelos.

The murals painted by Rivera until 1924 are well fitted to the vasconcelian theme, contributing to the didactic mission that the minister intended for the murals. Rivera, like Montenegro, Charlot, La Cueva, etc., gives us a vision of Mexico just as it was then. Later Rivera produced a simplifying and idealized vision of a society that had never existed. This was his main contribution, that of "building" a reality and a non-existent past, a future full of demagogic promises, a contribution which critics like Siqueiros rightly denounce as being nothing but *"Mexican Curious",* for tourists.

It has been said that as early as 1924 (when he began painting at the Secretariat of Public Education) Rivera's paintings were impregnated with populist ideology, with a strong touch of folklorism and a sort of archaeological mania; that they lacked impulsive force and were essentially mystical or tourist paintings. The major critic was Siqueiros.

Siqueiros: "His [Rivera's] aesthetic ideas were archaeological and populist, a little further than those of our populism of Santa Anita's school. He recommended the codexes, the altarpieces and the drawings of the Mexican ballads [particularly of the engraver Posada] as the sources that should nurture us."

> *Sus [de Rivera] ideas estéticas eran arqueológicas y populistas, un poco más adelantadas que las de nuestro populismo de la escuela de Santa Anita. Recomendaba los códices, los retablos y los dibujos de los corridos [particularmente al grabador Posada] como las fuentes que deberían nutrirnos.* [1073]

Rivera says himself: "I wanted my paintings to reflect the social life of Mexico just as I saw it, and by means of my vision of the truth to show the masses an outline of the future."

> *Durante algunos meses antes de empezar mi trabajo en este edificio del Gobierno recorrí el país en busca de material. Mi deseo era reproducir las imágenes puras, básicas, de mi tierra. Quería que mis pinturas reflejaran la vida social de México tal como yo la veía, y mediante mi visión de la verdad mostrar a las masas un esquema del futuro.* [1074]

On the timbers that cover the exit from the mine, Rivera decided to express his message explicitly in words. In the lower part of the mural, the artist wrote out Gutiérrez Cruz's poem which reads:

[1072] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, pp. 257-261.
[1073] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 212.
[1074] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 105.

Compañero minero, doblegado bajo el peso de la tierra, tu mano yerra, cuando sacas metales para el dinero. Haz puñales, con todos los metales, y así, verás que los metales, después son para ti. [1075]

This poem gave rise to a violent argument between the painter and the minister. Vasconcelos asked him to erase it; the question was settled in the Union, which ruled in favor of erasure, on the grounds that no image was being censored, and that people were much more sensitive to writing than to painting. Diego Rivera accepted the decision, and a copy of the text was placed in a bottle, which was cemented into the wall.

Rivera: "During my work on the patio of the Secretariat of Education, the first of the many controversies that would mark my career as a muralist painter occurred."

Durante mi trabajo en el patio de la Secretaría de Educación ocurrió la primera de las muchas controversias que habrían de marcar mi carrera de pintor muralista. En un fresco de la planta baja del Patio del Trabajo, que mostraba a los fatigados mineros saliendo tambaleantes de las minas, dibujé las palabras de un poema revolucionario de Gutiérrez Cruz. El poema exhortaba a los mineros a forjar dagas con el metal que extraían y apoderarse de las minas para ellos. Inmediatamente estalló una tempestad en la Prensa. José Vasconcelos, el Secretario de Educación a través de quien había recibido el encargo del Gobierno, me rogó que quitara el poema ofensivo; me dijo que eso le estaba haciendo imposible su tarea de justificar toda la composición. La Unión de Pintores me pidió que mantuviera mi posición. El clamor se hizo más fuerte. Finalmente accedí a lo que Vasconcelos me pedía, y uno de mis ayudantes raspó las palabras del muro. [1076]

According to Rivera: "The Secretary of Education, however, promised to allow me to paint in the contiguous panel a peasant and a worker arm in arm, with a somewhat milder poem by Cruz" [1077]

El Secretario de Educación, sin embargo, también se comprometió conmigo a permitirme pintar en el panel contiguo a un campesino y un trabajador abrazándose mutuamente. En este panel dibujé unos versos de un poema un poco más suave, de Cruz. Se oyeron nuevos gritos; pero esta vez todos se mantuvieron firmes y paso la tempestad. [1078]

Ground floor − *Patio de las Fiestas*

Rivera: "I painted what could be a great source of happiness for the Mexican Indians if it were to come about: scenes that showed the self-sufficiency of the public land, the land given to the Indians for them to cultivate."

En el Patio de las Fiestas representé un contrastado aspecto de la vida Mexicana. Aquí, la gente se volvía de sus trabajos extenuantes a su vida creadora, sus alegres matrimonios y sus vivaces fiestas [...] Además pinté lo que podía llevar a ser una gran fuente de felicidad

[1075] In Wolfe alightly different text of the poem is given, and the translation is at times inaccurate: Compañero minero, doblegado bajo el peso, de la tierra, tu mano yerra, cuando saca metal para el dinero. Haz puñales, con todos los metales, y así, verás que los metales después son para tí. In English: Comrade miner, Bowed under the weight of the earth, Thy hand does wrong, When it extracts metal for money. Make daggers, With all the metals, And thou wilt see, How after, all the metals, Are for thee. Quoted in Wolfe, Bertram D., The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 174.
[1076] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 108.
[1077] This panel is the one referred to in the *Catálogo General* as "The hug".
[1078] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 108.

> *para los indios Mexicanos si se llevaba a cabo: escenas que mostraban la autosuficiencia del ejido, la tierra dada a los indios para que la cultivaran. Por toda la escalera seguí pintando con el mismo feliz y profético espíritu* [1079]

Between August 1923 to 1924, Rivera painted on the South wall of the ground floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas* frescos with the following themes: *Dance of the Deer* [1080], *The crop of the corn*, *Homage to the corn and the nixtamal*, *The Fiesta of the Corn*, *Distribution of the Land* (three connected panels), *The Day of the Dead – Offering*, *The Day of Dead – The food*, *The Day of the dead – Fiesta in the streets*, *Magueys and landscape*, *Wheat*, *Fruits*, *Melon*, *Pumpkin and flower*, *Biznaga*. On the West wall of the ground floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted (between July 1923 and the beginning of 1924): *Landscape and chinampas of the lake of Texcoco*, *The Burning of the Judases* [1081], *First of May meetings* (four connected panels), *Dolores's Friday in Santa Anita's Channel*, *Landscape of the Valley of Mexico*, *Mountainous landscape* and other *Landscapes*. On the North wall of the ground floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted between 1923 and 1924, *The Dances of the Listones*, *The tianguis* (three connected panels), *The Zandunga*, *Dyers*, *Weavers*, *Still Life – flowers in button*, *tortillas and sunflowers*, *Still Life – tropical flowers low bamboo curtain*, *Bundle of canes*, *Recumbent Tehuana*, *Tehuanas*, *Pyramid with bonfires*. Other frescos painted included *The Laundrymen* and *The Loaders* painted by Jean Charlot, *The Bull* and *The dance of the Santiagos,* painted by Amado de la Cueva. [1082]

While working as assistants on the first *patio* Jean Charlot, de la Cueva and Guerrero had also been given the task of decorating some areas of the second *patio*. Such team-work reflected the spirit of the *Union*. However, Rivera thought that the work of his companions was not satisfactory and used his authority to have their murals removed.

Although the initial intention was to produce a collective work, when Rivera finished his part, Jean Charlot and De la Cueva had only finished five panels, and Diego used this, together with the pretext that their work did not harmonize with what he had painted, to remove one of the three panels made by Charlot, thus frustrating the intention of making a collective work.

Charlot describes the dispute as follows:

> *The new decoration that Rivera started to paint then in the second patio and which eventually superseded our own, fused three panels out of each wall into a central triptych. The planning of such a triptych for the south wall implied the destruction of my "Dance of the Ribbons," already painted in its center panel. Rivera, who one year before had complained that our work remained forgotten behind piles of benches and boxes, went a drastic step further in sending it into oblivion. He also decided to destroy the two Guerrero panels. The "great simplicity and purity" that he had praised in Guerrero's work, the "Mexican mode of feeling and good and firm expression of French plasticity" that he had admired in mine, failed to save our murals.* [1083]

In an interview with Crispin, published in *The Universal*, July 10 of 1923, Rivera says: "I was paid five hundred pesos for a portrait, that is, a figure, in Paris – – – – – so you can see what 'wonderful' business I'm making at the moment, I negotiate and receive the insults of my intelligent countrymen."

[1079] Ibid, p. 106.
[1080] A mythical deer-hunting dance ritual, common among many cultures throughout Mexico.
[1081] The Burning of Judas, a traditional Saturday *fiesta*, has long served as an almost ritual pretext for the people of the cities who take revenge, symbolically, on their enemies. In this case the enemies are personalized as a capitalist, a military officer and a priest.
[1082] In spite of there being differences in the formal structure of these works, they do not differ so much from the work of Rivera.
[1083] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 278.

Debo advertirle – agrega Rivera − que un retrato, esto es, una figura, me era pagado en París a razón de quinientos pesos – así se verá el maravilloso negocio que hago actualmente, negocio por el cual merezco los insultos de mis inteligentes compatriotas. [1084]

Beltram D. Wolfe answered the criticism on Rivera's behalf in *The Nation*: "Diego earns 12 pesos working a 12 to 14 hour day":

Mientras que Manuel Lourdes, un pintor burgués, conbra 8 mil pesos por un retrato de Horacio Casasús, Diego gana 12 pesos diarios trabajando de 12 a 14 horas. [1085]

The difference in payment seems exaggerated and it probably belongs to the mystification that Wolfe is devoted to.
The newspapers in Mexico City were unenthusiastic about the birth of this great pictorial movement. In the campaign against muralism the newspaper *El Heraldo* accused Vasconcelos "of wasting big sums, spoke of 'fabulous prices, fat profits.'"

La campaña de prensa arrecibiaba, y en junio de 1923 llegó a su punto más alto. El Heraldo acusó a Vasconcelos de dilapidar grandes sumas, habló de "precios fabulosos, ganancias pingües, con gran desarroche" [1086]

The controversy about muralism became extremely violent and, going beyond the frescos of the Preparatory *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* and of the Secretariat, critics raised doubts about Vasconcelos's whole cultural program and about his handling of public funds. The attacks took two different tacks. Above all, Rivera and the painters sponsored by the ministry were accused of being paid "fabulous" prices for their frescos and their other works, of receiving "substantial salaries," and of " wasting" State money. Obliquely, they were accused of associating, direct or indirectly, through their proclamations and declarations in favor of the setting-up of a socialist society, with Plutarco Elías Calles's campaign, which began in 1923, to succeed Obregón as president.

An anonymous editorialist of *El Heraldo de México* began the polemic, insinuating that in fact most critics and Mexican intellectuals felt disgusted by the paintings. The editorialist claimed further that they did not approve of the paintings, but, since they all depended more or less on the budget of the Secretariat, where most of them worked, they kept quiet and sacrificed their aesthetic convictions to their material interests. It was claimed that Vasconcelos himself had been deceived, and that he was blind to reality because of the swarm of flatterers who whirled around him. [1087]

These accusations called forth a furious response, signed by the members of the Union of Painters and Sculptors and by about thirty intellectuals, in which the painters affirmed that their salary was no greater than that of the ordinary house-painters. [1088]

They accused their detractors of being "ignorant reactionaries" and "failures who are envious of artists whose work corresponds to the sentiments of the people."

Se ha iniciado una campaña contra el movimiento de pintura actual de México. Sólo por la ignorancia y la envidia puede ser atacado. Y para que el golpe tenga carácter de infamia mal calculada, se pretende mezclar el movimiento actual de pintura con la política personalista. Se nos tira la piedra del dinero manchada por aquello de gran derroche,

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[1084] Crispín, "Interview with Diego Rivera", *El Universal*, July 10 1923.
[1085] D. Wolfe, Bertram, "Art and Revolution", *The Nation*, August 27 1924. Quoted in *Signos*, 1991, p. 15.
[1086] *El Heraldo de México*, June 20 1923. Quoted in *Signos*, 1991, p. 15.
[1087] "El caso del pintor Diego Rivera", *El Heraldo*, 10 and 19 June 1923. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, pp. 428-429.
[1088] This protest is published by *El Universal Ilustrado*, June 28 1923, p. 54.

precios fabulosos, ganancias pingües, etc. Al pintor que más se le paga en la Secretaría de Educación Pública se le liquida lo mismo que a un obrero pintor que cobra el precio común y corriente pintando paredes lisas por metro cuadrado. El público puede convencerse revisando los contratos que tienen los pintores con la Secretaría de Educación Pública. De ninguna manera esta protesta significa disculpa. Estamos seguros que el movimiento actual de pintura en México es expresión de la afirmación de nuestra nacionalidad, sus enemigos no lo atacan a nombre del buen gusto, porque el gusto que lo norma, manteniéndose Mexicano, encuentra acuerdo con el de los hombres civilizados de aquí y del extranjero; como lo demuestran las opiniones estampadas por escrito sobre nuestra labor en México, E.U. y Europa [1089]

Diego Rivera about the insults in the press: "today, when uncivilized people try to insult this painter by calling him a painter of *pulquerías*, he feels that in this they are paying him the highest of compliments."

Al pueblo sólo le quedaba como edificio público la iglesia donde (testimonios son los exvotos pintados sobre la hoja de lata) los milagros de la imagen favorita servían de lenitivo al dolor de sus miserias, y la taberna donde la embriaguez acallaba su desesperación; en esos lugares, únicos que le quedaban, el pueblo siguió pintando, y por eso hoy que los zafios llaman al pintor actual, creyendo insultarlo, pintor de pulquería, él siente que con esto le tributan el mejor de los elogios. [1090]

In June 1924, a group of students attacked some murals in the National Preparatory School. Rivera, the most prominent figure in the muralist movement, did not support his colleagues when their murals were attacked, claiming that this was a minor incident. The 11 September 1924 *El Machete*
announced that Rivera had resigned from the Union of Painters and Sculptors because he had a different opinion about the public protest the artists made at the time of the destruction of the murals in the Preparatory School.

The conflicts between those who attacked the murals and the artists who defended them led to physical threats and the use of firearms. Orozco relates the following curious story: "Ignacio Asúnsolo presented himself one morning at the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* in front of the sixty stonemasons that he had at his service and seizing his 45 gun he begun a shooting that drained the shots of his three cartridge belts, and he and his brigade yelled *you die* to the students who did not appreciate beauty."

Ignacio Asúnsolo se presentó una mañana en la Preparatoria al frente de los sesenta canteros que tenía a su servicio y empuñando su pistola 45 comenzó una balacera que agotó los tiros de sus tres cananas, y él y su brigada lanzaron mueras a los estudiantes reacios a la belleza. [1091]

Even Charlot writes about Asúnsolo's gun:

I arrived with the contingent that left Mexico City on February 26, 1923. Though few in number, we were a conspicuous lot, a handful of civilians in a sea of uniformed politicos. Nonetheless, or perhaps because of this, we acted fierce: the sculptor Nacho Asúnsolo, not entirely sober, held up our fellow passengers with a substantial pistol "that my General Obregón gave me with his own hand." One should, however, ascribe the feat of cowing a carload of sharpshooting generals into submission to the political magic associated with

[1089] Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 425. According to Tibol that protest was published in *El Mundo*, April 26 1923. According to Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 429, the protest is published by *El Universal*, June 1923, 28 p. 54.
[1090] "El caso del pintor Diego Rivera" (2th part). *El Heraldo*, 19 July 1923.
[1091] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 111-113.

the weapon rather than to its owner's momentarily erratic aim. Feeling pushed into the background for once and brooding at a car window, Rivera made a weak bid for public attention by shooting a ragged hole through one of his own sleeves, boldly claiming it as proof of a murderous attack. [1092]

In public opinion, both national and international, these incidents gave rise to a lot of stories, which were spread by the press and entered the collective imagination. These kind of stories helped reinforce the building of myths.

Rivera: "When mural painting in Mexico began, a bloody assault of the whole lower bourgeoisie against the painters started. That attack increased to the maximum of its upward curve, when I began painting the frescos at the Secretariat of Public Education. In that curious and epic-funny time, there was not a single daily newspaper or magazine that did not devote at least one article a day to covering me with insults and disparaging my painting."

Desde que empezó a producirse el periodo de pintura mural en México, dio principio un asalto encarnizado de la subburguesía entera contra los pintores. Ese ataque se recrudeció al máximo de su curva ascendente, cuando empecé a pintar los frescos de la Secretaria de Educación Pública. En esa época curiosa y épico-drolática, no había cotidiano ni revista que no me dedicara diariamente cuando menos un artículo en que me cubría de insultos y abominaba de mi pintura. [1093]

Some frescos at the Secretariat depicted the *Distribution of the Land,* with Zapata and Felipe Carrillo, the heroes of the agrarian Revolution, accompanied by brown peasants in white shirts. Zapata was a favorite theme of Rivera's; he painted him three times. According to Wolfe:

Though he never was to admit or become fully aware of it, the admiration conceived for Zapata was to become the core of his Revolutionary philosophy for the rest of his life. [1094]

Siqueiros describes Rivera as a "a mystic zapatist."

Rivera era un zapatista místico. [Más tarde pintó un San Zapata en los corredores altos de la Secretaría de Educación Pública.] Acostumbraba a componer historias mágicas sobre la personalidad de ese caudillo. Hablaba de cartas que revelaban a Zapata dueño de una claridad ideológica sólo comparable a la de Lenin [...]. *Y éstas habían sido escritas mucho antes de la Revolución rusa.* [1095]

Raquel Tibol: "Rivera's zapatismo can be seen in almost all his pictorial and graphic works carried out from 1923 onwards."

[...] el zapatismo de Rivera se puede apreciar en casi todos sus trabajos pictóricos y gráficos realizados de 1923 en adelante". [1096]

[1092] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 306.
[1093] Rivera, Diego, "La pintura Mexicana: los 16 años de Diego en Europa y su vuelta al solar", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 276.
[1094] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 62.
[1095] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 212.
[1096] Tibol, Raquel, *Diego Rivera Ilustrador*, SEP, Mexico 1986, p. 36. Quoted in Mejorada, Alícia Sánchez, "Un buen libro sobre Rivera", *Artes Plásticas*, Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. 2, nr. 6, December 1987, p. 84.

Rivera painted Emiliano Zapata, "The Attila of the South" or the "Commander from the South", three times: first on the South wall of the ground floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*, then on the South wall of the second floor of the *patio de las fiestas*, finished toward November 1928, then on the North wall of the second floor of the *Patio del Trabajo*, as martyr. Besides these representations of Emiliano Zapata, the mythological leader of the rural revolutionary army of the South, Rivera exalted him on the walls of the National School of Agriculture of Chapingo, in the Palacio of Cortés in Cuernavaca [1097], in the National Palacio, and in the *Teatro de los Insurgentes*. The inclusion of the character of Emiliano Zapata in the Secretariat is a political act, a rhetorical utopia, that Rivera, and not only he, fed on for the rest of his life.

The presentation of the natives in the murals of the Secretariat of Public Education is quite overwhelming; each colored *tablero* is an elegy, an exaltation of the indigenous peoples. In the *Patio de las Fiestas* Rivera presents a succession of cheerful paintings showing traditional customs, with less solemn characters than those of his previous murals.

The Tianguis (The Market place) is one of the most important works in the Secretariat of Public Education. Rivera had resolved the initial difficulties he had experienced with the fresco technique by the time he came to paint it, he had accustomed himself to the speed imposed by the technique of painting on the wet plaster, and he had reduced his drawing to firm, expressive contours. *The tianguis* covers two big panels separated by doors and united in the upper part above the doors. For the first time, Rivera conceived the wall as a whole and applied a complex organization of space, whereby multiple juxtaposed planes are staggered, allowing him to place dozens of characters one above the other.

Rivera's didactic-narrative orientation brought decisive changes in his formal expression, with a growing number of figures, and the accumulation in a single space of a large number of details, all related to one another. However his ambitions led only to the accumulation of figures, and it proved impossible for him to establish geometric relationships between the different formal elements, and the narrative thread ended up being lost in a tangle of ways and colors where each square centimeter is occupied by some detail. In *The Tianguais* Rivera already seems to be suffering from the *horror vacui*, which became so pronounced in later years, as seen in the stairways of *National Palace*. In *The Tianguis* the painter projects an idealized image of the country world, drawn with an evident paternalism.

In the elevator of the ground floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted: *The harvest*, *The sinkhole*, *The bath in Tehuantepec*, *Tehuana with boy*, *Mayan mestiza with boy*, *Market scene*, *Figures with a scale*, *Recumbent Tehuanas*, *Tehuanas*, *Tropical landscape*, *The trapiche* (*The Sugar Mill*), *Palms*, as well as other ornamental topics and hammers and sickles.

First floor of the *Patio del Trabajo*

On the North wall of the first floor of the *Patio del Trabajo*, Rivera from 1924 painted *grisailles* with the following subjects: *Surveying*, *Medicine*, *Chemistry*, *Electric machine*, *Electric arch*. The *grisailles* on the East wall represent: *X Rays*, *Geology*, *Work*, *The product of work*, *The operation*, *Symbol of the infinite*. On the South wall Rivera painted further *grisailles*: *Research*, *Cactaceae*, *War*, *Science*, *Research workers*.

In this part of the Secretariat, Diego Rivera painted a series of vignettes to look like bas-reliefs. The topics are scientific; for example, one vignette shows a surgical operation, a copy in *grisaille* of an early oil painted in Paris. These small panels are rather ornamental, thus differing from those on the ground and third floors.

[1097] Rivera, *Zapata*, 1930-31, Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 40.

First floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*

On the South wall of the first floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted, between 1924 and 1925, Shields of the States of the Mexican Republic: *Sinaloa*, *Sonora* and *Nayarit*, *Chihuahua*, *Coahuila*, *Nuevo León*, *Tamaulipas*, *Zacatecas*, *Aguascalientes*, *Guanajuato*, *Durango*, *San Luis Potosí*. On the West wall of the first floor, he painted the Shields of the following states: *Morelos – Querétaro*, *Hidalgo*, *Mexico, Jalisco*, *Colima*, *Guerrero – Michoacán,* and on the North wall of *Tlaxcala*, *Puebla*, *Veracruz*, *Oaxaca*, *Chiapas*, *Tabasco*, *Campeche*, *Quintana Roo* and *Yucatán*.

Second floor of the *Patio de las Fiestas*

Rivera's murals on the second floor of the Secretariat, painted after Calles came to power, are the works most often reproduced and commented on. I will examine some of the more controversial images, in order to elucidate how certain myths and commonplaces were constructed.

Rivera's fame was on the increase, and the writings of certain foreign authors about him and the other muralists gave rise to various myths and crude simplifications about Rivera, who, more than anybody else, fomented much imprecision and generalizations with his fairy-tales, thus enlarging his fame still more. A typical example of this is D. H. Lawrence, who wrote *The Plumed Serpent* in 1926, a novel reflecting Lawrence's fascination with Aztec civilization.

For Shifra M Goldman: "The "primitive" or "late" people were supposedly instinctive, less repressed; they were more near the animal nature, and they were more exotic. In this consists the essence of the novel *The plumed serpent* by D. H. Lawrence, written in 1926. Artists like Diego Rivera who had spent a long time in Paris, substituted [a fascination with] the pre-Columban [culture] for the African, then in vogue in Europe as a result of Cubism."

> *Los pueblos "primitivos" o "atrasados" eran supuestamente instintivos, menos reprimidos; estaban más cerca de la naturaleza animal, y eran más exóticos. En esto consiste la esencia de la novela La serpiente emplumada de D. H. Lawrence, escrita en 1926. Artistas como Diego Rivera, que pasó larga temporada en París, sustituyeron lo africano, entonces en boga en Europa como resultado del Cubismo, por lo precolombino.* [1098]

Wolfe: "the admired art critics of New York and Paris began to arrive and to praise Rivera. Enthusiastic articles appeared in the foreign press. Mexican journals, ever sensitive to praise from such quarters, translated them."

> *The hue and cry was at its loudest when suddenly it trailed off into weak and isolated yips of uncertainty. What confounded respectable critics and the gente decente was appreciation of the work in unexpected quarters. They had set up against his "ugly" Mexicanism the refined standards of New York, Los Angeles, and Paris. But rumors of something extraordinary in painting had spread abroad; the admired art critics of New York and Paris began to arrive and to praise Rivera. Enthusiastic articles appeared in the foreign press. Mexican journals, ever sensitive to praise from such quarters, translated them. For some unaccountable reason he was regarded, the respectable public suddenly realized, as one of the attractions of Mexico. Detractors were reduced to uncomprehending silence.* [1099]

[1098] Goldman, Shifra M., *Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, p. 10.
[1099] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 204.

On the West wall of the second floor of *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted, in 1926, a work that has come to be known as the *Corrido de la Revolución* (The ballad of the Revolution). The individual themes were: *Cantando el Corrido* [1100]*, To work, Snake from the náhuatl mythology, The Union, Feathered snake, Alphabetization – Learning how to read, The threshing-floor – The crop* (signed)*, The rain, Náhuatl Snake, ears, wheat faces and the harvesters' sickle.* On the North wall of the second floor of *Patio de las Fiestas*, Rivera painted, in 1926, the following topics: *The tractor, The capitalist's dinner, The sages, Banquet of Wall Street, The dream – The night of the poor, Branches of trees loaded with fruits, The fruits of the earth, The orgy – The night of the rich ones, We want to work, Guarantees – Waste of the capitalism, The so dear home – End of the Corrido, Drawing* (signed)*.* On the South wall of the second floor of *Patio de las Fiestas* (finished toward November 1928), Rivera painted: *Drawing, In the Arsenal, In the trench* (dated 1928)*, The wounded, The one who wants to eat he has to work* (signed)*, The cooperative, The capitalist's death* (signed)*, A single front* (signed 7 November 1928)*, Our bread – The share of the bread* (signed)*, The protest, Emiliano Zapata* (signed)*.*

Rivera used some elements of the pre-Columbian mythology for the first time in his mural works at the Secretariat. Thus ornamental elements, such as the snake, are side by side with elements of *Revolutionary* mythology, which he was still developing.

Olivier Debroise says that: "In this phase [starting from 1925-1926] Rivera's mural work reveals a wide range of contradictory enthusiasms derived from the confrontation of ideologies and the diverse ways of matching scientific and technological advances and the modifications of the daily landscape, to a social morality which was about to desintegrate."

> *En esta fase [a partir de 1925-1926] la obra mural de Rivera se inscribe en una amplia y contradictoria corriente de entusiasmos que se derivan del enfrentamiento de ideologías y de las diversas maneras de aparear los avances Científicos y tecnológicos, las modificaciones del paisaje cotidiano, con una moral social a punto de sucumbir. Entre la tentación progresista y la nostalgia, el mesianismo de la era industrial y el mito de una Edad de Oro impoluta, el Hombre en la encrucijada. El mismo Pantocrator de 1922 en la bóveda del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria, que observaba en 1927, como si los analizara, los ciclos orgánicos de la Tierra fecunda, dueño ahora de su saber y de su herramienta, preside la Gran Reconstrucción, las manos sólidamente aferradas a las manijas de control.* [1101]

Rivera painted Zapata again, one of his favorite topics.

As Rodrigues says: "Physically dead, but spiritually alive, Zapata is present with his horse and with his flag ["Land and freedom"] listening to the songs sung in tribute to him. When integrating the "absent one " into the scene of the peasants who are glorifying his achievements, Diego Rivera masterfully erases the barrier between the life and the death of the hero he immortalizes."

> *Físicamente muerto, pero espiritualmente vivo, Zapata asiste con su caballo y con su bandera ["Tierra y libertad"] a los cánticos que se le tributan. Al integrar el "ausente" a la escena de los campesinos que glorifican sus hazañas, Diego Rivera borra magistralmente la barrera entre la vida y la muerte del héroe a quien aquí inmortaliza.* [1102]

[1100] *Singing the Corrido*, a Mexican ballad.

[1101] Debroise, Olivier, "La gran reconstrucción y la tierra fecunda [La evolución de Diego Rivera, 1917-1920]", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, pp. 156-157.

[1102] *Guía de los murales de Diego Rivera en la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Presentación y texto de Antonio Rodríguez, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Cultura, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1984, p. 106.

In his History of Mexican Mural Painting the same author says:

> *Zapata, who is also listening to the legendary tale of his exploits, is presented like a demi-god, rising above his companions in arms, but never ceasing to be one of them.* [1103]

The dinner in Wall Street

According to Rivera, society is divided into three basic sectors: the peasants, the workers and the rich. These last, of course, are decadent, corrupt and wicked; on the North wall Rivera represents them in two panels: *The orgy* and *The dinner in Wall Street*, or *The dinner of the rich*. Rivera adopts a pamphlet-like and populist attitude to represent those who were later his patrons, commissioning from him important works which made him still more famous.

Wolfe: "when the Rockefellers hired Diego to decorate Radio City, they could not allege that they were not forewarned, for they were already familiar with this mural."

> *The illustration shows Mexican and American capitalists and their womenfolk, at a table before champagne and ticker tape, a bank vault, loudspeakers, the ticker, and a replica of the Statue of Liberty. Those at table include caricatures of John D. Rockefeller the First, the elder J. P. Morgan, and Henry Ford. Certainly, when the Rockefellers hired Diego to decorate Radio City, they could not allege that they were not forewarned, for they were already familiar with this mural.* [1104]

But the matter can be viewed differently: Rivera, who supposedly criticizes the capitalists, sells himself to these capitalists, as will be discussed later. This applies to J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, and Rockefeller. Yes, they were aware of Rivera's posture, and yes, they did hire him.

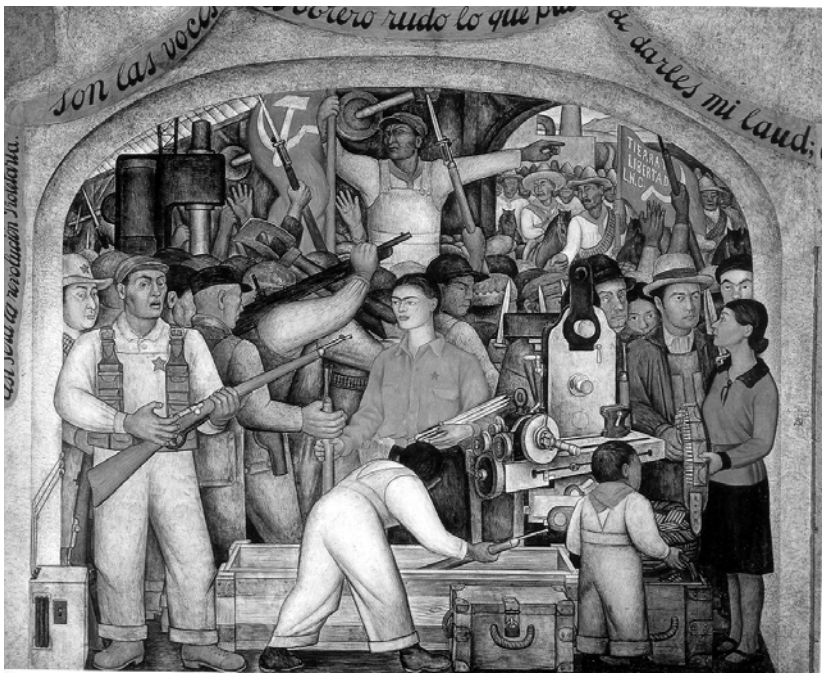


Figure 65. Diego Rivera: *The Arsenal. Patio de las Fiestas*, Secretary of Public Education, Mexico City, 1928.

The Arsenal

The panel entitled *The Arsenal* (**Figure 65**) [1105] is one of Rivera's most frequently reproduced works. In it Rivera represented in a rhetorical way, in a combination of art and propaganda, a *Revolution* that never existed. By means of this falsification of history, the imagination of Rivera and the demagoguery and

[1103] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 226
[1104] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 209.
[1105] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 67.

populism of the State present to the people, as a substitute for real reforms, an armed phase of a Revolution that never had existed and that would never exist, outside its symbolic representation on the walls painted by Rivera.

According to Antonio Rodriguez, "Diego Rivera presents an idealized vision of the bourgeois-democratic Revolution in Mexico."

> *Taking as theme the corrido [popular ballad] Así sera la Revolución proletária ['This is how the proletarian Revolution will be'], published in El Machete, Diego Rivera presents an idealized vision of the bourgeois-democratic Revolution in Mexico, mingling what happened with what he would have liked to have happened, or rather with what will have to happen. This sentence defines Rivera's real attitude. He does not say that the bourgeois-democratic Revolution was all couleur de rose, nor has he painted it as such. He shows what the proletarian Revolution will be like when the workers have taken possession of the factories and the remainder of capitalist society has been swept away. He does not reproduce history, or not only history; he prophesies. Criticisms accusing him of demagogy and of falsifying history by saying 'This was the Revolution' are unfair. He only predicts what will be when it happens.* [1106]

Many Mexicans believe that the events as painted really did take place; that this is not the case does not matter, because there is another "truth" level, the representational truth of the mural, which is no less important than the historical truth. Rivera lends his narrative credibility by representing known characters in *Revolutionary* postures: they are depicted distributing weapons in order to defend and consolidate the Revolution.

It was in the arsenal that the Revolution was about to be unchained. Among the numerous figures represented in this fresco are David Alfaro Siqueiros, Frida Kahlo, Tina Modotti, Julio Antonio Mella, etc. There is an obvious danger: the Revolution, so richly represented by Rivera, can just stay, neutralized and folklorized, on the walls, in a self-legitimation.

The character of Siqueiros appears to the left in the mural, with a five-pointed star in his Texan hat and holding a rifle in his right hand. David Alfaro Siqueiros, who was at that time a friend and political ally of Rivera, wears a captain's uniform, reflecting the rank he is said to have had during the years of the Revolution. (He later fought in the Spanish Civil War and became a Colonel.) To his left a painted banner proclaims *Así será la Revolución proletaria*, So will be the proletarian Revolution.

Frida Kahlo is in the center of the painting distributing rifles and bayonets to the workers. Rivera had got to know Frida Kahlo in 1928, and they married the following year. Rivera represents the artist, who became a member of the PCM and an active communist the same year, with the red star on her chest, just like the other members of the party. Frida Kahlo did not distribute weapons in 1928 to rebels who wanted to build a socialist Mexico. In fact, on June 16 1928, some weapons were distributed among workers and peasants in the course of a meeting; however the reason was not that so that they could put an end to the bourgeois government and to consummate the proletarian Revolution, but so that they could assist government forces in their struggle against the *Cristeros*.

On the right-hand side Rivera painted Julio Antonio Mella, who was murdered on January 10, 1929 in the streets of Mexico City by order of the Cuban dictator, Gerardo Machado. Rivera portrays Mella being given cartridges by Tina Modotti, an American of Italian origin who was very active in the anti-fascist movement.

Rivera: "In 1929 Julio Mella was murdered on orders of President Machado. The Mexican Government, however, decided not to see a political motive in the crime. It claimed that the murder was a crime of

[1106] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 225-226

passion, and prosecuted Tina, whose political points of view were offensive for the régime, as the presumed murderess."

> *Julio Mella era un dirigente revolucionario cubano que había huido de la dictadura del Presidente Gerardo Machado. Mella había llegado a México en busca de refugio, y aquí había conocido a Tina Modotti, una excelente pintora y fotógrafa. Yo me había mostrado amistoso con Tina antes de mi viaje a Rusia; en realidad, esta amistad había sido la causa final de que Lupe se divorciara de mí. Mucho antes de mi regreso a Mexico, Tina y Mella se habían hecho amantes. En 1929 Julio Mella fue asesinado por órdenes del Presidente Machado. El Gobierno Mexicano, sin embargo, decidió no ver un móvil político en el crimen. Pretendió que el asesinato era un crimen pasional, y enjuició a Tina, cuyos puntos de vista políticos eran ofensivos para el régimen, como la presunta asesina. El alegato del Gobierno se basaba únicamente en el hecho de que Tina había sido la más reciente amante de Mella. De esto deducía que Tina se había cansado de Mella y había decidido dar fin a sus relaciones asesinándolo.* [1107]

In 1923 the photographer Edward Weston had left his wife and family and moved to Mexico with Tina Modotti, taking with them his eldest son, thirteen-year-old Chandler. In 1922 she had already visited Mexico and got to know Diego Rivera, Xavier Guerrero, as well as other members of the progressive artists' circle. She had been fascinated with the monumental works of Rivera and took Weston to the Secretary of Education to show him the painted walls. Chandler was utterly fascinated by Rivera, his bulk, his contagious laughter and his impressive revolver, and he asked if Rivera used it to defend his paintings. [1108] Together, they kept a studio in Mexico City until 1926. Weston established contacts with Mexican intellectuals and artists, including the muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, with whom he became close friends. Tina Modotti was Weston's pupil, model and lover and became a remarkable photographer who made sensitive studies of Mexican women and near-abstract still-lifes as well as recording the work of the Mexican muralists.

Los sabios (The sages)

In this panel Rivera made fun of the prominent intellectuals of his time, even attacking José Vasconcelos, the initial promoter of Rivera's mural work. Rivera mocked Vasconcelos, his educational projects, and his oriental Theosophy. Vasconcelos appears here astride a Hindu elephant made of ivory with a goose feather in his hand: a false prophet on a small elephant, dipping his quill into a spittoon. [1109]

For Esther Acevedo: "Vasconcelos, sitting on the white elephant of his extraordinary projects, turned his back – according to the painting – on the cultural essences of the country."

> *Vasconcelos, sentado sobre el elefante blanco de sus extraordinarios proyectos, daba la espalda – según la pintura – a las esencias culturales del país.* [1110]

According to Charlot:

[1107] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 126-127.
[1108] Newhall, Nancy, (ed.), *The daybooks of Edward Weston*, vol. 1: Mexico, New York 1973, p. 35. Quoted in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 34.
[1109] See **Figure 54**, p. 263.
[1110] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 118.

Rivera represented Vasconcelos in a panel of the Ministry that Vasconcelos himself had built as a dwarf comically straddling a white elephant, dipping his pen in a spittoon. [1111]

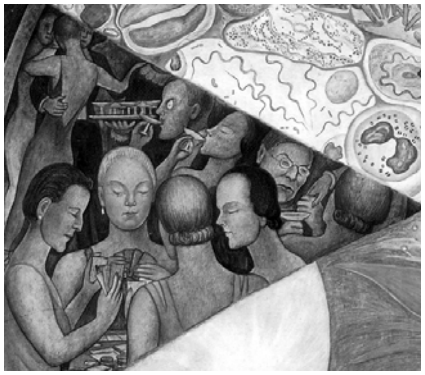


Figure 66. Diego Rivera: Detai from *Man at the crossroads looking with hope and high vision to the choosing of a new and better future*. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. [1112]

Alberto Híjar Serrano writes that "in the second patio of the Secretariat of Public Education, in *El corrido zapatista* he painted grotesque representations of "The sages" with a pile of books by not only Compte, Spencer, Stuart Mill and Gladstone, but also by Churchill, and María de Jorge Isaac. Thus Romanticism, imperialism and positivism constitute bourgeois knowledge."

[...] en el segundo patio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, en El corrido zapatista, pintó grotescamente a "Los sabios" con una pila de libros con títulos de Compte, Spencer, Stuart Mill y Gladstone, pero también de Churchill, y María de Jorge Isaac. Romanticismo, imperialismo y positivismo componen así el saber burgués. [1113]

This is Rivera's personal vengeance, as when he painted Rockefeller being attacked by bacteria or viruses, in the painting in *Bellas Artes* (**Figure 66**). These are personal "comments" by Rivera, a public provocation in a public and representative space, easy to access. Often in his murals Rivera depicted his (many) personal conflicts with individuals who had been his friends and/or patrons, as in the case of Vasconcelos, Rockefeller, etc., or historical characters such as Cortés. An important aspect in this context is the inclusion of painted sentences in several murals, for example, the sentence "God doesn't exist". Such sentences were at the same time iconical. Of course these images are long-lasting, which meant that Rivera always had the last word in the many controversies which he engaged in.

Rivera knew no scruples when he attacked his old friends and allies, whether he was dealing with Vasconcelos, Siqueiros, Alberto Pani or José Juan Tablada. On 22 June, 1923, Rivera, together with other artists, had signed a manifesto against the attacks on the murals which stated that "a campaign has begun against the current movement of painting in Mexico". This manifesto was signed by, among others José Juan Tablada. A couple of years later, in one of the panels of this series, *The sages*, Diego Rivera portrayed the workers in the upper part of the panel looking down on the intellectuals of Mexico, among them the poet José Juan Tablada, playing a lyre, unaware of the problems of the people.

He who would eat must work

On the south wall a panel, *He who would eat must work*, shows an armed worker giving a broom to Antonieta Rivas Mercado, the maecenas of a group of artists. In the same mural, a soldier kicks Salvador Novo's bottom. [1114]

[1111] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 303.
[1112] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, pp. 134-135.
[1113] Híjar Serrano, Alberto, "Diego Rivera: contribución política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 62.
[1114] Novo had protected and defended Rivera, during the period when Rivera had followed the ideas of Vasconcelos.

Second floor of the *Patio del Trabajo*

Figure 67. Diego Rivera: *The Architect* (self-portrait). *Patio del Trabajo*. Secretary of Public Education, 1928. [1115]



On the North wall of the second floor of the *Patio del Trabajo* Rivera painted, in 1928: *Cuauhtémoc as martyr*, *Emiliano Zapata as martyr*, *Felipe Carrillo Puerto as martyr*, *Otilio Montaño as martyr*, *Angels*, *Red star*, *Wheat faces*, *Fruit*s, and the following *grisailles: The zandunga – The dance of the sun and the moon*, *The Music and Three snakes.* On the East wall of the second floor Rivera painted, in 1928, the *grisailles The Drummer*, *The Dance of the Deer*, *The painting* and *The scribe.* He also painted the following topics: *Ornamental subject*, *Wheat ears*, *Women with vessel and tablespoon*, *Fraternity*, *Angel*, *Women with flowers and fruits*, *Wheat ears*, *Ornamental subject.* On the South wall of the second floor Rivera painted, also in 1928: *Wheat faces*, *The three Graces – The President*, *Eagle with snake*, *The Sciences*, *The Proclamador*, *Red star*, *The Arts*, *The Distributor*, *Condor*, *Fruits and the grisailles Architecture*, *Sculpture*, *Snakes*, *and Snails*. In the stairways of the second floor: *Woman with pitcher*, *Birth of the sea*, *The sea*, *The coast – Marina*, *The diver and the cloud*, *Tropical Mexico – Landscape of Tehuantepec*, *Xochipilli and Worshipers*, *The plantation*, *The country property*, *Peasant sharpening his machete*, *The peon's funeral, El Antiplano*, *Proletarian justice and Mechanization of the field*, *Construction of a New World – The Teacher*, *The Painter*, *The Sculptor*, and *The Architect* (a self-portrait, **Figure 67**)

In this part of the work, Rivera portrays, in an almost religious manner, four mythical characters who became martyrs, namely Cuauhtémoc and the heroes of the *Mexican Revolution*: Emiliano Zapata, Felipe Carrillo Puerto and Eulalio Montaño. He depicts all four figures mummified, wrapped in wide red cloaks, transfigured by their martyrdom. He uses the same techniques in the *National Palacio's* stairway, to create a complete panorama of the history of Mexico, a synthesis of his very personal value system replete with anachronisms.

Carlos Monsiváis writes that Rivera "goes from historical synthesis to racial sarcasm [sic], from the heroic representation of Zapata to the exaltation of emperor Cuauhtémoc."

> *Rivera no se detiene en el dramatismo de peones y soldaderas, en el patetismo de magueyes y líderes agrarios envueltos en la tierra como una semilla. El va de la síntesis histórica al sarcasmo racial, de la representación heroica de Zapata a la exaltación del emperador Cuauhtémoc.* [1116]

According to Antonio Rodríguez: "After the parenthesis which the painter dedicates to a pictorial gloss of the Mexican ballad of the Revolution, Diego Rivera recaptures the thread of the poetic ballad in which he exalts the heroes of the workplace and of the Revolutionary struggle."

[1115] Rivera, *The Painter, The Sculptor, and The Architect*. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 22.

[1116] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Diego Rivera, creador de públicos", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 11.

Después del paréntesis consagrado por el pintor a glosar pictóricamente el Corrido de la Revolución, Diego Rivera retoma el hilo de la balada poética con que exalta a los héroes del trabajo y de las luchas revolucionarias. En una serie de cuatro tableros que se inicia con la figura artísticamente recreada de Cuauhtémoc, alude el pintor a la resurrección de los mártires que habiendo sido sacrificados viven eternamente en la memoria del pueblo. Es fácil identificar a Cuauhtémoc, en el primero de estos paneles, por la honda que remite a los combates para la defensa de Tenochtitlán, y por la cuerda con que los conquistadores lo ahorcaron. [1117]

As Alicia Azuela de la Cueva states: "Diego Rivera introduces, starting from the murals at the Secretariat of Education, a series of iconographical symbols that become typical of his work and those of some other muralists."

Diego Rivera introduce a partir de los murales de la Secretaría de Educación una serie de símbolos iconográficos que pasan a ser típicos en su obra y los de algunos otros muralistas. Entre los principales están la trinidad obrero, campesino soldado; en contraposición de clero, militarismo y burguesía o imperialismo; surge también la trinidad Zapata, Carrillo Puerto, Otilio Montaño, y el uso de representaciones folklóricas o prehispánicas para simbolizar el mundo ideal del México prehispánico o "Marxista". [1118]

Antonio Rodrigues: "Dressed in a red tunic and wrapped in the luminous aura of the martyrs, Zapata survives his physical death in the memory of the peasants for whom the legend fought and died."

Vestido con una túnica roja y envuelto en el aura luminosa de los mártires, Zapata sobrevive a su muerte física en la memoria de los campesinos por quienes legendariamente luchó y murió. [1119]

Vasconcelos, who had no sympathy for Zapata, says of Rivera: "The old pensioner of the Porfirian dictatorship began to speak of communism, and he flattered the new [regime], fearful that they would throw him out onto the street, since one of the accusations hurled against me was the fact of having supported Rivera. He was successful in this maneuver; soon he was the official painter of the new régime."

Diego, que ya se había puesto a pintar en los muros de la Secretaría, arriba de las decoraciones por mí sugeridas, y rompiendo el plan general de la obra, unas alegorías en honor de Zapata y e Felipe Carrillo, el mártir callista, se puso a injuriar bajamente al ya casi anciano don Ezequiel Chávez. El antiguo pensionado de la dictadura Porfirista comenzaba a hablar de comunismo y adulaba a los nuevos, temeroso de que lo echasen a la calle, ya que uno de los cargos que se esgrimían en mi contra era el haberlo apoyado. Le dio resultado la maniobra; pronto fue el pintor oficial del nuevo régimen [1120]

Charlot puts forward an interesting theory about relationships between Vasconcelos and Zapata: "Vasconcelos escaped assassins only by changing his residence every night."

[1117] *Guía de los murales de Diego Rivera en la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Presentación y texto de Antonio Rodríguez, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Cultura, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1984, p, 127.
[1118] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 96.
[1119] *Guía de los murales de Diego Rivera en la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Presentación y texto de Antonio Rodríguez, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Cultura, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1984, p. 130.
[1120] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, pp. 260-261.

A deal is known by which General Villa agrees to surrender General Lucio Blanco, Secretary of the Interior [...] to be shot by General Zapata, who has for some time been fancying his head. General Zapata expressed a similar desire concerning Councillor Vasconcelos, Secretary of Public Instruction. The mustachioed chieftain coveted the portfolio of education for his mentor, General Otilio Montaño, who had drawn up the basic charter of Zapatismo. Loath to gratify Zapata's desire, however worthy the candidate for his secretaryship, Vasconcelos escaped assassins only by changing his residence every night. [1121]

The character of Cuauhtémoc, so symbolically important, appeared seldom in Rivera's murals, in marked contrast to his frequent appearance in the work of Siqueiros. Rivera represents Cuauhtémoc here in a rather subdued way. The stylized figure of the martyr of the Conquest is only identifiable thanks to the sling which he carries, symbolizing the defense of Tenochtitlán and the rope with which the Spaniards hung him.

The stairway

The stairway of the Secretariat of Public Education has three levels, like the building itself. Because of that and of its reduced dimensions, the mural could not be conceived of as a whole. In order "to read" this mural it is necessary to climb the stairs and to discover each sequence separately. On each floor Rivera portrayed a sequence seemingly without relationship to the other two. On closer inspection it transpires that they are integrated in such a way that none is conceivable without the other. The levels are: a geography lesson, by means of a succession of landscapes; the history of the human race from primitive man through to the birth of *Revolutionary* man; and a history of the painting.

Two panels stand out as being especially important: the panel where Xochipilli is represented and the panel with Rivera's self-portrait.

Rivera first uses pre-Columbian elements at the Secretariat of Public Education, painting Xochipilli, the god of love and flowers and the arts, sitting in an unreal jungle backed by a tropical landscape. Antonio Rodríguez contends that "Rivera first attempted the subject of Mexico's past on the walls of the Secretariat for Public Education, and it was to remain his main theme for the rest of his life."

Rivera first attempted the subject of Mexico's past on the walls of the Secretariat for Public Education, and it was to remain his main theme for the rest of his life. First came the epic of Nezahualcoyotl in the frescoes of the Patio of Labour; then the stylized, codex-like profiles of women sitting in pairs; further on, a statue of Xochipilli in the earthly paradise of the staircase murals; only towards the end, when painting the ballad of Zapata, did Rivera make full use of pre-conquest motifs: Xochicalco's great wriggling snake, the mask of Tláloc, and the glyphs for water, fire and motion now appear on the walls together with the latest symbols – the hammer and sickle. [1122]



Figure 68. pre-Columbian sculpture of Xochipilli.

For Betty Ann Brown Rivera was well aware of pre-Columbian sculpture:

[1121] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 85.
[1122] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, pp. 226-227.

Rivera was well aware of pre-Columbian sculpture – soon after its discovery he made use of the sculptural image of Xochipilli – and favored the critically acclaimed pieces, such as the masterful Coatlicue, which was found under the Plaza Mayor at the end of the 19th century. [1123]

The sculpture of Xochipilli which inspired Rivera is of a figure with bent arms and open hands, sitting cross-legged (**Figure 68**).

Rivera represents Xochipilli on the ground in the clearing of a dense jungle. It was only some years later that Rivera became interested in the flat planes and linear elements which characterize the *Codices*. A number of female nudes surround Xochipilli, two of them looking toward the deity, the other two apparently sunk in a kind of trance. The figure on the right is holding a flute, a reference to music, one of the attributes of Xochipilli. The group formed by Xochipilli and his worshipers lacks the kind of dynamic representation one would expect in the treatment of the themes of love, music, dance and games. Rivera's formal solution seems to only be an anecdotal visual reference to the native gods, in a jungle reminiscent of those of Rousseau (**Figure 69**).



Figure 69. Diego Rivera: *La Justicia proletaria y mecanización del campo*. Stairway of the Secretariat of Public Education [1124]

The last two panels of the stairway show the arid landscapes of the highland, evoking the capitalist order and pointing toward the birth of a new socialist order. In a panel entitled *La Justicia proletaria y mecanización del campo* a woman sitting has an ear of corn in each hand. Behind her the characteristic elements of the automated exploitation of the land are to be seen: the tractor, the train, the airplane, etc. On the left we can see a triple light ray which punishes the capitalist and his followers, while on the right and above the woman three armed men are shown: a soldier, a farmer and a worker.

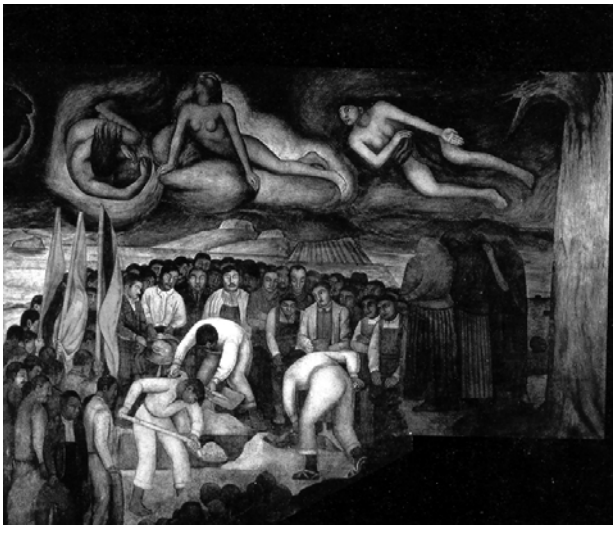


Figure 70. Diego Rivera: *The peon's funeral*. Stairway of the Secretariat of Public Education. [1125]

[1123] Brown, Betty Ann, "The past idealized: Diego Rivera's use of pre-Colombian Imagery", *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, p. 139.
[1124] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 60.
[1125] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 60.

In the last panel, *The peon's funeral*, Rivera depicts a burial, in a manner similar to certain compositions by Courbet. The funeral guests have their hats in their hands, some are holding red labor flags. Female figures fly over them observing the scene (see **Figure 70**).

Rivera's Self-portrait

In an area of the wall in the second floor of the staircase, near the exit, Rivera uses a picture that the photographer Edward Weston took of him, as the basis for a self-portrait that shows a painter, a sculptor and an architect; Rivera represents himself as the architect (see **Figure 67**, p. 379).

Rivera painted many self-portraits in his life, both in murals and as easel paintings. Xavier Moyssén asks himself the following question about Rivera's use of Weston's photo: "Did he doubt in that moment his capacity for self-knowledge? Was he impressed by the image that the photographic picture had captured? Maybe for both questions there is just one answer: that's the way it was."

> *En un muro del cubo de la escalera del mismo edificio, Rivera se pintó hacia 1926 como arquitecto; en la composición le acompañan un pintor de murales y un escultor. Para este autorretrato aprovechó la fotografía que le tomara Edward Weston; no fue ésta, por cierto, la única ocasión en que emplearía las fotos del famoso maestro de la lente; lo hizo también en Chapingo, con las fotos del cuerpo desnudo de Tina Modotti. En la fotografía de Weston aparece de medio cuerpo, está sentado descansando mientras fuma un cigarrillo; tiene la cara invadida por el contraste que establecen la luz solar y la sombra del sombrero. Diego Rivera dependió notoriamente de la foto; sin embargo, la postura que dio a su cuerpo es forzada, le falta naturalidad, por haber querido representarse con un plano sobre el vientre y las piernas. La expresión del rostro corresponde a la de un hombre agotado o enajenado por el trabajo. Con frecuencia los artistas suelen recurrir a la fotografía, como documento; en este sentido, Rivera lo hizo constantemente en sus grandes composiciones de contenido histórico; también se valen de ella en busca de soluciones formales para la composición de sus obras; sin embargo, el hecho de que Rivera haya utilizado el retrato que le hiciera Edward Weston, no deja de provocar preguntas como las siguientes: ¿Dudó en ese momento de su capacidad de autoconocimiento? ¿Lo hizo impresionado por la imagen que capturó la foto? Quizá para las dos preguntas sólo exista una respuesta: así fue.* [1126]

And he continues: "On the other hand, it is significant that he has not been portrayed as a painter, but as an architect. If we consider his self-centeredness and the fame that he already enjoyed, thanks to what he had already achieved, it is not difficult to imagine that he considered himself to be the maker of a new art for Mexico: muralism."

> *Por otra parte, llama la atención que no se haya retratado como pintor y sí en cambio como arquitecto. Si nos atenemos a su egocentrismo y a la fama de que ya disfrutaba, gracias a lo que había realizado hasta ese año, nada difícil es que se considerara a sí mismo como el constructor de un nuevo arte para México: la pintura mural.* [1127]

Rivera's fame increased. According to him, in 1926, he received an invitation to paint a mural at the School of Fine Arts of California:

[1126] Moyssén, Xavier, "Autorretratos de Rivera", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. XV, Num. 60, Mexico 1989, pp. 121-123.
[1127] Ibid.

En 1926 recibí, por medio del escultor americano Ralph Stackpole, a quien había tratado en París y en la ciudad de México, una invitación de William Gerstle, presidente de la Comisión de Arte de San Francisco, para pintar un mural en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de California. En esos momentos estaba yo tan metido en mi trabajo de la Secretaría de Educación y de la capilla de la Escuela de Agricultura de Chapingo, que no podía ni siquiera pensar en pintar en ninguna otra parte. [1128]

For Xavier Moyssén: "In the mural dedicated to the "Day of the dead," Rivera is among the crowd, which consists of the common people and by some famous personalities of the time; in accordance with the topic of death, one could say that all are gathered without distinction of social classes."

En el mural dedicado al "Día de los muertos", se encuentra Rivera entre la multitud, constituida por el pueblo humilde y por algunos personajes célebres en esa época; de acuerdo con el tema de la muerte, se podría decir que todos están reunidos sin distinción de clases sociales. En la escena, por lo demás costumbrista, hay un ambiente festivo, al que contribuyen las calaveras de azúcar y de cartón; entre éstas las hay tocando guitarras. Por otra parte, la pintura corresponde al reencuentro que el artista tuvo con su país, tras largos años de estancia en París. Durante los recorridos que hacía a fin de identificarse con un mundo del cual llegaría a ser el intérprete pictórico, libreta en mano tomaba apuntes de los habitantes y sus costumbres, de sus trabajos y sus fiestas. En la celebración del "Día de muertos", Rivera se autorretrató portando un sombrero de palma como cualquier vecino; se le ve feliz a través de su maliciosa mirada y socarrona sonrisa. [1129]

In 1924, Vasconcelos made the following comments about the murals at the Secretariat of Public Education: "I admit that there will be very few among contemporaries that understand this painting perfectly; but we should leave to the future generations the definitive judgement; to me it's interesting, and I have spent a lot of time in Chapingo contemplating the frescos; it is a work worthy of stimulus, of full support [...] Rivera is the philosopher of the paintbrush."

En último resultado, nosotros no debemos juzgar. Confieso que habrá muy pocos entre los contemporáneos que comprendan perfectamente esta pintura; pero debemos dejar a las generaciones futuras el juicio definitivo; a mí me interesa, y he permanecido mucho en Chapingo contemplando los frescos; es una obra digna de estímulo, de toda ayuda [...] Rivera es el filósofo del pincel. [1130]

However the relationship between Diego Rivera and the former minister soon deteriorated. Wolfe writes:

When Diego finished the Revolutionary ballads and martyrs on the top floor of the Education Building, José Vasconcelos, no longer Minister of Education, denounced the work. He had never liked Diego's painting, but had hitherto claimed credit for it. Now, as it was becoming more "Revolutionary," he himself was becoming more conservative. To the completed work he dedicated the following oft-repeated phrases: It was believed till quite recently that the economic transformations which are at present taking place in society would produce a great art – proletarian in Russia; popular in Mexico. For lack of a religious spirit, these movements remained incomplete, both socially and artistically. In

[1128] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p.136.
[1129] Moyssén, Xavier, "Autorretratos de Rivera", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. XV, Num. 60, Mexico 1989, pp. 121-123.
[1130] D. Frías, José, "La obra genial del pintor Diego M. Rivera", *El Universal Ilustrado*, February 19 1924, pp. 18-19. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, pp. 433-434.

> *Russia they have fallen into the grotesque, and in Mexico into the abjection of covering walls with portraits of criminals (Mexican leaders as Zapata for instance) [...] Diego responded by painting Vasconcelos in the ballad series among the disseminators of false knowledge, seated, in sign of this theosophy and ill-digested Oriental mysticism, upon a little white elephant. Though he is seated with his back to the spectator, so skillful is the portrait that none could fail to recognize it. What infuriated Vasconcelos was that the inkwell into which he appeared to be dipping his pen looked suspiciously like a cuspidor. A sad ending for an alliance which had begun so hopefully. Without Vasconcelos Rivera would never have had the opportunity to paint frescoes on public walls; without the great fresco Renaissance, Vasconcelos would have won less renown.* [1131]

When Rivera and his assistants finished work at the ministry in 1928, they had painted 235 individual fresco panels, distributed in the corridors of the three floors that surround the two courtyards, in the stairways and in the vestibule of the elevator. Of the 235 panels 116 can be deemed to be major works. The total area painted was 1585 square meters.

The resignation of Vasconcelos, in June, interrupted the work at the Secretariat. When Vasconcelos left, Rivera was the only who was able to continue working, with Vasconcelos's successor Puig Cassauranc's agreement.

What were Diego Rivera's alternatives at that moment?

> *What was Diego Rivera's alternative at that moment? Which of the two activities of his life was most important – the political or the pictorial? Faced with a similar alternative, the other leaders of the Mexican Communist Party – David Alfaro Siqueiros and Xavier Guerrero chose [Siqueiros at least temporarily] a totally political line of action.* [1132]

The mural works on the second floor of the Secretariat of Public Education, Chapingo, the Palacio of Cortés in Cuernavaca and in the National Palacio's stairway, reflect the ideologies of the *maecenas* that finance him the works but, formally, they are absolutely personal.

After the 'rehearsals' at the Secretariat of Public Education, Rivera was able to tackle the task of painting the walls of the *National Palacio's* stairway, where he showed his mastery of fresco technique and composition. In these murals Rivera also perfected his coloring and created the parameters of a personal palette. Rivera's personal references became national references, commonplaces in the idea of Mexico; in other words, they became the visual form of *Mexicanidad.*

After Vasconcelos's resignation, Rivera interrupted work at the Secretariat of Public Education but resumed work later thanks to the support of José María Puig Casauranc, Secretary of Public Education under President Calles.

The murals at the Secretariat of Public Education were concluded, as we already said previously, between 1923 and 1928. During this period Rivera alternated work on the Secretariat with work on other projects. In 1924 Rivera began murals in the administrative building of the *Escuela Nacional de Agricultura* in Chapingo.

[1131] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 210-211.
[1132] Herner de Larrea, Irene, *Diego Rivera's mural at the Rockefeller Center*, Edicupes, Mexico 1990, p. 31.

5) Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, 1924-1927 [1133]

The old property of *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, which had belonged to various different Spanish families until then, came into the possession of the Jesuits in 1699. Later it became known as *Chapingo*, a name derived from the site where it was built. The name comes from the Náhuatl, Tzapinico or Tzapinco, and meant, according to the most accepted etymology, the thorny place.

As a consequence of the *Mexican Revolution*, according to a presidential ordinance signed by Álvaro Obregón in 1924, the property of Chapingo became the headquarters of the National School of Agriculture, whose director was Marte R. Gómez. Today the building houses the National Museum of Agriculture and the Chapel, and is protected as part of the Cultural Heritage of the Nation because of the presence of Diego Rivera's fresco work, considered by many to be his masterpiece.

Following an invitation from the Director of the National School of Agriculture, Marte R. Gómez, Rivera began to paint murals in the entrance patio, the stairways and the first floor of the main building of the university. He continued with the decoration of the chapel in 1924, and he finished on 1 October, 1927. Thus, he was painting at Chapingo and at the Secretariat of Education during the same period.

On the eastern wall of the chapel Rivera painted the evolution of nature, on the western, the transformation of society, and the historical and social progress brought about by the *Revolutionary* struggle.

This mural covers a surface of some 700 square meters, with a simple yet convincing pictorial language, full of harmony and aesthetic quality: The work expresses the Mexican peasants' long tradition of struggle; it is inspired by an aesthetic vision of materialism as a philosophy of the world and of history. Man is seen as a historical agent who transforms nature and simultaneously links natural development with social progress.

Rivera began the decoration of the Autonomous University of Chapingo during the government of Álvaro Obregón, by invitation of Marte R. Gómez, director of the then National School of Agriculture, which had recently transferred to Chapingo, from its previous location in San Jacinto, Mexico City. At that time the Secretary of Agriculture was Ramón P. Denegri.

Rivera painted Marte R. Gómez together with President Manuel Avila Camacho, Ramón P. Denegri together with Álvaro Obregón in the stairway of Chapingo, as examples of *Good government*.

The reason why Rivera was invited to paint the walls of the renovated agriculture school was that the *Revolutionary* government had decided to train technicians for the planned agrarian reform and no longer in accordance with the old concept of private property. The plan was that the new technicians should generate new ideas and techniques, in line with the indigenous tradition. Rivera's task was to show the most outstanding aspects of pre-Hispanic culture and the outcome of the agrarian Revolution: the worker and the peasant alongside the professional technician.

According to Guadalupe Rivera Marín: "Rivera who already saw the storm coming, allied himself to the group of economists and socialist agronomists who implanted classes of Marxism and Leninism in the schools of superior education and expanded the teaching of political economy in the School of Agriculture of Chapingo, then under the direction of Marte R. Gómez."

> *El candidato y después presidente Plutarco Elías Calles consideraba necesaria la disciplina para organizar económicamente al país e innecesaria la política del Partido Comunista, rebelde y revoltosa por naturaleza. Por más que los comunistas proclamaron la necesidad de que se tomara en cuenta el poder del proletariado, al lado del capitalismo de Estado que empezaba a generarse, nadie quería escucharlos. Los pintores decidieron dar la pelea y defender sus intereses artísticos y políticos con todos los medios a su alcance, mientras el gobierno amenazaba exterminarlos. Rivera, quien ya veía venir la*

[1133] For the entire program at Chapingo see Appendix XIII.

tormenta, se alió al grupo de economistas y agrónomos socialistas que implantaron cátedras de Marxismo y Leninismo en las escuelas de educación superior y ampliaron la enseñanza de la economía política en la Escuela de Agricultura de Chapingo, entonces bajo la dirección de Marte R. Gómez. [1134]

Later, Rivera, who had been a militant since 1922, was expelled from the Communist Party. Among the reasons given by the Communist Party for Rivera's expulsion is the article of Joseph Freeman, an important Party member, an article that was published under the alias Robert Evans, in the newspaper *New Masses*, January of 1932, under the title "Painting and Politics". According to Joseph Freeman, "Marte R. Gómez and Ramón Denegri [...] were leaders of pseudo leftist tendencies that feigned to solve the problems of the Agrarian Reformation, although in fact the small bourgeoisie was the true beneficiary of the Revolution through legal means which established a capitalist system and was not oriented towards the peasantry at all."

Marte R. Gómez y Ramón Denegri, quienes [...] eran líderes de tendencias seudo izquierdistas que simulaban resolver los problemas de la Reforma Agraria, aunque en realidad resultaba la pequeña burguesía la verdadera beneficiaria de la Revolución a través de medios legales establecidos por un sistema capitalista en nada orientado a favorecer al campesino [1135]

The mural works at Chapingo, which is sometimes known as the *Capilla Riveriana*, the Riverian Chapel, in honor of the painter, were begun in the beginning of 1924. Rivera says however: "At the time of the Delahuarta insurrection, by the middle of 1923, the frescos of the first patio and those of the lobby and hall and Stairway of the School of Chapingo were already finished."

Cuando la insurrección Delahuartista, a mediados de 1923, estaban concluidos los frescos del primer patio y los del vestíbulo y hall de la Escalera de la Escuela de Chapingo [1136]

However the data gathered by the well-known scholar and art critic, Raquel Tibol, who states that Rivera began work in 1924, seem to be more reliable. Work began therefore in 1924 and was concluded in 1927. The artist painted simultaneously here and in the Secretariat of Public Education; both murals are thematically complex units. They are works of art influenced by the socialist and agrarian movements, and Rivera created a personal language, expressing his political ideas by means of a synthesis of Mexico's history, of an aesthetic and propaganda conception and a pictorial technique that he mastered as no other at that time. The work is both dramatic and highly sensual.

Olivier Debroise writes: "In the monumental discourse on Man's nature that [Rivera] pronounces starting from 1925-1926, the memories of Eden are intertwined with a messianic promise. With the decoration of the Salon of Records of Chapingo, a last stage begins in Rivera's formal and thematic evolution."

En el monumental discurso sobre la naturaleza del Hombre que [Rivera] propone a partir de 1925-1926, las reivindicaciones edénicas se entrelazan con una propuesta mesiánica. Con la decoración del Salón de Actas de Chapingo, se inicia una última etapa en la evolución formal y temática de Rivera. [1137]

[1134] Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, *Un Río, dos Riveras: Vida de Diego Rivera, 1886-1929*, Alianza Editorial Mexicana, Mexico 1990, p. 185.
[1135] Quoted in Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, p. 28.
[1136] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Diego Rivera en la vida y en la leyenda", *Hoy*, nr. 650, August 6 1949, p. 36.
[1137] Debroise, Olivier, "La gran reconstrucción y la tierra fecunda [La evolución de Diego Rivera, 1917-1920]", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 156.

Rivera's painting transformed the chapel with its religious activities into something different and secular. The sacred images were replaced by images that represented the *Revolutionary* doctrines and the idea that technical scientific advance would lead to social and economic emancipation.

For many this is one of Rivera's major works. Besides being a song to the earth, the painiting is an aesthetic vision of materialism as a conception of the world and of the history, of man as a transformer of the nature and of the society and of the intrinsic harmony of natural and social development, through technology and Revolution. In the frescos of the chapel the utopia of communitarian Mexico and muralism as an aesthetic and propagandistic expression combine together. The painter tried to express the extent and the cost of the agrarian reforms and also the liberation of the rural class thanks to the domination of the elements earth, water and wind, at man's service by means of science.

Rivera's decoration of the National School of Agriculture of Chapingo covers two different areas: the Chapel and the administrative building.

I will now detail Rivera's themes in the chapel. However, the titles differ according to the different sources consulted. The *Catálogo General* reflects statements made by Rivera, in particular to Gladys March. [1138] However other written sources, and several internet sites on Rivera's work which I consulted, cite different titles, dates and other details. Many of these sources are based on Rivera's testimonies and the interviews Rivera gave in the final period of his life. Therefore, the mistakes are plenty. It does not seem opportune to try to investigate the right dates and titles, because that is not my main purpose.



Figure 71.
General view of the chapel in Chapingo with Diego Rivera's murals. [1139]

National School of Agriculture of Chapingo: the murals in the Chapel

Here is a resume of the themes in the chapel:

La tierra fecunda (The fertile earth), La tierra dormida (The sleeping earth), La sangre de los mártires agrarios (The blood of the agrarian martyrs), La Germinación (The Germination), La floración o maduración (The floration or maturation), Símbolos del nuevo orden (Symbols of the new order), El propagandista o El agitador (The propagandist or *The agitator), Niño con frutas (Boy with fruits), Niña con mazorcas (Girl with ears), Los explotadores (The exploiters), La tierra oprimida (The oppressed earth), Los elementos (The elements), Las fuerzas subterráneas (The underground forces), El hombre liberador (The liberator man), Organización del movimiento agrario (Organization of the agrarian movement), Germina la*

[1138] The generic title for the murals in the Chapel, painted 1926-1927, is *Canto a la tierra y a los que la trabajan y liberan*, Song to the earth and to those who work and liberate it. This title is put into question by Raquel Tibol.
[1139] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/awlee/art244/image%20Set%205/is5image2.jpg

Revolución (The Revolution germinates), Profetas (Prophets), La muerte del campesino (The peasant's death), Luchar hasta vencer (To fight until conquering), Proletarios (Proletarians), Triunfo de la Revolución y la justicia (The triumph of the Revolution and the justice), La mano amistosa y vigilante (The friendly and vigilant hand) Guardianes de la Revolución (Guardians of the Revolution), Los frutos de la tierra (The fruits of the earth).

I will now discuss some of the mural compositions in the Chapel. I concentrate particularly on works which have been frequently reproduced and commented in the sources which I studied.

On the front wall of the nave, Rivera represented *The Fecundated Earth* or *The Liberated Earth* where natural forces are controlled by mankind.

On a mountain a naked woman leans back with a serene look on her face. Her right hand holds a bud, and she raises her left hand. She is surrounded by allegories of the elements (water, wind, fire and electricity) with which nature endows mankind and sustains his well-being. The picture symbolizes the work of exploitation of the natural wealth of the Garden of Eden and the gift of man's knowledge.

A colossal nude, depicting a pregnant woman at rest, symbolizes *The Fertile Earth* and dominates the front wall of the nave. Calmly, she looks ahead. She has a seed in her left hand, from which sprouts a bud. Her right hand is raised in a sign of harmony. On her right, there is a representation of the wind and four white doves.

Rivera used his wife, Lupe Marín, as model, portraying her before she gave birth to their daughter Guadalupe, born in 1924. Rivera says that he used her as model three times in Chapingo: "I used her again, this time pregnant, to represent the Fertile Earth."

> *Volvió a servirme, esta vez grávida, para representar la Tierra Fecunda. Lo dibujé así del natural, porque Lupe estuvo dos veces embarazada durante el tiempo que trabajé en Chapingo. Nuestra primera hija, Lupe, apodada Pico (Cabeza puntiaguda"), nació en enero de 1924; nuestra segunda hija, Ruth, o Chapo ("Negra como petróleo crudo"), nació el año que terminé el mural: 1927.* [1140]

She is surrounded by allegories of the elements: Water, which is represented by a woman with long hair. Her right arm is raised, obscuring her face. Water springs from a dam. Behind her the transformation of the wind's energy into electricity is depicted. Also visible is a field sowed with plants of corn. Wind and Fire, uncontrollable in earlier historical periods, are now submissive servants, thanks to science and technology. This theme became central in the artist's work, mainly as a result of his contact with the industrial society of the United States. In the right central part, a huge man emerges from the crater of a volcano with a lit firebrand that throws fire left and right. He represents the energy under the earth's surface which is given to human beings to use for humanity's benefit.

Rivera: "Around her I painted the elements: Wind, Water, Fire, previously uncontrollable, now, under the control of Nature, man's docile servants."

> *A su alrededor pinté los elementos: el Viento, el Agua, el Fuego, antes incontrolables, ahora, al mando de la Naturaleza, servidores dóciles del hombre.* [1141]

In foreground and with their backs to the viewer, appears the Human Family with the fruits of the earth: the new generation of men who will use science and technology for the good of humanity. A naked man is at the centre of the image; in his left hand he holds an apple, which represents human knowledge, while a boy

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[1140] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 109.
[1141] Ibid.

kneels down to join two electric cables and to produce a spark. The woman in the family, to the right of the picture, has black braids and seems to be a *mestizo*. Tropical fruits, the gift of Mother Nature, are at her feet.

On the wall of the old choir, opposite *The Fertile Earth*, Rivera painted a young woman, sleeping naked on the floor with her face partly covered by her hair. In her right hand, she has a small seedling; representing the fecundity and natural potential of the earth.

Rivera: "My symbol of Nature was a colossal, sleeping woman. Firmly grasped in her hands there was an equally symbolic phallic plant":

> *Mi símbolo de la Naturaleza fue una mujer colosal, dormida. Firmemente empuñada en sus manos había una planta fálica igualmente simbólica.* [1142]

In the theme *The Elements* Rivera painted the sun with an indigenous boy's face, and the wind as Ehécatl (the Aztec god of the winds.)

Once again, as in the Secretariat, Rivera portrayed Zapata, here in *The Blood of the Revolutionary martyrs fertilizing the earth*, together with the rural leader Otilio Montaño, who wrote the Plan of Ayala in 1910.

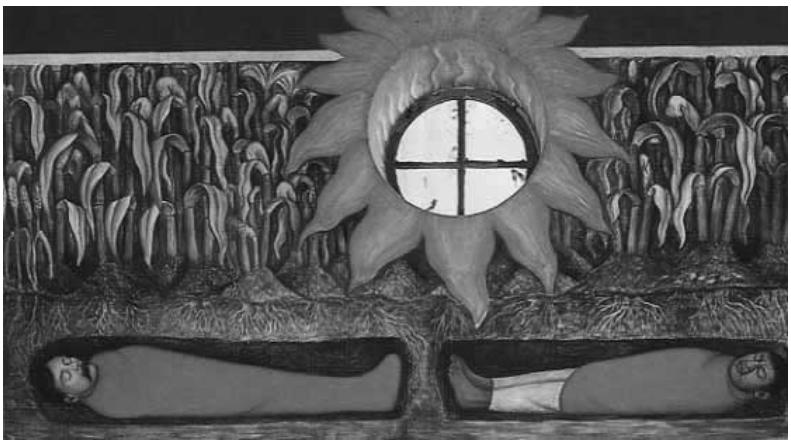


Figure 72. Diego Rivera: Emiliano Zapata and Otilio Montaño. National School of Agriculture of Chapingo. [1143]

The corpses of Emiliano Zapata and Otilio Montaño are visible under the ground (**Figure 72**). Their bodies are wrapped in red capes. Above them, on the earth's surface, corn is growing. Rivera's message is that the sacrifice of Zapata and Montaño was not in vain; their blood fertilizes the cornfield, strengthening the stalks of the corn, the traditional food of the Meso-American peoples. This panel is dominated by a great flower with petals of light, whose central part is the window itself, which Rivera thus cleverly turns into the sun.

Antonio Rodríguez says:

> *The bodies of Zapata and Montaño, covered by their native earth, produce a generous and exuberant harvest of maize, and the body of a fighter for freedom supplies the sap to the Tree of Life and stimulates the vengeance of other fighters. Similarly, the light from an idea penetrates the fertile soil of the mind, and while the fertile seed swells and germinates in the ground and in the body of woman, it too bears fruit.* [1144]

Rivera also used Tina Modotti as a model in Chapingo. In *The Germination*, Rivera adapted the composition to the circular window in the wall. In the concavities there are some female nudes in the form of foetuses and in diverse positions, inside the earth, representing the seeds of the plants, as the germinal forces of nature, in different stages of growth. In the painting *The Flowering* or *The Ripening* four women are portrayed in

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[1142] Ibid.
[1143] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 71.
[1144] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 228.

different positions, representing plants waiting to be fertilised. They have their hands open, with their palms upturned towards the light, waiting for the fecundation that will open the way to a new flower, to a new life.

The door



Figure 73. Wooden doors to the old Assembly hall, National School of Agriculture of Chapingo.

The two wooden doors to the old Assembly hall which adjoins the chapel were made in 1929, two years after Rivera had concluded the interior decorations. Rivera made the drawings, and the wooden reliefs were executed in the shop of the brothers López Jiménez (**Figure 73**). [1145]

Rivera divided the left and right parts of the door between two very different social classes: on the three boards to the left side of the door Rivera represented the "good", and on the three on the right, the "bad".

The three boards on the left leaf, from top to bottom, show the following subjects: the hammer and sickle, the symbol of communism, under the light of the star of Revolution. In the background are ears of corn and wheat leaves.

In the central part of the left door Zapata appears with a legend that says: *"La tierra libre para los hombres",* "The free land for men", and another that says: *"Los buenos estarán siempre con Emiliano Zapata",* "The good will always be with Emiliano Zapata". To the side of his head there is a star, and the sickle of the communist symbol is made of stars.

The lower part of the left door shows a peasant with a cartridge belt strapped on and a plough in his hands. There is also a country boy with a book in his hand and behind him, a rural teacher with her hand on the boy's shoulder; in the background several peasants.

On the right door, at the same height as the symbols of communism, the same ears of corn and wheat leaves, but instead of the hammer and sickle, the symbols of clericalism (the cross) and of militarism (the sword). Between them appears the symbol of capitalism.

In the central part of the right- hand door, there is a capitalist and a man with two faces. One of them tries to speak with Zapata, to his left, saying *"Yo estoy con la Revolución",* "I am with the Revolution", while with the other one he says to the capitalist on his right: *"Yo defenderé tus intereses y tú me recompensarás",* "I will defend your interests and you will reward me". The capitalist, who is wearing a high hat, gives the two-faced man a bag of money as a reward. In the lower part one reads the inscription: *"estos son los malos",* "these are the bad ones."

In the lower section of the right part of the door, a priest or archbishop appears together with an exploiter and a corrupt lawyer. In the center a man with his wife, who is putting make-up on her lips. Their son has a string in his hand and is pulling his toy car. According to the *Catálogo General*, the man in the lower panel is Plutarco Elías Calles, with his wife and son, and supported by the men of the reaction: the Secretary of Treasury Luis Montes de Oca, a capitalist and an archbishop.

[1145] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 81.

The administrative building

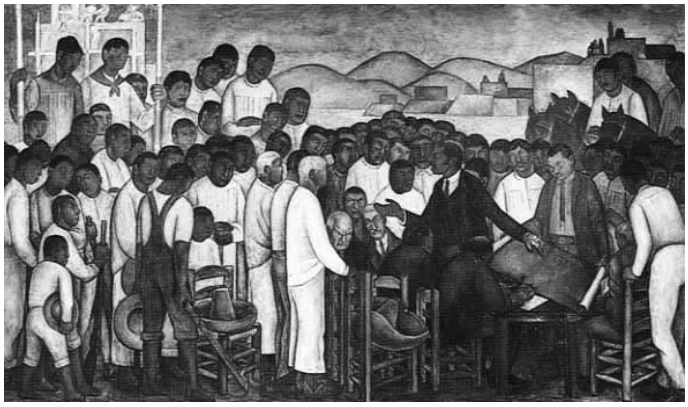


Figure 74. Diego Rivera: *Distributing the land*. National School of Agriculture of Chapingo

In the administrative area of the University, corridors and stairways, on the first and second floor, Rivera painted the following scenes: *Distributing the land* (**Figure 74**), [1146] *Aquí se enseña a explotar la tierra, no a los hombres*, (*Here it is taught to exploit the land, not man*) (**Figure 75**), [1147] *The wrong government*, *The good government* (**Figure 76**),[1148] *The Air and the Water*, *The Sun and the Earth*, paintings that reproduce the Inauguration records from 1924 and from 1925-1927, *the cardinal points*, and geometrical decorations that simulate architectonical details. Here the murals are static and descriptive and they reveal a simplistic opposition of the good (*The good government*) and the bad (*The wrong government*). The treatment, as much in regard to the formal aspects, as in Rivera's technique, has still strong limitations, just as in *The Creation* and in the first murals at the Secretariat. There are no formal extravagances, and the religious atmosphere is still quite evident.



Figure 75. Diego Rivera: *Aquí se enseña a explotar la tierra, no a los hombres*, (*Here it is taught to exploit the land, not man*). National School of Agriculture of Chapingo.

For Antonio Rodrigues: "the spirit of Christianity permeates the whole of this essentially pagan work."

> *Chapingo shows another unusual feature: the spirit of Christianity permeates the whole of this essentially pagan work. It reflects the contradiction of the strong religious feeling of the Mexican people, concentrated in the churches scattered throughout the country and yet directed towards the sun. Rivera represents the earth mother and paints beautiful female bodies to symbolize subterranean forces, at the same time scattering Christian symbols all over his murals; the halo in one of the final scenes is a machine wheel; praying 'angel' figures surround the shining star, next to pagan zephyrs and to doves which look like aeroplanes but recall the 'Holy Ghost' in popular religious pictures.* [1149]

At the same time, Rivera reveals a surprising rhetorical and simplistic way of painting, which contrasts with the more elaborate murals in the Chapel.

[1146] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 68.
[1147] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 69.
[1148] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.diegoRivera.com/murals/buengov.html
[1149] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 229.

Rivera: “In the middle of 1927, I had finished my work at the chapel of the School of Agriculture of Chapingo. The underlying topic of this composition was the principle settled down by Zapata that I expressed in a sentence in a conspicuous part of the mural next to the main stairway: “Here students are taught to exploit the land, not man”. This thought was certainly appropriate for an agriculture school.”

> *Para mediados de 1927 había terminado mi trabajo de la capilla de la Escuela de Agricultura de Chapingo. El tema subyacente de esta composición era el principio establecido por Zapata, que expresé en una frase en una parte conspicua del mural que daba a la escalera principal: “Aquí se enseña a explotar la tierra, no al hombre.” Este pensamiento era ciertamente apropiado para una escuela de agricultura.* [1150]



Figure 76. Diego Rivera: *The wrong government*,*The good government*. National School of Agriculture of Chapingo.

For Ida Rodríguez Prampolini: “In Chapingo, Rivera has highlighted the agrarian society, the fight for land and the natural domain; he has used the symbol of the red star, as well as in [The Secretariat of Public] Education he had used the sickle and the hammer simply as symbols from the iconography of the proletarian Revolution.”

> *En Chapingo, Rivera ha destacado la sociedad agraria, la lucha por la tierra y el dominio natural; ha utilizado el símbolo de la estrella roja, así como en Educación había empleado la hoz y el martillo pero simplemente como símbolos de la iconografía de la Revolución proletaria.* [1151]

The mural decorations at Chapingo are among the most magnificent works of Rivera. Maybe they are a Utopia, or rather a demagogic lie, to serve a populist cause. Nevertheless, they are without doubt of unparallelled creativity, and remind us of Vasconcelos’s utopia. The difference is that while Vasconcelos was aware of the problems that Mexico had to face and believed that the solution for Mexico was through the culture and the arts, through the elevation of the Mexican people, Rivera gave those ideals a substantially different reading and a rhetorical meaning which appears very distant from that of Vasconcelos. However, I believe that both were inspired, despite their differences, by similar ideals.

Rivera completed the Chapingo murals in 1927. A short while later he visited the Soviet Union, as a member of the delegation from the Mexican Communist Party, which attended the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution. Between 1927 and 1928 many Mexicans traveled to the Soviet Union. There were two Mexican delegations: the one invited to attend the celebrations of the Tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, and the one that attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, which opened in Moscow February 25, 1928.

[1150] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 108.

[1151] Rodríguez Prampolini, Ida, “Comentario a la ponencia de Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 230.

Rivera: “In 1927, with my fame already established, I was invited by the Commissary of the Russian People, Lunacharsky, to visit the Soviet Union as guest painter on the occasion of the celebration of the Anniversary of the October Revolution. Of course, I accepted, delighted.”

> *En 1927, ya establecida mi fama, fui invitado por el Comisario del Pueblo ruso, Lunacharsky, a visitar la Unión Soviética como pintor huésped con motivo de la celebración del Aniversario de la Revolución de Octubre. Por supuesto, acepté encantado.* [1152]

According to Wolfe he had already been invited, before he left Paris for Mexico in 1921, by David Sternberg.

> *The invitation from his friend David Sternberg, who had become “art commissar,” to come to Russia to paint, hastened his homeward journey. He was too creative a personality, too much a generator of his own energy, to be content to go to “Mecca” to worship. He preferred to go to Mexico to work. Yet always he harbored a secret doubt whether he should not have accepted, a longing to go there to see for himself, to learn, and in his own field to teach, to serve with his brush by painting a great mural in the land of the Soviets.* [1153]

Wolfe claims that it was Edo Fimmen who made possible for Rivera to be invited in 1927.

> *It was Edo Fimmen, President of the International Transport Workers’ Federation, who finally arranged for him in 1927 a second invitation to Moscow.* [1154]

On page 421 of same book, Bertram D Wolfe says that “Lunacharsky invited Diego to Moscow to do a mural.”

> *In 1927, before the mold constricting the arts in Russia had hardened, the relatively liberal Lunacharsky invited Diego to Moscow to do a mural. After the party bosses [Lunacharsky was not one of them] had seen Rivera’s sketches and heard his views, the opportunity to paint on a public wall in Moscow was denied him.* [1155]

Wolfe, relying on Rivera’s own testimony, speaks about the projects of Rivera to paint murals in Moscow.

On November 24 he signed a contract with Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education and the Fine Arts, to do a fresco in the Red Army Club. To facilitate his free movement for the purpose of gathering material and making sketches, Lunacharsky issued to him the following credential:

[1152] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 110.
[1153] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 215.
[1154] Ibid.
[1155] Ibid, p. 421.

We hereby certify that the government of the U.S.S.R. has decided to give a commission to Comrade Diego Rivera to make a fresco of large size according to his own selection. The order is regarded at the same time as a favor on the part of the Mexican people's art of Rivera, and if a favorable result comes of this experiment, the government looks forward to having Rivera prepare serious work for the decoration of the new V. I. Lenin Library at present under construction in Moscow.
People's Commissar Lunacharsky [1156]

Wolfe continues:

The painter was one of a delegation of "workers and peasants" (mostly intellectuals) from Mexico to the festivities. His pockets bulged with documents, mandates, credentials. They certified him to be a member of the Communist Party, delegate of the Mexican Peasant League, General Secretary of the Anti-Imperialist League, editor of its official organ, El Libertador, and many other things besides. [1157]

Under the festivities Rivera watched the Red Army file through the Red Square, followed by a procession that continued all day long. He made several dozens of sketches from the parade. Rivera says: "During the three hours that I resisted the icy winds seeing this parade I made many outlines for watercolors. Circa fifty of them were bought later by the wife of John D. Rockefeller."

Durante las tres horas que resistí los vientos helados viendo este desfile hice muchos bosquejos para acuarelas. Cosa de cincuenta de ellos fueron comprados después por la señora de John D. Rockefeller, Jr. [1158]

Rivera hoped to use these sketches in murals on Russian walls. In the end, however, they were used for the wall of the Radio City building in 1933.

All this he noted in forty-five watercolor sketches and innumerable penciled notes, out of which he hoped to build murals for Russian walls [...]. One of the sketches became the cover of an issue of Fortune. The notebook was purchased by Mrs. Abby Rockefeller; part of it served as material for the Russian demonstration scene on the wall of the Radio City building which the Rockefellers subsequently destroyed. Several sketches found their way into Cosmopolitan magazine. [1159]

Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. later bought other works by Rivera: "Then I made an album from the dresses to color that was bought by the wife of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and donated by her to the Museum of Modern Art of New York."

Después hice un álbum de los vestidos a color, que fue comprado por la señora de John D. Rockefeller, Jr., y donado por ella al Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York. [1160]

The projects with Lunacharsky, Commissary of Public Education of the USSR, were never completed. Besides the Saloon of Festivities in the Red Army building, Rivera was scheduled to paint murals in the

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[1156] Quoted in Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 217.
[1157] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 216.
[1158] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 116.
[1159] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 216.
[1160] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p.125.

Workers metallurgists' club at the Dynamo factory (or, as it is in some sources, in the *Dux Workers Club*) and at the Lenin Library of the Communist Academy in Moscow.

In the Red Army Club, Rivera was free to choose his own themes and, if the result of the experiment was considered favorable, he would paint in the new Library V. I. Lenin that was being constructed in Moscow. However, according to Wolfe, Rivera faced the obstacle of the empire style, which the Russians did not want to give up.

> *An uneasy feeling arose in Diego that all was not well with his plans to paint in the Red Army building. The artists assigned to assist him proved incompetent or unwilling to subordinate themselves to him and their humble auxiliary tasks. The building was a former palace; Diego wanted its hall stripped of its "Empire" decorations, which he considered rubbish, but of which the art experts of the club were enormously proud. They wanted him to paint in Empire style!* [1161]

Wolfe reports that the Mexican's proposal for a public and monumental art, as propagated in his lectures aroused great enthusiasm, especially amongst the youth.

> *His lectures at the Academy on the deficiencies of Russian art aroused the enthusiasm of the young, but the indignation of the men successful according to the prevailing standards which he was beginning to disturb.* [1162]

And further:

> *In his lectures he pointed out the weakness of easel painting for immediate mass consumption.* [1163]

Later Rivera would come to criticize the Soviet bureaucrats, the artists and the theoreticians, and to speak of the limitations of easel art. Wolfe:

> *Indeed, it was at that moment, in the spring of 1928, that the apotheosis of Stalin began and his face appeared simultaneously on the cover of every paper and magazine in the country, while every prominent artist was set to do his bust or portrait. To this campaign Diego unwittingly contributed. Judging from the sketch he did, he does not seem to have been impressed by his subject.* [1164]

Rivera was named instructor of monumental painting in the Central School of the Arts.

> *Young painters attending were impressed by the pictures, astonished by the huge, homely attractiveness of this painter from a distant land, charmed to discover that he understood and after his own fashion could speak their language. Rivera's star was in the ascendant. He was invited to speak to artists' groups everywhere, made an instructor in the Academy of Fine Arts, besieged with applications of younger painters who wished to serve as apprentices. They felt after seeing the reproductions of his walls that they could learn much from this man. They sensed a new potential in his work that Russian painting had not guessed at.* [1165]

[1161] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 220.
[1162] Ibid.
[1163] Ibid, p. 221.
[1164] Ibid, p. 220.
[1165] Ibid, p. 217.

14 June 1928 Rivera returned to Mexico together with Siqueiros and Graciela Amador. In mid-June 1928, Rivera gave favorable conferences about his experiences in the Soviet Union, and he declared to the journalist Jacobo Dalevuelta that he would return to the USSR within three months in order to fulfill his contractual commitments as muralist and instructor. [1166]

According to his accounts at the time, on his return he would be professor in the class of Monumental Painting in the Central School of Plastic Arts of Moscow and would paint murals for the house of the Red Army and for the metallurgy factory Dynamo.

But he did not return to that country until 1955, in which year he traveled there to be treated for cancer. Rivera never finished the Red Army mural and did not return to Moscow until the last year of his life.

Already in Moscow there were conflicts between him and Lunacharsky. Apparently, Lunacharsky said that Rivera returned to Mexico because the Party believed his participation in Rodríguez Triana's electoral campaign was more important than concluding his artistic commitments in Moscow.

This was probably a mere pretext masking the Soviet criticism of his behavior and ideas which was certainly the real reason why he was prevented from finishing the murals for the Red Army club and the Dynamo factory that the government had supposedly commissioned.

Wolfe quotes Rivera:

> *This is one of the varied results of the actual descending curve (transitory degeneration) of the Russian bureaucratized Communist Party, against which the sane Revolutionary forces of the entire world are struggling, an opposition which the international functionaries, petty leaders, and intellectual lackeys of Sir Joseph Stalin reward with the titles of renegades, traitors, and social fascists. But these gentlemen will have, against the true Revolutionary ideology and the true art of the Revolution, the same efficacy as a drunkard who, having stolen a pair of scissors, tries to cut with it a ray of light.* [1167]

Rivera's version: "But, oh! I would no longer put not even a brushstroke of painting on any wall of Moscow. The reason is very simple. Lunacharsky who had invited me, "requested me" that I returned to Mexico. I have the suspicion that this sad change was the result of resentment on behalf of certain Soviet artists."

> *Pero, ¡ay!, ya no iba a poner ni un brochazo de pintura en ninguna pared de Moscú. La razón es bien simple. Lunacharsky, quien me había invitado, "me pidió" que regresara a México. Tengo la sospecha de que el resentimiento de parte de ciertos artistas soviéticos dio como resultado este triste cambio.* [1168]

After his return Rivera immersed himself in political activity in 1928 and 1929: he collaborated actively in *Bloque Obrero y Campesino* and in the election campaign of the Mexican Communist Party candidate, Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana, and he condemned the repression exercised by the government.

The *Comité Continental Organizador de la Liga Antiimperialista de las Américas* designated him as the Director of El Libertador, the official organ of the Hands off of Nicaragua! Committee, and he was also active in the defense of the 30-30 group.

[1166] Dalevuelta, Jacobo, "Diego Rivera vine, pero se ira otra vez", *El Universal*, June 15 1928. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 428.
[1167] Rivera, Diego, "The Position of the Artist in Russia Today," *Arts Weekly*, Vol. 1, Nr. I, March 11, 1932, pp. 6-7. Quoted in Wolfe, Bertram D., The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 224.
[1168] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 122.

Finally, he was expelled from the Mexican Communist Party, according to him, because of his "unrevolutionary" attitudes. This expulsion allowed him to collaborate with a government that he termed repressive and to accept the commission for a mural in the Palacio of Cortés in Cuernavaca. The commission was subsidized by the North American ambassador Morrow, whom not long before he had accused of condoning the violent repression at the May Day parades.

Certainly Rivera's themes begin to change with the exit of Vasconcelos, although his trip to Russia in 1927 may have been more important in this respect. From then on, his work is full of political accents, takes an anti-imperialist stance, and presents the *Mexican Revolution* as part of the World's Socialist Revolution.

Linda Downs:

> *It is perhaps understandable that Rivera's work became inextricably linked with Social Realism. His trip to the U.S.S.R. in 1927-28 brought him into contact with many young Russian artists who later carried out government mural commissions, and his works were well known in Moscow through the publication of newspaper and magazine articles.* [1169]

In 1928 Rivera finished one of his most important works, the Secretariat of Public Education. At the same time came the definitive break-up of his tumultuous marriage with Lupe Marín. Rivera met Frida Kahlo whom he later married. These political and personal events did not prevent him painting in the Assembly Hall of the Secretariat of Health the following year.

6) The years 1929-1930

The rest of my analysis of Rivera's career concerns the years 1929 and 1930, a period that marks a major change in the artist's work. A lot has been said about Rivera's political reasons for changing direction. To me this does not seem to fit the facts. The change is internally coherent (if one can speak of coherency in relation to Rivera) in the sense that it follows the rules of his constantly twisting opportunism.

General Álvaro Obregón was murdered in July of 1928, soon after having been elected president for the second time. Because of the murder of the general, whose term should have run from 1 December, 1928 until 30 November, 1932, the Congress of the Union designated Emilio Portes Gil as provisional President from 1 December 1928 until the new presidential elections which took place 17 November, 1929. (This was the election described in the section on Vasconcelos which ended in Pascual Ortíz Rubio becoming President.)

In 1929 the expectations of the Mexican Communist Party that Calles would fight for democracy in Mexico were disappointed; the dictator repressed workers and peasants and made extensive concessions to North America in order to achieve full recognition of the Mexican State.

The Mexican Communist Party adopted a radical position and found itself subject to persecution which forced it and *El Machete,* its newspaper, to operate clandestinely. Rivera was expelled after unsuccessfully requesting permission to devote himself to his artistic work. The party saw his request as simply a pretext to avoid fulfilling his obligations as a militant.

> *A fines de 1928, el abogado personal del Presidente Calles me hizo una visita en mi casa, número ocho de la calle de Tampico. Me fue a ver para apremiarme con objeto de que pusiera fin a mi vehemente campaña personal a favor del general revolucionario y guerrillero Rodríguez Triana. Éste, enemigo de Calles, era un relevante participante en la*

[1169] Downs, Linda, *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, Introduction, p. 18.

lucha por la dirección del bloque de campesinos y obreros, auspiciado por el Partido Comunista. Cuando el representante de Calles hubo acabado de exponer los deseos de su cliente, le dije calmadamente que yo apoyaría a cualquier candidato político en el que creyera.

- Piensa con cuidado sobre esto, Diego − dijo -; si no paras tus actividades, el viejo es capaz de mandarte ahorcar.

Yo respondí, tratando de ocultar mi cólera:

- Está bien; dile a Calles que sé que tiene suficientes cuerdas y muchos verdugos. Pero dile también que se equivoca si cree que me voy a asustar. Y no te olvides de decirle también esta otra cosa que te voy a decir: Seguiré haciendo lo que se me dé la gana hasta que el Partido Comunista me eche por usarlo para hacerme dictador de México. Y menciono esta posibilidad porque hace mucho tiempo solicité el privilegio de encabezar el primer levantamiento contra Calles. Supongo que mi abierto desafío era más de lo que el pobre hombre esperaba. Salió precipitadamente. Y a mí no me colgaron; todavía estoy vivo y pintando. [1170]

Híjar Serrano Alberto writes: "In principle it seems certain that none of the multiple and varied Rivera's changes contradicts his project of national liberation. Even the imperialistic North American patronages to his murals can be included as cunning tactical moves in a bigger project."

En principio parece indudable que ninguno de los cambios del Rivera múltiple y variado contradicen su proyecto de liberación nacional. Aun los patrocinios norteamericanos imperialistas a sus murales pueden ser incluidos como astucias tácticas de un proyecto mayor. Esto plantea la dificultad mayor del análisis político de Rivera porque tal parece que se deberían acomodar cada una de sus acciones como momentos de un proceso organizado por un sujeto mayor que no es otro que la liberación misma. [1171]

In 1929 Rivera's political fight culminated in conflict. As political leader of the Anti-imperialist League of the Americas he suffered under the repression of May 1st, and he discovered the repressive character of the bourgeois state despite Plutarco Elías Calles being the Honorary President of the League.

In 1928, moves were made to make Rivera Director of the National Academy of San Carlos, and he was appointed to the post the following year. At the same time he began the monumental decoration of the National Palacio's main stairway.

Siqueiros: "In the middle of the period of reaction, when we suffered the hardest persecution, when we were put in jail for months and years, Diego Rivera accepted the position of director of the National School of Fine Arts."

En pleno período de reacción, cuando nosotros sufríamos la más dura persecución, cuando se nos metía meses y años en la cárcel, Diego Rivera aceptó el puesto de director de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes. Su colectivismo pedagógico se tradujo en una fabricación racionalizada de fetos de las artes plásticas. Teorías hipócritamente exaltadoras de las obras de los diletantes y de los niños consiguen hacerlo un "dios padre" rodeado de querubines que cantan su obra. ¿Pero qué había pasado con El Maestro pintor clásico que debería enseñar en el proceso de la producción? Su programa

[1170] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 125-126.

[1171] Híjar Serrano, Alberto, "Diego Rivera: contribución política", Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p.39.

oficial fue entonces una transcripción de la demagogia política aplicada a la demagogia pedagógica. [1172]

According to Wolfe "Diego set out to make a Revolution in the Academy."

> *More than a quarter of a century after he was expelled from the San Carlos Academy, Diego Rivera returned as its Director, elected to that post by the art students, as was the custom. He had become, at the moment, a sort of people's artist. The President offered to create a cabinet post for him. The patio and stairway of the National Palace were awarded to him for decoration. Letters rained upon him, letters of felicitation with an eye to appointment to the faculty, letters suggesting reforms in the system of instruction, letters from cranks, from people with an ax to grind, from intelligent and zealous men. Without pausing to reflect or prepare the ground, without stopping his unceasing painting, Diego set out to make a Revolution in the Academy. His first action brought the faculty down about his ears, for he established a regime whereby the professoriate, its personnel and methods, were put to the discussion and vote of the student body!* [1173]

Wolfe continues:

> *The curriculum the new Director proposed was a work of exuberant fantasy. It was to train men (and women) who were to be skilled factory workers, painters, sculptors, architects, builders, interior decorators, engravers, masters of monumental painting, of ceramics, typography, photography, lithography, and much more besides, all in one and the same person. After they had mastered all these arts and crafts, they might specialize according to their bent. But before they could be specialists, they must be universal artists in the fashion of a Leonardo da Vinci.* [1174]

Wolfe:

> *The program envisaged a race of physical giants, with the enormous physical strength, talents and appetite for labor of a Diego Rivera, and the versatility of a Leonardo da Vinci. Not only the pupils, but the teachers, too, would have to be combinations of a Da Vinci and a Rivera.* [1175]

The attacks by architects, students, and other groups upon the Director began pouring in. Rivera was accused of being a "false Revolutionist." He had just been expelled from the Communist Party, and his popularity had waned. He was accused of being a millionaire, of taking huge fees for his mural painting and holding a bank account in American dollars which was constantly getting bigger, thanks to the sale of canvases in the United States.

Rivera claims: "They made me manager of it, because the autonomist Revolutionary university wanted me to put into practice the propositions, opinions and ideas that they knew, thanks to my writings and my words and my conferences, that I held."

[1172] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 209.
[1173] Wolfe, Bertram D., The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 253.
[1174] Ibid, p. 254.
[1175] Ibid, p. 256.

> […] *me hicieron director de ella a causa de la Revolución autonomista universitaria para demandarme que pusiera en práctica los enunciados, opiniones e ideas que sobre el caso sabían que tenía yo por mis escritos y mis palabras y mis conferencias.* [1176]

Rivera's expulsion from the Communist Party is discussed further below. The following section deals with the other mural projects that Rivera carried out towards the end of the '20s and beginning of the '30s.

Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia, 1929-1930 [1177]

After his return from the Soviet Union and the completion of the murals at the Secretariat, Rivera undertook, in 1929, another official task: providing mural decoration for the new building of the *Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia*, the construction of which began during the Calles régime.

The theme of the work was *Health and Life*. In the conference room of the *Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia*, Rivera painted a series of allegorical figures *al fresco*, which cover the walls and roofs and represent *Purity*, *Strength*, *Knowledge*, *Life*, *Moderation*, and *Health*. Rivera also painted some topics from the field of microbiology in the central laboratory and designed four stained-glass windows, which were made by Enrique Villaseñor, on the theme of *The elements*. To carry out the murals Rivera had the *The Scale of Life,* a fresco painted in 1927 by his colleague Fernando Leal, erased.

Rivera: "These panels, made in the Auditory of Assemblies of the building, that cover three hundred fifty square feet of wall and roof, comprehend six big woman nudes that symbolize Purity, Strength, Knowledge, Life, Moderation and Health itself."

> *Estos paneles, hechos en el Auditorio para Asambleas del edificio, que cubren trescientos cincuenta pies cuadrados de pared y techo, comprenden seis grandes desnudos de mujer que simbolizan la Pureza, la Fuerza, el Conocimiento, la Vida, la Moderación y la Salud misma.* [1178]

Formally, the mural work resembles the work that he did in Chapingo. On the other hand, despite the many years between them, the theme and the titles are quite similar to those in *The Creation* of 1922, to some panels at the Secretariat of Public Education and in particular to certain panels at Chapingo.

Analytically, the work can be located between the early *Revolutionary* rhetorical production of propagandistic and utopian character and his later muralist work, where he mixed an archaeological *indigenismo* with *Revolutionary* and Zapatist rhetoric to produce an amalgam of history. Later, with many commissions coming to him from the United States, Rivera "exported" that vision and, in order to create a more universalistic world, developed his own new mythology, with references from the pre-Columbian past combined with universal utopias portraying a better world.

His later work acquired a narrative didactic character that expressed an epic rather than a critical sense in its treatment of historical facts. Instead of speaking of specific social problems, he made abundant descriptions of folkloric customs or philosophical speculations, and he was criticized for his archaeological tendencies and for his kowtowing to the tourist market.

[1176] Rivera, Diego, "Papel de la escuela al aire libre", *Revista Así*, January 27 1945.

[1177] *Ministerio de Salubridad Pública* (The Ministry of Public Health). The murals were painted in the Conference room and in the Lobby of the Central Laboratory, Av. Paseo de la Reforma and Lieja, Mexico City. Total surface: 116 m2

[1178] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 126.

Rivera: "Purity was seated on the ground, near a stream of clear water that flowed over her hand. Above her, on the roof, looking down, flew Life. Strength rested on the ground with her wide hips, her vigorous thighs and her powerful hands. Knowledge sat down cross-legged, looking dreamily at an open bud that she held in her hand. Near her, and almost touching her face, there was a viper coiled round a tree. Health was a thirsty figure with uplifted hands. Moderation was a tall woman with big bones who lay there with eyes closed. In her hand, she seized a viper, its forked tongue flickering; the woman gripped the body of the viper between her legs."

> *La Pureza está sentada en tierra, cerca de un arroyo de agua clara, que fluye por encima de su mano. Encima de ella, en el techo, mirando hacia abajo, volaba la Vida. La Fuerza descansaba en tierra con sus anchas caderas, sus vigorosos muslos y sus manos poderosas. El Conocimiento se sentaba con las piernas cruzadas, viendo soñadora un botón abierto que sostenía en su mano. Cerca de ella, y casi tocándole la cara, había una víbora enroscada a un árbol. La Salud era una figura sedente con las manos levantadas. La Moderación era una mujer alta de grandes huesos, que yacía con los ojos cerrados. En la mano empuñaba una víbora, debajo de cuya cabeza salía el dardo de su lengua bifurcada; la mujer oprimía entre las piernas el cuerpo de la víbora.* [1179]

Rivera also designed the stained-glass windows that represent the four elements, *Earth*, *Fire*, *Air* and *Water*. [1180]

Rivera: "Then I designed four stained-glass windows for four windows of the same building. I tried to mix the tints of the colored glasses in order to create as plastic an effect as possible. With this end I also used glass pieces cut in curved segments to give the whole composition a symmetry of flowing lines."

> *Después diseñé cuatro vitrales para cuatro ventanas del mismo edificio. Traté, mezclando los tintes de los vidrios de colores, de crear un efecto tan plástico como fuera posible. Con este fin también empleé pedazos de vidrio cortados en segmentos curvos para dar a toda la composición una simetría de líneas móviles.* [1181]

The National Palace, Mexico City

The National Palace is located at *Plaza de la Constitución*, or Zócalo, in the historic center of Mexico City. The plaza was paved in the 1520s by order of Hernán Cortés, using stones from the temples and palaces of the sacked Aztec city of Tenochtitlán, on the site of which Mexico City was built. The entire eastern side of this huge Zócalo is occupied by the National Palace. The National Palace has been a witness to and a part of the history of Mexico and has become one of the symbols of the Mexican nation. Its history goes back until the time of the Mexica Empire, when Xocoyotzin, Moctezuma's palace, occupied the site. For almost three hundred years, it was first the headquarters and residence of Hernán Cortés and after that, used to house the viceroys of New Spain. Today the National Palace is the official residence of the Federal Executive power and houses various government departments. The Palace is one of the principal attractions for tourists, many of whom come to marvel at Diego Rivera's murals.

The National Palace was subject to numerous modifications during the Colony period both as a result of damage done during risings against the colonial government and as a consequence of renovations ordered by various viceroys. The 1693 renovation gave it the form which it retained until Independence, with two floors housing the offices of the colonial administration, the royal chapel, the rooms of the viceroys, the jail, the House of Currency and, in the grounds, the Botanical Garden.

[1179] Ibid.
[1180] The four stained-glass windows have a total surface of 22 m2.
[1181] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 126.

This construction has been the seat of Mexico's executive power since the end of the War of Independence in 1821. After Independence, it became the government's headquarters during the agitated years of Mexico's life as an independent nation. It has housed various ministries, the Camera of Deputies and the Senate, barracks and the National Museum. In almost every presidential period, changes and improvements have been made, so that it is difficult to recognize in it the building that Cortés erected in the XVI century.

The Murals [1182]

The idea for the project of National Palace's murals dated from 1927, during the government of Calles. The mural was formally commissioned in 1929, during the two-year interim presidency of Emilio Portes Gil. However, actually it was the former president Plutarco Elías Calles, president between 1924 and 1928, who held the reins of power and wanted to use mural works as a form of ideological propaganda. He was the *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución*, the strong man in Mexico, and for the next six years, he would control the formal presidents, who in fact were merely puppet presidents. Thus the whole period from 1924 until 1934 is known as "the Maximato". [1183]

During this period Calles retreated from the ideals of the Revolution, despite extensive use of a *Revolutionary* rhetoric. He guided his politics toward a capitalism cloaked in a pseudo-*Revolutionary* rhetoric. Calles directed the course of state policy away from social reform toward a consciously pro-capitalist development until in 1930 the agrarian reform was pronounced a failure and he promulgated laws that protected capital and the large land owners. The reorientation that Calles made was possible due to a tendency toward the institutionalization of Mexican society and reformist politics which allowed him to control the labor and peasants' organizations. In 1933, he ordered the disarming of the peasant leagues, which had supported the regime in the 1920s. Calles also moved closer to the United States by means of agreements with Ambassador Morrow, which allowed him to break up the precarious alliance with the left which no longer served his purposes; he also managed to exert his will on the local caudillos. In spite of its anti-*Revolutionary* practices, the government still presented itself as authentically *Revolutionary* and used left-wing propaganda to legitimize its policies.

It was nationalist rhetoric that allowed Calles to give an artificial coherence to his régime. He defined the regime as a *Revolutionary* government, the legitimate follower of the ideals of the Revolution, and was thus able to neutralise the proposals and interests of the different groups that had participated in the armed fight. The government became authoritarian and dictatorial, developing a type of leadership that used economic, political and cultural nationalism as demagoguery and finally descended into populism. Men like Vasconcelos, who tried to denounce the situation, were pursued into exile. Rivera's representation of Vasconcelos, in the Secretariat and in the National Palace, has to be seen in this ideological context. In this matter Rivera is therefore not innocent; at the very best he is ambiguous. During this period of marked ideological contradictions, Diego Rivera accepted a commission from the regime to paint the history of Mexico on the walls of its headquarters. The contradictory positions that he adopted speak of his opportunism, of his lack of clarity or of a defined position toward the political struggle, attitudes which are symptomatic of the contradictions and fragmentations that characterize the Mexican left of those years. In 1927 Rivera participated actively in the Anti-imperialist League of the Americas, which that same year congratulated Calles on his "anti-imperialist" attitudes!

[1182] The National Palace is certainly Rivera's most famous work. It is very extensive and was painted in several stages. I only refer to the project in quite general terms, according to its relevance to my themes. To study the whole program of this mural please consult Appendix XVII.

[1183] There are many sources dealing with this period of Mexican history, e.g., Chapters I and II of Meyer, Lorenzo, Segovia, Rafael, Lajous, Alejandra, *Los inicios de la institucionalización. La política del Maximato: Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, período 1928-1934*, El Colegio de Mexico 1978. Also of particular interest is Vasconcelos's version, in his autobiography on this period.

The year of 1929 was a very active year for Rivera and a momentous year for the consolidation of the State and the post-*Revolutionary* society. The provisional president, Emilio Portes Gil, continued the task of consolidating the state, initiated by Calles, who continued meddling in the political life of the country until the government of Lázaro Cárdenas.

The decoration of the National Palace's central stairway was carried out *al fresco* in a number of phases. One phase of the work began in 1929 and was concluded in 1935. In order to carry out the mural in the Palace of Cortés in Cuernavaca and murals in the United States, Rivera interrupted his work in the National Palace in 1930. Three Presidents came and went and a fourth took office during the period in which he worked on the murals, and those changes in power led to important alterations in the murals that he painted there. The Mexican state became a master in the art of using history as an instrument of ideological persuasion and of confusing talk about Mexican origins with its own objectives and political programs. Rivera was usually at the disposal of those in power. It was 1935 before Rivera finally concluded the decoration of the National Palace's stairway, by which time Cárdenas was in power. Other murals in the corridors were completed in the 1940's and 1950's.

Rivera's murals in the National Palace are in two closely connected areas in the central part of the building which occupies the whole eastern side of the capital's Zócalo. The subject matter of the murals is the history of Mexico from the fall of Teotihuacán to the beginning of the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1935.

In this mural the terms of the dialectic are not historical "facts" but the idealized versions of such facts. The visual organisation of the mural reflects the chronology of the subject matter. To the center, the events that forged Mexico. To the right side, an idealization of the indigenous world and a rehabilitation of the positive values inherited from the Toltecs and Mexica. And on the other side, an ideal, a hope; tomorrow's collectivist world where all are equal. The idealised portrayal of the pre-columban cultures reinforced the identification of *Mexicanidad* with the indigenous Indian culture. At this stage Rivera had great prestige and expectations were high, even though his ideas and theories are quite confused on these subjects.

Armando Torres-Michúa: "*Mexicanidad* is not the fusion, the mixing or addition of two realities, but the synthesis of contradictory elements in different percentages."

> *La Mexicanidad no es fusión, mezcla o suma de dos realidades, sino síntesis de elementos contradictorios en diferentes porcentajes − según el caso − ; por ello el nacionalismo de los muralistas a veces parece decorativo o exagerado, sin embargo, fue un tipo de pintura convincente dentro de sus propios cánones, porque sus soluciones no eran filosóficas, morales, jurídicas, etc., sino estéticas; aunque no excluyeron incorporar la lucha por una mejoría que abarcara a toda la nación.* [1184]

In Rivera's National Palace murals, Esther Cimet Shoijet identifies "at least three distinct visions of the indigenous peoples: a "picturesque" or "of manners" [the panels of the second floor]; another mythical [North wall of the stairway]; and another in which they are the fighters and the exploited [central wall of the stairway.]"

> *Al analizar en concreto las imágenes del muralismo llegaremos probablemente a la conclusión de que más que estar representado el indígena "en el marco verdadero de la lucha de clases" muestran una cierta visión de ésta, o más bien diversas visiones dentro de las cuales pudiera incluirse su ausencia. Un caso muy claro en este sentido son ciertos murales de Rivera, donde en una obra realizada en distintas etapas ente 1929 y 1952, pero ubicada en el mismo sitio − el Palacio Nacional − , aparecen cuando menos tres visiones diversas del indígena: una "pintoresquista" o "costumbrista" [páneles del segundo piso];*

[1184] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 35-36.

otra mítica [muro norte del cubo de la escalera]; y otra en la que es visto como luchador y como explotado [muro central del cubo de la escalera]. [1185]

For Raquel Tibol: "The excellence of some of his aesthetic analyses is often overshadowed by theories of varying quality, such as some of his explanations about the biological necessity of art or about miscegenation."

La excelencia de algunos de sus análisis estéticos se ve empañada muchas veces con teorías del más diverso calibre, como serían algunas de sus exposiciones sobre la necesidad biológica del arte o sobre el mestizaje. Ocultismo y seudociencia se enredan en su discurso cuando trata de penetrar en cuestiones estéticas no esclarecidas o cuando exalta al mundo primitivo como el auténtico reino de la libertad, o cuando sitúa el refinamiento del arte popular en niveles de sofisticación. La endocrinología, el hedonismo, el vitalismo son amarrados por una disposición subversiva progresista. [1186]

I believe Rivera adopted Vasconcelos's theory of the coalition of races, but he gave it a more complex reading. They shared a central concern with the cultural consequences of the Conquest, and both tried to build a unifying myth, for which muralism was an important vehicle.

Justino Fernández on the other hand affirms: "The coalition of the races was a clearly established fact and indicated, beyond all theories, that the white man loved brown flesh without distinctions or fastidiousness and out of this union a beneficent miscegenation arose bearing a new culture, in which the indigenous past was integrated, in many ways and nuances, and was not completely annihilated. The Creoles put down roots, and they were no longer just Spaniards but also American."

La fusión de las razas fue un hecho capital y suficiente demostración, allende todas las teorías, de que el hombre blanco amó la carne morena sin distinciones ni remilgos y de tal unión surgió un benéfico mestizaje portador de la nueva cultura, pues en ella iba implícito, de muchas maneras y matices, el pasado indígena no del todo aniquilado. Los criollos echaron raíces y ya no fueron más sólo españoles sino también americanos. [1187]

As Olivier Debroise says: "Rivera never definitively abandoned the *Mexicanism* of his first murals; however, in his easel work and in the murals of National Palace's corridors, he seems to give to the public the image that has been formed of him in Mexico."

Rivera nunca abandonó definitivamente el Mexicanismo de sus primeros murales; sin embargo, en su obra de caballete y en los murales de los corredores de Palacio Nacional, parece ceder a la imagen pública que se ha formado de él en México. [1188]

Bertram Wolfe comments:

When the walls of the National Palace were offered to Diego – great walls facing and flanking a monumental stairway which rises by steps of low gradient from the ground floor

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[1185] Cimet Shoijet, Esther, *Movimiento muralista Mexicano: ideología y producción*, Libros de la telaraña, nr. 1, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, División de Ciencias y Artes para el Diseño, Mexico 1992, p. 120.
[1186] Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, prólogo, p. 26.
[1187] Fernández, Justino, *Estética del arte Mexicano: Coatlicue, El retrato de los Reyes, El hombre*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1972, p. 543.
[1188] Debroise, Olivier, "La gran reconstrucción y la tierra fecunda [La evolución de Diego Rivera, 1917-1920]", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 156.

> *of a large inner court, dividing at the end of the first flight into a right and left staircase – the expanse of wall and the nature of the building suggested to the painter the most ambitious undertaking of his career. He would paint the epic of his people.* [1189]

On the right wall of the National Palace's central stairway and on part of the corridor, Rivera reconstructed the lost paradise of the indigenous Kingdom. On the wall facing this paradise, Karl Marx's figure points towards the sunrise of a future of hope. [1190]

For Keen:

> *The murals that he painted in the Palacio Nacional between 1929 and 1951 constitute his climactic achievement in this field. These murals re-create ancient Mexican civilization in immense detail, with the utmost archaeological veracity. In conformity with his Marxist outlook, Rivera devoted much attention to the material foundations of ancient Indian life, to the depiction of economic activity and technology. The crowning scene in this series is a panoramic view of Tenochtitlán, in which he conveys with marvelous coloring and stylized realism the teeming life of the great city.* [1191]

I believe that the history that Rivera depicted, expressed through the presentation of heroes and corresponding villains, is superficial and simplistic. The ideological differences and the class struggles are hidden by the idea of a common historical project, conceived of as some kind of an incarnation of a national identity.

Rivera paints Emiliano Zapata and Venustiano Carranza as heroes of the *Mexican Revolution*, seeming not to give any importance to the fact that Carranza gave orders to kill Zapata. At the same time, he glorifies Tenochtitlán as the center of a perfect civilization, although the Aztec empire was the great oppressor of its time.

Rivera's historical interpretations form part of the populist politics used by his patrons who sought to have the people identify with a utopian past, or to put their hopes in a remote future, as the regime was unable to face up to the historical moment, neither having the resources nor displaying the honesty needed to begin the struggle in real terms.

Azuela de la Cueva: "His mural production, with the exception of a few works, is fed by an improvised populist and superficial ideology that includes, among other characteristics, the vulgarization of Marxism, which leads to the paradox of left-wing themes, sponsored by a capitalist country. He carries out the same didactic mission of reducing the meaning of the Mexican Revolution to comprehensible terms [which can be manipulated]; helped by subjective historical interpretations which often follow the official line."

> *Tanto Diego Rivera como sus seguidores, al poner su producción artística al servicio de las ideas del Estado marcan un nuevo camino a la producción mural, no sólo de estos años sino también de aquellos que siguiendo los mismos lineamientos han continuado desempeñando el papel del arte oficial del Partido Revolucionario. Su producción mural con excepción de algunas obras, se alimente de una ideología populista improvisada y superficial que incluye entre otras características a la vulgarización del Marxismo, dando lugar a la paradoja de los temas de izquierda, patrocinados por un país capitalista. Desempeña la misma misión didáctica de reducir a términos comprensibles*

[1189] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 261.
[1190] See **Figures 82** and **83**, p. 419 and 423.
[1191] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 527.

[manipulables] el sentido de la Revolución Mexicana; dado a base de interpretaciones históricas subjetivas con base en mucho a los criterios oficiales. [1192]

As in the murals of the Secretariat of Public Education, Rivera had many personal bones to pick and ridiculed many who were formerly his friends, allies or patrons. This is the fate of Vasconcelos, once again, and several others. In the National Palace Rivera painted Rockefeller, with whom he had just had a confrontation because of the mural that he painted for the Rockefeller Center in New York, talking on the phone to Harry Sinclair, William Durant, J. P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and Andrew Mellon.

Rivera's portraits on the walls of the Palace generated plenty of controversies. The most significant controversy concerns his depiction of Cortés in one of the corridors of the palace. However, this work was painted in the fifties; it falls outside the scope of this study.

The mural was the most ambitious project offered to Rivera up until then; the National Palace mural represented an extension of his thematic material, embracing, according to Rivera, the whole history of Mexico. In it, Rivera came to articulate his own, controversial concept of Mexican history, expressed in terms of the remote and immediate past, and in a vision of the future.

Rivera: "It is not up to me, of course, to anticipate the verdict of the future. But, whether you like it or not, nobody will be able to deny that it represented a new way of mural painting. The murals before this – all – they had shown isolated figures and groups of figures against big and silent backgrounds. In this mural I appropriated the architectural movement of the same stairway, and I related it to the dynamic upward development of the Revolution."

No me corresponde a mí, por supuesto, adelantarme al veredicto de los tiempos futuros. Pero, le guste o no le guste, nadie podrá negar que representó una nueva manera de la pintura mural. Los murales anteriores a éste – todos – habían hecho figuras aisladas y grupos de figuras contra grandes y mudos trasfondos. En este mural me apropié el movimiento arquitectónico de la escalera misma y lo relacioné con el dinámico desarrollo ascendente de la Revolución. Cada personaje del mural estaba dialécticamente conectado con sus vecinos, de acuerdo con su papel en la historia. Nada era solitario; todo era relevante. Mi mural del Palacio Nacional es el único poema plástico que yo conozca que comprende en su composición la historia completa de un pueblo. Es también el trabajo que se ha llevado una mayor parte de mi tiempo. Lo dejé varias veces para pintar otros murales, pero seguí volviendo a él – la última vez en 1955 – para hacer cambios y adiciones. Como todos sus detalles están relacionados orgánicamente, hay pocas alteraciones que haya podido hacerle sin afectar los detalles vecinos. Entre mis amigos han tomado a chiste decir: "¿Ya saben la noticia? Diego ya acabó de pintar la escalera." [1193]

In the National Palace, Rivera painted a vast succession of murals which purport to relate the history of the indigenous peoples. The preponderant theme is the figure of the Indian: in the splendor of the pre-Hispanic constructions, in the anonymous front lines in the wars against the Spanish, French or American invaders and in the *Revolutionary* struggle.

Armed with the experience gained at the Secretariat of Public Education and Chapingo, Rivera was now ready to face the task of painting murals in the National Palace's stairway. His technical mastery of the fresco technique made him now prepared for great challenges in the field of mural decoration, and he

[1192] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socios económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, pp. 93-94.
[1193] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 130-131.

displayed a particular intuition for composition and its integration into the architecture. Rivera also refined his coloring, creating a highly personal palette.

As one would expect, Rivera gave a different chronology of the facts concerning the idea and timing of the realization of the murals at the National Palace. He told Gladys March that he had a vision during his return by boat from the Soviet Union, a journey he made together with Siqueiros and his wife Graciela Amador. According to Rivera, "A radiant red ball left the horizon of the sea and wine suddenly to settle in a greenish white bank of clouds. Some seconds later another sphere was shot before our eyes, and later another one."

> *Durante todo el trayecto de regreso el tiempo fue ideal, y me aproveché de eso para completar algunas telas y acuarelas que había empezado en la Unión Soviética. En el camino ocurrió un incidente que tal vez duró sólo un minuto, pero que tuvo en mí un profundo efecto. Graciela, Siqueiros y yo estábamos en la cubierta viendo un brillante atardecer. Una refulgente bola roja salió de pronto del horizonte del mar y vino a posarse en un banco de nubes blanco verdoso. Unos segundos después se disparó otra esfera ante nuestros ojos, y después otra.* [1194]

Rivera continues: "In those moments the conception of the mural of the National Palace's stairway that I had begun to draft in 1922, was totally and completely illuminated in my mind, with so much clarity that immediately after my arrival back in Mexico I sketched it with as much easiness as if I was copying paintings that I had made previously."

> *En esos momentos la concepción del mural de la escalera del Palacio Nacional, que había empezado a planear en 1922, se iluminó totalmente completa en mi mente, con tanta claridad que inmediatamente después de mi llegada a México la bosquejé con tanta facilidad como si estuviera copiando pinturas que hubiera hecho previamente.* [1195]

Rivera, to Gladys March: "The National Palace's stairway rises wide and majestic from a wide interior patio, being divided to right and left in the first tract. For the wall of the stairway of the right, I made a vision of Mexico before the Conquest: its popular arts, crafts and legends; its temples, palaces, sacrifices and gods. In the great central wall, of six arches, I would paint the whole history of Mexico from the Conquest until the Mexican Revolution."

> *La escalera del Palacio Nacional se eleva amplia y majestuosa desde un ancho patio interior, dividiéndose a derecha e izquierda en el primer tramo. Para la pared de la escalera de la derecha hice una visión de México antes de la Conquista: sus artes populares, artesanías y leyendas; sus templos, palacios, sacrificios y dioses. En la gran pared central, de seis arcos, pintaría toda la historia de México desde la Conquista hasta la Revolución Mexicana.* [1196]

He continues: "In the triangular base I would represent the cruelties of the Spanish régime, and above that, the many fights of my people for Independence, culminating, in the external arches, in the lost war against the invaders from the North and the final victory over the French. The four central arches would show aspects of the Revolution against Díaz and its repercussions in the divided years of fighting under Madero, Huerta, Carranza, Obregón, [extending] until the horrible present of Plutarco Elías Calles."

> *En la base triangular representaría las crueldades del régimen español, y encima de eso, las múltiples luchas de mi pueblo por la Independencia, culminando, en los arcos exteriores, en la guerra perdida contra los invasores del Norte y la final victoria sobre los franceses. Los cuatro arcos centrales mostrarían aspectos de la Revolución contra Díaz y*

[1194] Ibid, p. 123.
[1195] Ibid, p. 124.
[1196] Ibid.

sus repercusiones en los desgarrados años de lucha de Madero, Huerta, Carranza, Obregón, hasta el horrible presente de Plutarco Elías Calles. [1197]

Raquel Tibol: "According to the painter's own description, Rivera represented Plutarco Elías Calles in his historical role as initiator of the bourgeois consolidation of Mexico in connection with international finance, exercising repression against Revolutionary peasants and labor strikers."

Allí Rivera representó, y sigo la relación hecha por el propio pintor, a Plutarco Elías Calles en su papel histórico de gobernante iniciador de la consolidación burguesa de México en conexión con la finanza internacional, ejerciendo represión contra campesinos revolucionarios y obreros huelguistas. En el mismo tablero aparece un grupo de comunistas tras unos "camisas doradas" [fascistas vernáculos] que hablan con un caballero de Colón vestido de charro. Del cuello de un campesino y de un obrero ahorcados penden unos letreros que dicen "Ahorcado por latro faccioso comunista" y "por rebelde agrarista". Hay una máquina de hacer dinero debajo del altar de la Virgen de Guadalupe, y junto a él un fraile explotador, unos burgueses y un campesino idiotizados en adoración y contribuyendo al enriquecimiento de la Iglesia. [1198]

Rivera, again: "In the wall of the stairway of the right I would paint the present and the future. Of course, I was less sure of the course that the present would follow than the course of the past. It would take me a long time to find the correct point from which the future could be projected until, after six years, my preliminary perspectives were tuned by the destruction of my mural in the Rockefeller Center."

En la pared de la escalera de la derecha pintaría el presente y el futuro. Por supuesto, estaba menos seguro del curso que seguiría el presente del que siguió el pasado. Me llevaría mucho tiempo dar vueltas hacia atrás para encontrar el punto correcto desde el cual el futuro podía proyectarse hasta que, después de seis años, mis perspectivas preliminares fueron afinadas por la destrucción de mi mural en el Rockefeller Center. [1199]

These murals are introduced into the *Revolutionary* discourse of the Mexican state, which appropriated muralism thanks to Rivera's compliancy and opportunism. This was to be the great work of muralism, painted at the historical and administrative center of the nation and representing the history of the country and giving meaning to the new state. Rivera assumed a unique position in the panorama of state muralism in Mexico, adapting to the political circumstances of the moment, always justifying his options with his own peculiar logic.

David Alfaro Siqueiros: "Later Rivera painted patriotic scenes and symbolic glorifications of the strong men of the new bourgeoisie in the stairway of Mexico's National Palace. As of habit, he tried to hide his attitude with confusing symbolism. All his work of that period followed this pattern."

Más tarde Rivera pintó en el cubo de la escalera del Palacio Nacional de México escenas patrióticas y glorificaciones simbólicas de los hombres fuertes de la nueva burguesía. Como de costumbre, trató de encubrir su actitud con símbolos confusionistas. Toda su obra de ese periodo se desenvolvió en tal sentido. No se conformaba con argumentar en el sentido de que estaba obrando estratégicamente y buscaba nuevos sofismas. "Yo soy un zapatero − decía − y en la sociedad actual no me queda más recurso que fabricar zapatos

[1197] Ibid.
[1198] Tibol, Raquel, "El nacionalismo en la plástica durante el cardenismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 242.
[1199] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 124.

para quienes los usan. Yo soy un pintor mural y mientras ustedes, los militantes, no creen una nueva sociedad, tendré que seguir sufriendo la presión del amo de hoy. [1200]

As on many occasions in his life, Rivera was on the defensive, rebutting attacks against him and trying to justify his behavior. Rivera defends himself in a pamphlet published in 1935, claiming that all his mural projects up to 1929, excepting that of the Cortés Palace in Cuernavaca, were approved by the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party, and implying that the same party approved his collaboration with the government of Calles and of Portes Gil.

Rivera's biographer Bertram D. Wolfe claims that the critical-historical analysis inherent in the National Palace murals made Cárdenas's government refuse to grant a budget for Rivera to paint the decorations of the stairway of the School of Medicine and led to the painter's exclusion from official projects. However, there is another incident that contributed to the strained relationship between Rivera and the president of Mexico, namely the offense caused to Cárdenas by allegations in Diego Rivera's and Bertram D. Wolfe's book, *Portrait of Mexico* (Covici-Firede, New York 1937). Cárdenas's diary entry of 1 May 1937 reads: "The work Portrait of Mexico of Bertram D. Wolfe, published this present year, says that the undersigned, taking advantage of a confidential report from the United States on the rise of silver prices, intervened in the stock game which made me (sic) millionaire."

La obra Portrait of Mexico de Bertram D. Wolfe, publicada en el presente año, dice que el suscrito, aprovechando un informe confidencial de Estados Unidos sobre el alza de la plata, intervino en el juego de la bolsa que me hizo millonario. El autor de esta obra [sigue diciendo Cárdenas, quien voluntariamente desconoce a Rivera], que de seguro persigue un fin político, sabe bien que la mayoría del pueblo Mexicano no está al tanto de estas operaciones y precisamente, por no conocerlas, pretende el autor de la intriga impresionar al pueblo con una intervención mía que estoy muy lejos de tener. Lo haré conocer a las cámaras para que participen de la responsabilidad de este cargo. [1201]

Later, Wolfe was less than satisfied with the *Portrait*:

In 1934 I did a book with him on his paintings in the United States, entitled Portrait of America. Today I do not think too well of the Portrait, for which I gave him much of the iconographic material and "intellectual" briefing. In any case, he knew his own country better and more deeply than ours, and did much better work on the walls of public buildings in Mexico than any he did in the United States. [1202]

Rivera: "In the stars, I depicted Karl Marx exhorting the suffering workers to break their chains and pointing toward a vision of the future land of peace and industrialized and socialized abundance."

En lo alto de las estrellas, retraté a Carlos Marx exhortando a los sufridos trabajadores a romper sus cadenas y señalando hacia una visión de la futura tierra de paz y abundancia industrializada y socializada. [1203]

[1200] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 228.

[1201] Lázaro Cárdenas. Obras 1. *Apuntes 1913-1940*. Tomo 1. Nueva Biblioteca Mexicana, Dirección General de Publicaciones. UNAM, Mexico 1972. Quoted by Tibol, Raquel, "El nacionalismo en la plástica durante el cardenismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, pp. 243-244.

[1202] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 4.

[1203] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 166.

By 1929, Rivera had done several studies on the subject of the history of Mexico, especially that of the pre-Hispanic period. His interpretation of the old indigenous world, in the National Palace's monumental stairway, relied on the known sources and presented a simplistic vision of the various periods of national history. Rivera composed the work on the basis of what little information that was known about the period, which he materialized into the idealized vision of agriculture, the arts, religion and war that adorns the walls of the palace.

I feel that this supposedly didactic vision, eulogising a past that never existed (at least certainly not in the terms in which it is presented here) actually complicated the collective vision of the history of Mexico. What Rivera presented in his mural was no more than an idealized interpretation of the indigenous world, a vision which deliberately forgot the human sacrifices, and ignored the raw violence that characterizes all armed conflict.

Rivera's representation of Mexican history is an organized choreography in folkloric terms which does not leave a square centimeter free, a colored decorativism that deprives the facts he pretends to represent of any dramatic dimension.

Rivera in his presentation of the pre-Hispanic period, as the root which legitimates contemporary Mexico, does not distinguish between the various different cultures that existed in the pre-Hispanic world over the centuries and passes over its internal conflicts. He adopts the liberal idea of considering this past as creative and productive. The world of the colony is mostly viewed negatively: the forced work of the natives in the mines, in the construction of buildings for the Spaniards, loading heavy burdens, the torture of the Inquisition, the rape of the women, and the destruction of indigenous culture, symbolized by the burning of Codexes.

Rivera presents miscegenation as the fruit of the violation of one culture by another, and concretely of an indigenous woman taken by a Spanish soldier. He paints in consequence the figure of the son of the Malinche. The majority of visitors interviewed about the murals say: "I liked the landing in Veracruz because of the boy with the green eyes."

> *"El desembarco en Veracruz me gustó por el niño de los ojos verdes", único comentario que de este fragmento destaca no la esclavitud ni el impacto de La Conquista sino la aceptación y la esperanza.* [1204]

The theme of slavery is not even considered; facts are merely stated and historical reality is accepted as such. There seem to be two reasons for this. On the one hand Rivera's representation in no way awakens a feeling of outrage, because in the totality of the historical vision these aspects are just a detail. On the other hand, there is the deliberate idea of softening reality on the part of Rivera, something which was already evident in Vasconcelos's vision. What has happened in the past, has happened. There is no alternative but to go forward and to accept miscegenation as a fact and a source of strength.

In chapter II I indicated that two traditional ideological currents coexist in Mexico: the liberal and the conservative. The liberals favor the *Mexica* and their leader Cuauhtémoc; the insurgency and its symbols: Hidalgo, Morelos and Guerrero; the Reformation with Juárez, Ocampo, Lerdo and Ramírez and the Revolution of 1910 and its regimes. Directly opposed to this approach, the Conservatives take the side of Spain and the conquest by Hernán Cortés; of the royalists represented by Calleja and Iturbide, Miramón, Márquez and Mejía who supported Maximilian as Emperor and finally sympathize with Porfirio Díaz, when his government moved toward political and economic conservatism. Vasconcelos is usually associated with this line. Yet at the same time, as discussed in detail above, Vasconcelos was a man of the Revolution and the initiator of a process of cultural liberation and affirmation. He is seen as a reactionary, rejecting everything that has to do with the cultures before the arrival of the Spaniards, because in later life he he

[1204] *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 34.

reduced his discourse to a primitive Hispanism. Few defended him when Rivera attacked him in his murals, whether in the Secretariat or in the National Palace.

For Orozco the subject of the cultural identification in terms of race and of different interpretations of the past is seen with apprehension and disdain: "We don't still know who we are, like people suffering from amnesia. We classify ourselves continually in Indians, Creoles and mestizo, only concerned about the mixture of blood, as if we were race horses, and from this classification parties have arisen that are full of hate and fight one another to the death, the Indigenists and the Hispanists."

> *Uno de los temas que más ha preocupado a los pintores murales ha sido la Historia de México. Unos se han afiliado a alguna de las facciones de historiadores y otros han opinado independientemente, pero todos se han vuelto expertos opinadores y comentadores de mucha fuerza y penetración. Es realmente admirable. La discrepancia que es evidente en las pinturas es reflejo de la anarquía y confusión de los estudios históricos, causa o efecto de que nuestra personalidad no está todavía bien definida en nuestra conciencia, aunque lo esté perfectamente en el terreno de los hechos. No sabemos aún quiénes somos, como los enfermos de amnesia. Nos clasificamos continuamente en indios, criollos y mestizos, atendiendo sólo a la mezcla de sangres, como si se tratara de caballos de carrera, y de esa clasificación han surgido partidos saturados de odio que se hacen una guerra a muerte, indigenistas y hispanistas.* [1205]

And further: "The whole History of Mexico seems to be written exclusively from the racial point of view. The discussion seems to finish up with attempts to proclaim and to impose the superiority of one of the two races, and the worst thing is that it is not a domestic discussion, because foreign feathers have intervened, and they continue intervening in the making of our history, with very perverse aims."

> *Toda la Historia de México parece estar escrita exclusivamente desde el punto de vista racial. La discusión se reduce, en apariencia, a proclamar e imponer la superioridad de una de las dos razas, y lo peor es que no es una discusión doméstica, porque plumas extranjeras han intervenido y siguen interviniendo en la confección de nuestra historia, con muy aviesos fines.* [1206]

I believe that Vasconcelos agrees with Orozco on this matter. This explains Vasconcelos's insisting that the project of national construction, with muralism as an essential cultural and didactic component, was urgent. Orozco continues: "This antagonism is fatal because all races are proud in end."

> *El trabajo de nuestros historiadores parece un encuentro de pugilato entre indianistas e hispanistas, siendo el "réferee" extranjero. La teoría de que México es necesariamente indígena, español o mestizo es una base falsa para definir nuestra personalidad.* [...] *Las consecuencias de la tesis o teoría racial, con exclusión de cualquier otra, son muy graves. El antagonismo de razas está exacerbado. La Conquista de México por Hernando Cortés y sus huestes parece que fué ayer. Tiene más actualidad, en cualquier momento, que los desaguisados de Pancho Villa. No parece que hayan sido a principios del siglo XVI el asalto al gran Teocalli y la Noche Triste y la destrucción de Tenochtitlán, sino el año pasado, ayer mismo. Se habla de ello con el mismo encono con que pudo haberse hablado del tema en tiempos de Don Antonio de Mendoza [el primer virrey]. Este antagonismo es fatal porque todas las razas son orgullosas en extremo.* [1207]

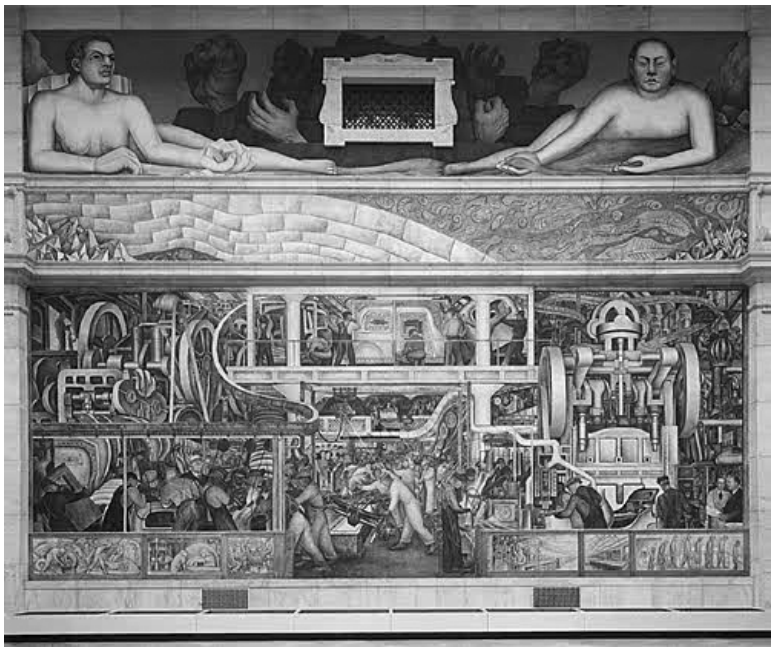
The murals in the staircases of the National Palace reveal the changes which occurred during the years in which they were conceived and carried out. They are thus symptomatic of the social changes which occurred

[1205] Orozco, José Clemente, *Autobiografía*, Ediciones Occident, Mexico 1945, pp. 99-102.
[1206] Ibid.
[1207] Ibid.

in Mexican society. They also reveal Rivera's great capacity to adapt to the historical circumstances in his country and, indeed, everywhere he worked.

The series of historical events during the time between 1929 and 1935 and the ideological changes in Rivera's thought along this time is visible in a series of alterations to the original project, as much in formal aspects as in the approaches he used to illustrate the history of Mexico, presenting the historical process with many historical and ideological anachronisms and incoherencies, in an amalgam of forms and colors that simultaneously confuse and seduce the observers.

Figure 77. Diego Rivera: *Detroit Industry* or *Man and Machine*, south wall. Detroit Institute of Arts, 1932/33. [1208]



In the five years between completion of the main stairway wall (1929-30) and the beginning of the adjoining south wall (1935), Rivera had undertaken five fresco programs in the United States: two in San Francisco; one in Detroit (**Figure 77**); and two in New York, his unfinished work at the RCA building in Rockefeller Center, and a series of twenty-one movable panels at the New Workers' School. The artist's experiences with the capitalist power structure of the United States seemed to have moved his already *Revolutionary* thinking as to the political role his art ought to play from a focus that was local and national to one that was international and involved a full and open advocacy of the Marxist-Leninist view of historical process.

During the government of Cárdenas, 1934-40, Rivera was allowed to paint and finish the stairways in the National Palace and to reproduce, in Bellas Artes, the mural that was destroyed in the RCA in New York.

President Cárdenas also allowed Rivera to paint in 1935 another part of the mural in the staircases of the Palace. In true opportunistic form Rivera, once again, adapted the theme to the patron. For Esther Acevedo: "A certain flexibility in Cárdenas's régime always allowed Rivera, the opportunist, to criticize different groups or characters who were out of fortune at this time, like Calles, the ecclesiastical power or the University which Cárdenas tried to weaken; he also allowed him to incorporate Marx's figure in a mural in the Executive's headquarters."

> *La cierta flexibilidad del régimen de Cárdenas le permitió al siempre oportunista Rivera hacer una crítica a diferentes grupos o personajes en desgracia en este momento, como Calles, el poder eclesiástico o la Universidad a la que Cárdenas trató de debilitar; le permitió además incorporar la figura de Marx en un mural en la sede del Ejecutivo.* [1209]

Accordingly Rivera was attacked by the Mexican left. Siqueiros accused Rivera of cowardice in his painting.

[1208] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 52.
[1209] Acevedo, Esther, et al, *Guía de murales del centro histórico de la ciudad de México*, Universidad Iberoamericana, CONAFE, Mexico 1984, p. 122.

Rivera answered: “Siqueiros accuses me of being courageous with the dead and cowardly with the living, for not having painted, for example, the victims of the proletarian fight in Mexico, fearing the living in power, and not painting them in the political role which they carry out.”

> *Siqueiros me acusa de ser valiente con los muertos y cobarde con los vivos, por no haber pintado, por ejemplo, a las víctimas de la lucha proletaria en México por miedo a los vivos en el poder, y no haber pintado a éstos en el papel político que desempeñan.* [...] *Rivera tampoco tiene miedo a la crítica ni a la autocrítica, deber elemental de todo revolucionario, y está dispuesto a aprovechar ambas para mejorar su línea y su acción en la pintura que tiende a ser útil a los obreros y a los campesinos del mundo y está dispuesto a colaborar en tal trabajo con Siqueiros, aunque sea como hasta ahora, Siqueiros hablando y Rivera pintando.* [1210]

According to Raquel Tibol, it was Rivera who invented during the days of the controversy the widespread slogan: “Siqueiros speaking and Rivera painting”, which “didn’t correspond to the facts. Siqueiros discussed, but he also worked without rest.”

> *Fue Rivera el que inventó durante los días de la controversia el dicho tan difundido: “Siqueiros hablando y Rivera pintando”, lema que a pesar de su graciosa sonoridad no correspondía a los hechos. Siqueiros discutía pero también trabajaba sin descanso.* [1211]

Rivera tried to defend himself: “So, because, on a national and international scale, it is a lie and a calumny what Siqueiros asserts, the facts demonstrate it, and they also demonstrate that whatever the defects that Rivera has as painter, as man and as Revolutionary, he is neither an opportunist, nor is he afraid of the living who are in power, nor is he is only brave with the dead.”

> *Así, pues, en escala nacional e internacional, es mentira y calumnia lo que asevera Siqueiros, los hechos lo demuestran, y demuestran también que cualesquiera que sean los defectos que Rivera tenga como pintor, como hombre y como revolucionado, ni es oportunista, ni tiene miedo a los vivos en el poder, ni es sólo valiente con los muertos.* [1212]

Mary Randolph claims that what Rivera paints is only a masquerade: “The masquerade has been quite successful in confusing people. Rivera paints the faces of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the National Palacio’s walls. The Red Shirts parade through the streets escorted by the police; the hammer and sickle are printed in the federal warnings. Certainly these are the draperies of socialism; however, feudalism, capitalism and foreign imperialism continue the process of exploitation without being bothered. In a word, a Mexican Fascist government squashes and cuts people with a sickle and a hammer in a much more efficient and subtler way than with a swastika.”

> *La mascarada ha tenido bastante éxito en cuanto a confundir a la gente. Rivera pinta rostros de Marx, Engels y Lenin en los muros del Palacio Nacional. Los Camisas Rojas desfilan por las calles escoltadas por la policía; la hoz y el martillo están impresos en los avisos federales. Ciertamente estas son las colgaduras del socialismo; sin embargo, el feudalismo, el capitalismo y el Imperialismo extranjero siguen en proceso de explotación sin ser molestados. En una palabra, un gobierno fascista Mexicano aplasta y corta a la*

[1210] Rivera, Diego, “Raíces políticas y motivos personales de la controversia Siqueiros-Rivera. Stalinismo vs. bolchevismo Leninista”, Imprenta Mundial, Mexico 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 123-125.

[1211] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 71.

[1212] Rivera, Diego, “Raíces políticas y motivos personales de la controversia Siqueiros-Rivera. Stalinismo vs. bolchevismo Leninista”, Imprenta Mundial, Mexico 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 124.

gente con una hoz y un martillo de una manera mucho más eficiente y sutil que con un hackenkreuz. [1213]

The mural – organization

The allegory of the history of Mexico in National Palace is organized in two parts: the main entrance stairway depicts *From the Conquest to the Future*, realized in two stages: the stairway's main and north side walls were completed in 1929-30 and in 1935 the left-hand side wall composition was added, completing the decoration of the stairway area,.

The other decorations, consisting of eleven panels which represent the theme *From the Pre-Hispanic Civilization to the Conquest* extend the historical program on Mexico's ancient past further up the stairway, and cover the gallery surrounding the building's central patio on the second floor. These were painted between 1943 and 1951.

The three phases of the work show a clear evolution in Rivera's artistic language. While the style of the main and north walls of the stairway is similar to that used in the murals he painted from 1922 to 1928, demonstrating a slow evolution towards a unified, personal idiom that corresponded to a process of decorative and nationalist affirmation, the style of the south wall is more polemical, reflecting his political and artistic experiences in the United States and his declared aim to adhere to the rhetoric of the Cárdenas presidency on his return to Mexico. The other decorations, which cover the gallery surrounding the building's central patio on the second floor, use a more descriptive style to idealize pre-columban civilization.

At first sight the west or central wall appears to be a great chaos of figures, coloring and movement. This difficulty in reading the mural impedes the fulfillment of its didactic function. The structure continues through the arches that subdivide the great space, and it becomes evident that it is to be read as much horizontally as vertically.

The frescos of Rivera became more and more packed with indigenous or popular multitudes, revealing a kind of agoraphobia. Some critics referred to his peculiar style as being "agoraphobic" because he seemed to be afraid of having any open space visible in his paintings. Perhaps, one should refer to a *horror vacui* [dread of unfilled spaces].

Antonio Rodríguez:

Diego Rivera has often been accused of suffering from Agoraphobia. It is true that there are few of the empty spaces beloved by Chinese Tao painters in his pictures. That is not surprising – there is an abyss between Chinese philosophy and that of Rivera. [1214]

[1213] Randolph, Mary, "El monopolio de Rivera", *Art Front*. July 1935, pp. 12-13. Published as appendix, document number 1. In Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, pp. 69-70.
[1214] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 265.

Stairway − Main wall

Figure 78. Diego Rivera: central wall, top of central arch, stairway in the National Palace. [1215]



On the wide central wall, located in the main access of the stairway and under five arches, Rivera painted the History of Mexico from the Conquest until 1930: more than 400 years compressed into an area of a few square meters. The topmost area of the main stairway wall is composed of five rounded pictorial areas, formed by the stairway ceiling vaults. Four of these are painted to represent themes and figures from major periods during the century between the proclamation of independence in 1821 and 1930, the year in which this part of the mural was completed. The flanking walls were treated as separate compositions.

The sequence of arched panels on this main wall is not arranged in strict chronological order and may be read both horizontally and vertically or by sections. Rivera creates a triptych, with two arcades on the right, a main arcade that becomes the center of the composition and two on the left. In the upper part of the five arches of the wall, Rivera presents scenes that summarize important historical landmarks: Independence, the Reformation, the Revolution of 1910, in the three central arches, and the North American invasion and the French Intervention in the lateral arches, the two 19th-century military invasions of Mexico by foreign powers which were symbolically so important in the definition of Mexican nationalism. Whilst Rivera was working on this section nationalist feelings were, rhetorically, directed against "*yankee* imperialism."

On the north wall is the North American invasion of 1847, symbolically represented by the North American eagle, and the Mexican resistance at the Castle of Chapultepec with the national flag. Historically the invasion was tremendous humiliating, but here Rivera reduces it rhetorically to the two symbols. The general in charge of the defense was Nicolás Bravo, who had been president of the country. On the south wall the French invasion is represented in the moment of its defeat, when the imperial eagle escapes and Maximilian together with the Mexican generals Miramón and Mejía was shot. Benito Juárez is among the faces observing the scene.

The panels flanking the central arch focus on two lengthy periods, the period of the Reformation and the epoch of Porfírio Diaz. In a representational montage in the upper part of the central arched space the masses appear simply as ornamental groups, dividing the scenes and creating rhythm and movement. The painting of the most significant characters in the official history symbolizes a continuity in Mexican thought and identity as a nation. The succession of characters are unified in a national progression that ends logically in the state that sponsors the murals. Further details about the individuals represented are found in Appendix XVII. Some of the individuals portrayed are listed below.

The Independence is presided over by the priest Hidalgo, holding up the broken chains of slavery, and by Morelos. Ignacio Allende and Vicente Guerrero stand with the flag of the Three Guarantees on Hidalgo's

[1215] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 87.

left. To his side is Iturbide. Below him are Andrés Quintana Roo and Leona Vicario. The upper part of the composition shows several characters involved in the Revolution, including, of course, Zapata.

In the arch of the Reformation Benito Juárez is shown with a parchment inscribed with the words *Constitución de 1857 Leyes de Reforma*. On his right is Ignacio Ramírez, el Nigromante, and to the left, Ignacio M. Altamirano and Melchor Ocampo. Also visible is a very fat friar and, to his right, the dictator Antonio López of Santa Anna, carrying a cane. To his right, the archbishop Labastida, an important conservative character who points at the treasure amassed by the church. Other important characters of this period whom Rivera shows are General Juan Alvárez, Santos Degollado, General Miguel Miramón, Ignacio Comonfort, General Leandro Valle and Valentine Gómez Farías. At the top of the composition a dome and the facade of a church are visible and far behind to the right another religious construction is being destroyed.

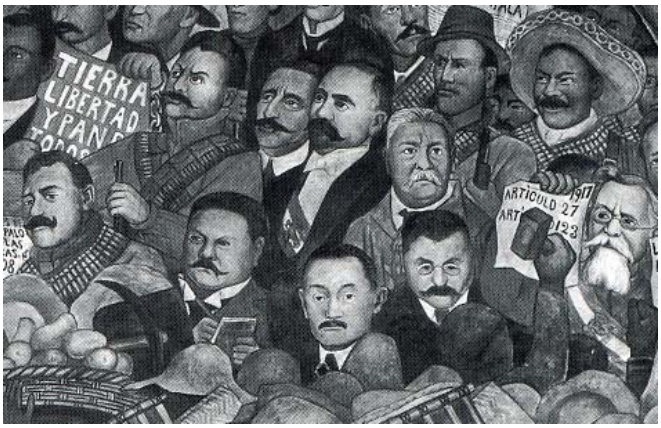


Figure 79. Diego Rivera: the Revolution of 1910. National Palace, Mexico City. [1216]

The second arch, to the left of the central arch, is a representation of the Revolution of 1910 (**Figure 79**). In the lower left part some of the liberal intellectuals are presented, who created the basis on which Díaz based his dictatorship. The journalist Guillermo Prieto, Gabino Barreda, the proponent of positivist philosophy, Justo Sierra, the educator, and several other intellectuals and artists are portrayed. Immediately above them, in the upper left part of this arch, are several important members of Díaz's government, together with Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, who succeeded Juárez in the Presidency. Above him is Porfirio Díaz, the man who has been presented by post-*Revolutionary* history as a disaster for Mexico and a traitor to liberalism. On his left is his wife, and to the right are José Ives Limantour and General Victoriano Huerta, who betrayed and murdered Madero. Above and behind them are stores, churches and oil towers. On the right-hand side of this arch and balancing the composition, in an ideological confrontation, are characters from all the different factions, who participated in the Revolution. Although they represented different segments of the opposition and were actually on different sides, Rivera paints them side by side as if the Revolution had been simple and united. The mass of figures is centered around the image of Madero, traditionally seen as the initiator of the Revolution. Close to him are Luis Cabrera, José Maria Pino Suárez and Aquiles Serdán. Below Madero are José Vasconcelos (here portrayed in a neutral form) and José Guadalupe Posada (**Figure 80**).

[1216] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 94.

Figure 80. Diego Rivera: the Revolution of 1910. National Palace, Mexico City. Detail. [1217]



Also visible: Ricardo Flores Magón, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Juan Sarabia and the generals Eulalio Gutiérrez and Lucio Blanco. Several pennants show different texts and through this it is possible to identify the characters. Zapata is portrayed with Otilio Montaño next to him. Below and to the right, a smiling Francisco Villa appears, complete with cartridge belt. This is possibly the first appearance of this character in the official history of the Revolution.

One banner proclaims *Tierra, libertad y pan para todos*, Earth, freedom and bread for all, and diverse texts alluding to reforms and laws. On the far right Venustiano Carranza, who began the institutionalization of the victorious *Revolutionary* movement, is shown.

Figure 81. Diego Rivera: National Palace, Mexico City. Main wall. Detail. [1218]



Rivera painted an enormous eagle sitting on a nopal, the symbol of Mexico, in the exact center of the panoramic composition in the main wall. Its size and position compel attention. The eagle does not have the traditional serpent in its beak, but the Atlteachinolli, the Aztec symbol for Fire and Water Atl-tlachinolli literally means "Burning water" and symbolises war (**Figure 81**). According to the legend of the Mexica migration, Huitzilopochtli told his people that they would settle at the place where an eagle landed on a nopal near a lake (see pp. 81-82). This would be the sign water-fire or burnt-water, in náhuatl *atl tlachinolli* (or *teuatl tlachinolli*, in Sahagún's version). [1219]

The figure of Cuauhtémoc is denoted by the sign of a descending eagle. Cuitláhuac is shown with a shield bearing the hieroglyphic of his name, holding a lance with a flint tip. Cortés is also shown, mounted on a white horse.

Antonio Rodríguez:

> *On one side of the stone is the hand of Cortés, brandishing his spear, and on the other the hand of Cuauhtémoc holding his sling – two elements completely opposed to each other but historically essential in the formation of present-day Mexico.* [1220]

The eagle at the horizontal midpoint of the composition serves to separate colonial Mexico from independent Mexico. On the lower section of this wall, Rivera painted a brutal vision of the Conquest, where Indian warriors dressed in ceremonial garments fight the armored Spanish invaders led by Cortés. The world of the Conquest presents the Spaniards as criminals who subjugated the great pre-Hispanic culture with violence and barbaric methods. In this vision, with its mythologized version of ancient life and religion in the Valley

[1217] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 94.
[1218] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, n.p.
[1219] Alternative spellings: Atl-tlachinolli, atl-tlachinoli, or teuatl tlachinolli.
[1220] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 247

of Mexico, only the work of the Christian missionaries appears in a positive light. Here Rivera is following the liberal tradition which views the encounter between the two cultures as a bloody confrontation culminating in the oppression of the indigenous peoples, as evidenced by the forced labor in the mines, the construction of buildings for the Spaniards, and the use of the indigenous workforce for onerous physical tasks. The presence of Alvarado represents the brutality with which the indigenous peoples were treated, the imposition of slavery and the countless instances of rape by the Spaniards, who viewed the indigenous peoples as the spoils of war. Miscegenation, the fruit of such situations, is symbolized by Cortés, Malinche and their son, Martin Cortés. It is also possible to recognize Bernardino de Sahagún, Vasco de Quiroga and Pedro de Gante, on the right of the eagle in the middle of the composition. These last represent the cultural aspects and the attempts to protect the indigenous peoples, the only positive aspects in the colonial world according to liberal historians. Despite the violence, indigenous culture was preserved and the indigenous people protected by the friars. The negative aspects shown include the torture carried out by the Inquisition, the destruction of the indigenous culture, symbolized by the burning of the Codexes, and the rape of the women.

North Wall, The old indigenous world, 1929

Figure 82. Diego Rivera: North Wall, *The old indigenous world*, National Palace, Mexico City, 1929. [1221]



The work in the National Palace began on the lateral North wall with a representation of the pre-Hispanic world and in this first wall, Rivera followed his original plans faithfully. The decoration of the National Palace's huge stairways reveals Rivera's intention of portraying indigenous history as a Golden Age, a period of great prosperity and achievement, especially in the arts. This concept, in which the pre-Hispanic past was rehabilitated as a glorious period and an essential component of Mexican nationality, was recognized and promoted officially. Opposite this idealizing vision, Rivera painted the three hundred years of colonial life as a brutal period, in line with the standard liberal perspective.

For Wolfe:

> *This Golden Age may never have existed, or may have been rude and barbarous and cruel, but no matter. Its temples and codices, its sculpture and remnants of poetry and artifacts, testify to the fact that it was a profoundly esthetic culture, more cruel and passionate and mythopoetic than logical and rational.* [1222]

[1221] Reproduced in Folgarait, Leonard, *Mural painting and social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the new order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, n.p.
[1222] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 427-428.

This first part is characterized by an idyllic happiness and innocence, and everything seems to breathe harmony. This idealization of the indigenous world was taken to extremes in the murals of the north corridor of the first floor which Rivera executed in later years. Pre-Hispanic Mexico possesses a double historical and mythical character, and the mural is a synthetic vision of the life of the indigenous peoples painted with the representation of Quetzalcóatl as the main deity of the Meso-American regions. [1223]

Antonio Rodríguez:

> *In the Palacio Nacional, Diego Rivera undertook the titanic task of representing in line and colour the epic of a nation. Such a feat had never been attempted in the history of painting, and it raised him to the level of the greatest exponents of his art. The mural in the Palacio Nacional starts with a kind of introduction, in which Quetzalcóatl – the 'wonderful twin' – appears in the threefold shape of star, god and human being. We first see him on his raft formed by serpents, sailing through space where he is a star accompanying the sun at night. On earth, he assumes the functions of a patriarch and a chief, becomes king and, having sacrificed his blood to give life to men, is recalled, having completed the earthly cycle of his mission. He leaves the earth and returns to sidereal space, assuming the shape of the morning star. 'He went aloft and entered the sky' say the Anales de Cuauhtitlán. He is metamorphosed into Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, or the lord of the house of dawn, the star which appears near the sun at sunrise. The circle is not completed, however, for the simple reason that life is in perpetual motion and there are no closed circles in it. At the top of the mural, the creative star can be seen in its Tzontémoc – setting sun incarnation, indicating that the great trajectory will be continued elsewhere, maybe in the world of shadows, where it proceeds nightly to undergo its hardest trial before being transformed into light once again.* [1224]

The image of Quetzalcóatl can be identified by his color and European features, his tunic adorned with shells and the pendant hanging around his neck, a characteristic symbol.

Shifra Goldman writes: "In his vast epic poem on the history of Mexico, painted on the walls of the National Palace's stairway, in Mexico City, he created an Age of Gold where Quetzalcóatl is a prophet of old."

> *En su vasta epopeya sobre la historia de México, pintada en los muros de la escalera del Palacio Nacional, en la ciudad de México, creó una Edad de Oro en donde Quetzalcóatl es el profeta de la época antigua. Sin embargo, la reafirmación cultural no es toda la sustancia del mural de Rivera. La población indígena de México era también la clase más amplia y explotada del país, la base rural en la que descansaba toda la estructura económica. Revitalizar a esta clase, presentar en un mural no sólo su antigua tradición idealizada, sino también su capacidad para reconstruir el presente y controlar el futuro, era continuar la obra iniciada por la fase militar de la Revolución. Este es el verdadero sentido del mural de Rivera, que constituye una obra nacionalista e indigenista a la vez.* [1225]

[1223] The image of Quetzalcóatl or allusions to the myth of Quetzalcóatl were used in several subsequent murals, for example, in the mural "Unidad panamericana", located in the hall of San Francisco City College, in the controversial mural "Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda", painted in 1947-1948, in the mural "The sport", stone mosaic set in the wall of the *Olympic Stadium* at the University City, in 1952, in the fresco in 1953 at the *Hospital de la Raza*, in the mural "El teatro en México", also painted in 1953 for the *Teatro Insurgentes*, and finally the relief in mosaic at Dolores Olmedo's house in Acapulco in 1956.
[1224] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 246.
[1225] Goldman, Shifra M., *Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, pp. 11-12.

According to Claudia Ovando Shelley and Alma Lilia Roura "The painting shows the Mexica group in the period immediately before the arrival of the Spaniards, but the scene of the white and bearded god Quetzalcóatl [the feathered snake] introduces a mythical, non-historic time."

> *La pintura muestra al grupo Mexica en el momento inmediato anterior a la llegada de los españoles, pero la escena del dios blanco y barbado Quetzalcóatl [la serpiente emplumada] introduce un tiempo mítico, ahistórico.* [1226]

According to Louise Noelle, "it was Diego Rivera, a pioneer in many senses, who first caught the image of Quetzalcóatl in a mural."

> *Quien primero plasmó en los muros la imagen de Quetzalcóatl fue Diego Rivera, pionero en muchos sentidos; lo hizo en 1929 en el muro norte de la escalera monumental del Palacio Nacional. En la obra "Historia de México desde la época prehispánica al futuro", Rivera se ocupó del pasado precolombino. La composición está dividida en dos escenas, una inferior sobre la guerra, y la superior referida a la cultura, en cuyo centro se localiza Quetzalcóatl, el sacerdote-gobernante; se trata de un hombre blanco y barbado, como reza la leyenda, rodeado de otros sacerdotes a quienes transmite su saber, que a su vez se difunde por el mundo prehispánico. Este personaje, para mayor identificación, porta sobre su cabeza un penacho de plumas de quetzal, sobre su pecho un caracol, símbolo de su relación con el agua y el viento, y en la mano un báculo en forma de voluta. Tanto el báculo como el caracol están tomados del Códice Florentino, [Cf. Códice Florentino, Libro I, lámina II.] mismo que le sirviera de inspiración para la representación del hombre-dios que en la parte superior del mural se aleja sobre una serpiente voladora. La relación entre Quetzalcóatl y la cultura es evidente en la pintura, y la figura central, probablemente inspirada en el Atlas de fray Diego de Durán, tiene toda la dignidad de un maestro pacífico y civilizador.* [1227]

Quetzalcóatl seems to be instructing a group of priests gathered around him. Behind him there is one pyramid and on his left side another, both drawn in a rather schematic and rudimentary way. Quetzalcóatl here is much humanized, and in many ways his features recall traditional representations of Christ. It is simultaneously the representation of a beneficent god and the guide of the Toltecs, a god, who is associated with creation and the arts. [1228]

Quetzalcóatl, white-skinned and bearded, is at the center of the composition; he is holding court. Above the arched wall a sun-face is visible. It is upside-down, and ears and part of the nose are visible, representing both the daily sunset and the fall of Tenochtitlán and of the Mexica Empire, according to the prophecies of the Mexicas. In line with the pre-Hispanic tradition, it is the sun that circles the earth. To the left of this inverted head a volcano is erupting; a serpent with a forked tongue is visible in the crater. The theme as a whole symbolizes the indigenous origins and foundation of modern Mexico, but it can also be read as a reference to the destruction of the pre-Hispanic world.

Wolfe believes the serpent with the forked tongue represents Quetzalcóatl.

[1226] Ovando Shelley, Claudia y Lilia Roura, Alma, "La herencia de los ídolos", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1989, p. 37.

[1227] Noelle, Louise, "Las Representaciones de Quetzalcóatl en el Arte Contemporáneo Mexicano", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. XV, Num. 60, Mexico 1989, pp. 131-133.

[1228] By way of contrast Orozco's representation of Quetzalcóatl in Dartmouth College in the United States is much more one of a god in anger. See **Figures 103** and **104**, p. 468.

> *In contrast to the drab Mexico of Tomorrow, the Mexico of Yesterday on the left wall of the Palace stairway, the Mexico of autochthonous Indian civilization before the Spaniard came, is lyrical in organization and in the treatment of its nameless figures, in the poetry of the arts and crafts of that vanished Golden Age, the graceful flowery wars, the idyllic landscape overhung by a personified and animated sun, presided over by three legendary incarnations of Quetzalcoatl. He rises out of a volcano as the feathered serpent in tongues of flame; he rides the sky in a serpentine boat; he presides, as Marx fails to on the opposite wall, over a group that forms a graceful circle around him, while with majesty, benevolence, and wisdom, he expounds the arts and crafts and imparts learning to men.* **1229**

And further:

> *Wherever he has painted it, in Cuernavaca, on the stairway and later on a wall of the corridor of the National Palace, in the Hospital of the Race, his painting moves the beholder. Rivera's true Prometheus is not Marx but Quetzalcoatl. His Golden Age is not in the mine shafts, smokestacks, and observatory of the Future [in the real future the smokestacks will disappear], but in the morning splendors of the Golden Age that has vanished, insofar as it ever was, this painter of his country's epic has found his utopia.* **1230**

For Louise Noelle: "a curious feathered snake that looks rather like a handmade object, arising from a volcano in eruption in the right superior part. If there is symbolism here, it is that of the holocaust of Quetzalcóatl, who died and became Xólotl, the evening star, since the sun is setting."

> […] *una curiosa serpiente emplumada, que semeja más bien un objeto artesanal, surgiendo de un volcán en erupción en la parte superior derecha. Si algún simbolismo tiene, es el del holocausto de Quetzalcóatl, que al morir se transforma en Xólotl, estrella vespertina, puesto que el sol está cayendo.* **1231**

In the upper right area, Quetzalcóatl, true to prophecy, departs toward the east on a feathered serpent. Beneath him, there is an idealized picture of the pre-Hispanic world, where creative work is exalted, and the indigenous people occupy themselves with agriculture, painting, ceramics, music, ceremonial dancing, weaving, stone carving, pottery making, sculpture, etc.

Wolfe's judgement is that Rivera did not succeed in giving life to the myths:

> *If the "history" on the Aztec-Mexican side is in large part absurd myth, as in the case of the flying machine of the King of Texcoco, it is nevertheless living myth. But the painter's misunderstandings and mystifications of the Anglo-American culture are no more than superficial literary clichés. Their roots were not deep in his spirit, hence he did not succeed in giving life to them in paint.* **1232**

In the words of Antonio Rodríguez:

[1229] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 427.
[1230] Ibid, p. 428.
[1231] Noelle, Louise, "Las Representaciones de Quetzalcóatl en el Arte Contemporáneo Mexicano", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Vol. XV, Num. 60, Mexico 1989, pp. 131-133.
[1232] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 366.

Rivera makes Quetzalcóatl the first chief, who sacrificed the blood of his penis to give life to the true inhabitants of the earth. [1233]

At the lower left part of the composition is a scene of open battle. The choreographic fight is minimized, and it is not bloody. A knight of the warrior order of the eagles, wearing a flamboyant head-dress, is seen demanding tribute from a file of heavily burdened carriers.

This part of the mural composition, which was painted in 1929, has many formal weaknesses; it is in the other parts of the project that the painter's language reached much higher formal levels.

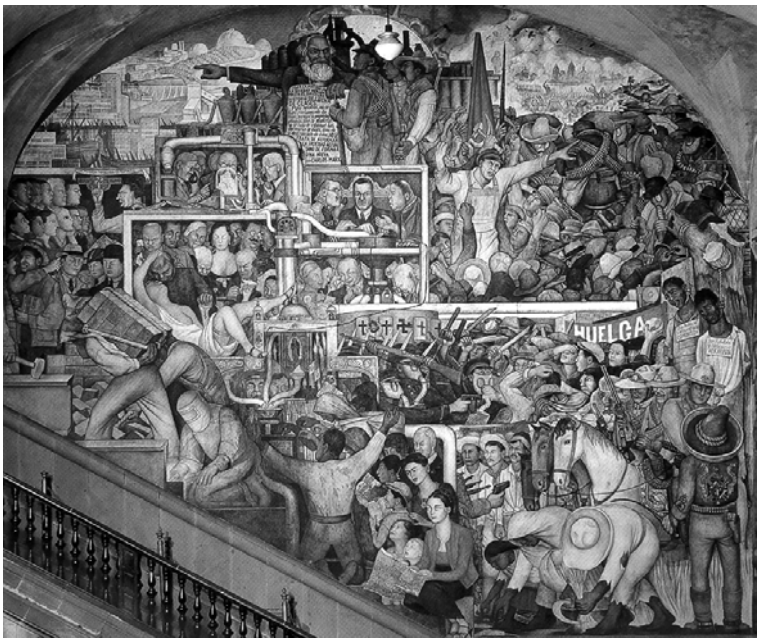
Rivera takes little advantage of the symbolic potential of Quetzalcóatl.

For Claudia Ovando Shelley and Alma Lilia Roura "The artificiality of this position was reflected in the plastic solution, since the artistic qualities that Rivera attributes to the south in this context, acquire a tint of folklore. It is particularly evident in the figure of Quetzalcóatl, robbed of the ritual symbolism and the dignity which would have corresponded to his attributes."

La artificialidad de este planteamiento se reflejó en la solución plástica, ya que las cualidades artísticas que Rivera atribuye al sur en ese contexto, adquieren un tinte folclorizante. Ello es particularmente evidente en la figura de Quetzalcóatl, despojada del simbolismo ritual y dignidad que conforman algunos de sus atributos propios. [1234]

South wall – Today's and tomorrow's Mexico

Figure 83. Diego Rivera: South Wall, *Today's and tomorrow's Mexico*, National Palace, Mexico City. [1235]



The south wall, opposite to the wall on which he represents Quetzalcóatl, is one of Rivera's murals to have attracted most commentaries. The main reason for this lies in his inclusion of the image of Marx, which dominates the composition, and his painting of Frida Kahlo.

As usual, Rivera did not miss the opportunity to comments on personalities with whom he had had arguments. This part of the mural was painted in 1935, and Rivera gave free rein to his mystifying imagination, building a vision in which the class struggle is an integral part of Mexican history, suggesting that the communist ideal is the goal to reach in the final transformation of the Mexican society, and expressing the liberation of worker and peasant from the tyranny of repression.

[1233] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 248.
[1234] Ovando Shelley, Claudia y Lilia Roura, Alma, "La herencia de los ídolos", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1989, p. 40.
[1235] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 92.

The south wall was supposed to represent *Mexico today and tomorrow*, according to the artist's own words, and it was painted during Cárdenas's government. In this work Rivera demonstrated his 'Revolutionary' position, because it culminates with the victory of communism and contains Marx's image.

Wolfe:

> *In place of the bearded god Quetzalcoatl on the left wall, the presiding genius over this disorder and turmoil on the right is the bearded god of the future, Karl Marx. One has only to compare the skill and tenderness with which Rivera did the images of Quetzalcoatl with the stiffness of his Karl Marx to see where the painter's heart lay.* [1236]

Rivera's vision of the future is basically of an industrialized city in which the worker is the dominant figure, who brings about change, whilst the peasants play a secondary role. This is unsurprising when one considers Rivera's stay in the United States, where he was in contact with the industrialized world and where he demonstrated his unbounded admiration for machines.

Rivera: "I could add that this was neither difficult, nor unpleasant, but on the contrary, it was pleasant to paint machines. I had been doing so since I was three years old. It is true that in Mexico I mainly painted peasants, because Mexico is essentially a rural country; as for me, I was born in a mine. I was born an industrial worker."

> *Podría agregar que esto no fue ni difícil, ni desagradable, sino al contrario, fue agradable pintar máquinas. Lo había estado haciendo desde que tenía tres años. Es cierto que en México pinté principalmente a campesinos, porque México es esencialmente un país campesino; en cuanto a mí, yo nací en una mina. Nací obrero industrial.* [1237]

This thinking explains the alterations that Rivera made to the initial project. Compared with the sketches from 1927, when the project was first conceived, the mural of 1935 attaches a much greater importance to the industrialized sector whilst the rural world plays a much reduced role.

This wall is dominated by Marx's effigy. In his left hand Marx holds a roll on which major points of his programme are listed, whilst his right hand points to an ideal, industrial, agricultural, and scientific landscape. This is his goal: the emancipation of the workers, peasants and soldiers, who should abolish private property and class divisions in order to create a new society. There is an obvious parallel between the prophecies of Quetzalcóatl, on the opposite wall, and Marx's prophecies. Despite obvious formal differences, there is an ideological correspondence and an interaction between these two murals.

In the words of Antonio Rodríguez:

> *In order to convey the concept of the beginning and of the end, Rivera painted Quetzalcóatl and Karl Marx, thus uniting the past and the present, the individual and the universal in the allegory of both prophets.* [1238]

In the words of Ida Rodríguez Prampolini: "In the mural *Mexico, today and tomorrow*, Rivera introduces the history of Mexico in the universal history, in the fight for labor emancipation and he assures the future victory of the society without classes, all this by means of successive scenes that represent the forces that move to the society."

[1236] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 345.
[1237] Rivera, Diego, "¿Para qué sirve el arte?", *Modern Monthty*, Vol. 7, nr. 3, pp. 75-78, New York, June 1933. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 186.
[1238] Rodríguez, Antonio, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London 1969, p. 247.

> *En el mural del México de hoy y mañana, Rivera introduce la historia de México en la historia universal, en la lucha por la emancipación obrera y asegura el triunfo futuro de la sociedad sin clases, todo esto por medio de escenas sucesivas que representan las fuerzas que mueven a la sociedad. Haciendo equilibrio y justo enfrente del sereno Quetzalcóatl, rodeado por sus 13 servidores que representan y componen el número 13 astrológico del calendario Mexica, aparecen las fuerzas del capitalismo protegidas y encerradas en una especie de bunker.* [1239]

The composition shows a compressed mass of people, comprising teachers, students, members of the church, workers, peasants, union members, capitalists, etc. Hardly anybody is missing. On the far right a group of people on a demonstration with a banner bearing the word *Huelga* (Strike) are being attacked by soldiers in gas masks, whose insignia and swastikas identify them as Fascists. In the central part and to the left, below Marx, there are four areas, divided off by tubes and machinery, which show scenes with the reactionary forces and the Mexican bourgeoisie. In the middle field there are three characters: an army officer on the left, General Calles sitting down in the presidential seat, and a representative of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the right. With characteristic opportunism Rivera criticizes Calles, which he had not done in the central panel. This was now possible since Cárdenas had already broken with Calles, when Rivera painted these images and Calles was out of favor. One of the fields represents corruption in social life with a half-naked woman hugging a priest and the high society drinking and having a good time. The field above (just below Marx) shows a group watching the movement of prices on the New York stock exchange. Foreign capitalism is represented by Rockefeller, talking on the phone to the left, and by Harry Sinclair, William Durant, J. P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and Andrew Mellon.

On the left-hand side of the lower part of the mural, workers are shown engaged in various activities. On the far left, two workers are chatting; one of them holds a hammer and the other Karl Marx's *Capital.* They point derisively at a group of people above and behind them in a classroom with a banner that says "Mexican National Socialism" and is adorned with a swastika. Another banner identifies the classroom as belonging to the National University with its motto *Through my race the Spirit will speak*. In it there is a group of students representing diverse races who are repeating the Master's words. This could be a criticism of the University, which Rivera, after his experience with the School of Arts, considered reactionary. He is also clearly alluding to Vasconcelos, as evidenced by the group of students representing diverse races.

Alberto Híjar Serrano: "His resentment against the reactionary domination of this institution shows in the left part of National Palace's south wall where two workers, one with The Capital in the hand, are roaring with laughter and pointing at the ridiculous *vasconcelistas* who are listening to someone, under the university motto of "Through my race the Spirit will speak."

> *Su resentimiento contra el dominio reaccionario en la institución lo muestra en la parte izquierda del muro sur de Palacio Nacional donde dos obreros, uno con El Capital en la mano, señalan riendo a carcajadas a los vasconcelistas ridículos que escuchan a uno, bajo el lema universitario de" Por mi raza hablará el Espíritu".* [1240]

Below, in the middle, one finds an altar to the Virgin of Guadalupe flanked by a Mexican flag, the North American flag and that of the Cristeros. By this time the conflict with the Cristeros had been resolved.

[1239] Rodríguez Prampolini, Ida, "Comentario a la ponencia de Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 232.

[1240] Híjar Serrano, Alberto, "Diego Rivera: contribución política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 48.

Alberto Híjar Serrano: "The Cristero war mades him paint the idolatry of the Virgin of Guadalupe on the south wall and the Cristeros to the right."

> *La Guerra Cristera lo hace pintar en el muro sur la idolatría por la Virgen de Guadalupe y a la derecha a los Cristeros.* [1241]

Under the altar a native is giving to charity, while some members of the church look pleased; meanwhile, a heterogeneous group of the faithful prays. As usual there were disputes about Rivera's representation of the Virgin of Guadeloupe. Wolfe writes:

> *In 1935, not confiding any longer in the elements, a group of students sprayed acid on Rivera's National Palace Mural, defacing but failing to obliterate a section in which he suggested that the clergy employed the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to get money from the Mexican poor. After his Del Prado murals they tried direct action on his studio windows.* [1242]

Far below a group of teachers and students read Karl Marx's works. One of the teachers has Frida Kahlo's face and the other that of her sister Cristina. Frida holds a paper on which one can read: "los principios sociales del cristianismo predican la cobardía, el desprecio de sí mismo. Marx" ("the social principles of the Christianity preach cowardice, the scorn of oneself. Marx"). To their right, a group of peasants work, while others are threatened by guns. Far to the right is a man with his back turned to the observer. He is wearing a sombrero and a jacket with the Cross of the Marquis, a symbol of the Knights of Columbus, the defenders of the Catholic Church. He is either being given something or he is shaking hands with a mounted military man.

This last mural presents Rivera's version of the Mexico in which he lived and his perspective on the future. It is a rhetorical idealization of what the world could be if Marx's teachings were followed, but without any reference to the concrete steps that Mexico would need to take. In the years that followed, under the Cárdenas regime, Rivera did not receive any more commissions for official murals, an issue which will be discussed later.

National Palace, Corridor of the first floor, north wall: The Tianguis of Tlatelolco, 1944-1945.

Although this work is outside the chronological scope of this thesis, it is interesting to briefly discuss the murals Rivera made in the corridors of the National Palace, especially because there were several controversies which caused a lot of ink to run.

The murals painted between 1945 and 1951 for the Patio Corridor were also true frescoes, but they were mounted on movable steel frames, which were measured to fit into the spaces between the doorways. The eleven related frescoes are organized in a conventional, panel-to-panel sequence, following the plan of the building. There are nine principal murals, each one with a *grisaille* panel below, and two preliminary panels in *grisaille*.

[1241] Ibid, p. 42.
[1242] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 207.

Figure 84. Diego Rivera: *The Tianguis of Tlatelolco*. Corridor of the first floor. North wall. National Palace, 1944-1945. [1243]



The first and largest panel (**Figure 84**), very often reproduced and considered to be an accurate reconstruction of the old city of Tenochtitlán, shows the capital of the Aztec civilization. Rivera's panoramic vista of Tenochtitlán combines "archaeological veracity" with a tendency to idealize and to ignore unpleasant realities. Wolfe confirms that it was one of Rivera's most cherished ambitions to paint Tenochtitlán.

> *Two dreams he wanted to realize before death: "to paint the ancient capital of Mexico, Tenochtitlan, as it had been before the barbaric Spanish invaders destroyed its beauty"; [...] To realize the first of the two dreams, he found new walls in the corridors of the inner court of the National Palace. He began painting day and night again – had he ever really ceased? − as if death would not wait. Portraits, sketches, easel paintings, a lovely children's Christmas Eve festival [las Posadas] in fresco in the home of Santiago Reachi in Cuernavaca. And, from the pale light of dawn to the dim light of dusk, his idealization of Tenochtitlan on the walls of the corridors of the National Palace.* [1244]

In a survey of visitors to the National Palace 34% of those asked which part of the mural they "would like to take home with them" chose the paintings located on the walls of the stairway, that is to say, the epic synthesis of Mexico's social and political history. In second place, 18% chose a panel of the corridor "The great Tenochtitlán": a beautiful Mexico City, prosperous, socially harmonious, culturally wise, in times of the Aztec splendor. Not only due to a historical feeling of admiration but to a projection of their own desires."

> *En segundo lugar, un 18% eligió un panel del corredor"La gran Tenochtitlán": una ciudad de México bella, próspera, socialmente armoniosa, culturalmente sabia, en tiempos del esplendor Azteca. No sólo debido a un sentimiento de admiración histórico sino a una proyección que puede ser vista como de deseos.* [1245]

This mural is a long horizontal rectangle and it gives an overwhelming panorama of the city of Tenochtitlán, perched on its "floating island" and surrounded by majestic snow-capped mountains. The sacred ceremonial center with its cluster of glistening white temples stands in the distance. Two big temples preside over the city; in one of them blood from the sacrifices is to be seen.

For Benjamin Keen:

[1243] Reproduced (reversed) in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 172.
[1244] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 367-368.
[1245] *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 30.

> *Rivera portrays a highly organized, complex society, a fascinating mixture of barbarism and civilization, with some very modern vices. In the far distance we see the great Temple, topped by the sanctuaries of Tláloc and Huitzilopochtli, its staircase ominously tinged with blood.* [1246]

The roadways and canals that lend order to the city contrast with the movement and agitation in the foreground, where market day in Tlatelolco, Tenochtitlán's twin city, is depicted. Several chronicles have described the wealth on display on such market days, and Rivera wanted to reconstruct all this variety in detail, from the fruits, vegetables, medicinal grasses and animals that were sold, to the great wealth of handmade objects such as mats, blankets, musical instruments, pots, jewels and food. In a bunk in the exact center of the composition Rivera paints a character who seems to be some kind of market inspector. To the right there is a tattooed woman with an aureole of callas, the artist's favorite flower, which appears in many of his easel paintings. Some say the figure resembles Frida Kahlo, others that she is a courtesan, because she is revealing her right leg. She is surrounded by people offering her objects, and she is wearing a jade necklace, which could be the symbol of her profession. In the base of this mural there are five small *grisailles* representing from left to right the sowing of the corn, the crop, the religious ceremony of distributing the corn, the cotton crop and its elaboration and, finally, the work of producing paper and pulque.

Referring to the Tlatelolco market scene, Shifra Goldman writes:

> *The painting gives no hint of Aztec imperialism, which the market symbolizes. Tribute and sacrificial victims were brought to Tenochtitlan from the subject peoples.* [1247]

The truth is that Rivera shows, besides the pyramid with the blood of the sacrifices, which appeared in Cuernavaca too, someone holding a whole arm, as if it was any other product. This detail is however lost in the multitude of other details in the composition, and it cannot be seen as criticism in any real sense.

The other panels show the high points of pre-Columbian civilization in the northeast, east, south, and west of this city in the Valley of Mexico.



Figure 85. Diego Rivera: *The Conquest*, or *The arrival of Hernán Cortés to Vera Cruz*, National Palace. Corridor of the first floor. National Palace, 1951. [1248]

The two introductory text panels describe the cultural and agricultural achievements which Mexican civilization has bequeathed to the world: *El mundo debe a México*, (The world owes to Mexico).

It was initially planned to continue around all four sides of the corridor, but the series as completed occupies the full length of the north patio wall and about one third of the

[1246] Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, 529.
[1247] Goldman, Shifra. Quoted in *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, p. 154.
[1248] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 62.

east wall. Whatever the symbolic relationship of the patio corridor frescoes to those of the stairway, the former may be seen as evidence of the artist's intention to make real and memorable to the common people of Mexico the achievements of their native ancestry as a source of pride in their race, nation, and way of life.

In the last mural that Diego painted in the National Palace, he repeats scenes and characters he had already used in his works in Cuernavaca, in the stairway of the Palacio and in *Hotel del Prado* in 1948, and emphasizes all the horrors and cruelties that The Conquest brought. These themes and Rivera's interpretations are hardly surprising. The last of the panels shows the arrival of the Spaniards under Cortés, who is vilified as a deformed syphilitic, which led to some controversy (**Figure 85**). Until then, despite his ideological aversion to the Spaniards, Rivera had always represented Cortés with respect, including in several representations in the staircases of the Palace.

Wolfe:

> *If Diego expected a great public controversy about his "historical reconstruction" of the portrait of Cortés, he was woefully disappointed. Cortés did not have as many ardent friends and partisans in modern Mexico as a Calles or a Cárdenas or that Juan Diego who was granted a vision of the Virgin. No one demanded that his spiteful, ineffectual, no doubt untruthful, and certainly artistically weak caricature be scratched from the wall of the National Palace, where men who bear in their faces and in their spirits the mixture of Spanish and Indian bloods and cultures today carry on their rule.* [1249]

Yet his representation of Cortés aroused a certain amount of indignation. [1250]

Justino Fernández, for example, says: "Rivera painted a magnificently painted image of Cortés with a strange and lamentable physique. It is a complete symbol for the negative view that Rivera had of The Conquest and the Spanish colonization, in sharp contrast to the positive view of the old indigenous world and the socialist [world] of the future":

> *Más adelante sigue La Conquista y es allí que Rivera pintó una imagen de Cortés, de magnífica ejecución, que lo presenta con un físico extraño y lamentable. Es todo un símbolo del sentido negativo, que Rivera dio a La Conquista y colonización españolas, contraponiéndolas al sentido positivo del antiguo mundo indígena y al socialista del futuro.* [1251]

It is interesting to see that Rivera did not paint Cuauhtémoc (the great national hero) as a character with heroic dignity; by way of compensation, he painted him only in an insignificant and ornamental way in a *grisaille*.

In El Nacional October 11, 1949 one can read: "Diego Rivera is willing to paint the portrait of the Maximum Hero of the Homeland, Cuauhtémoc."

> *Diego Rivera está dispuesto a pintar el retrato del Héroe Máximo de la Patria, Cuauhtémoc, del mismo tamaño del que pintó del constructor de nuestra nacionalidad, Benito Juárez, cosa que haría como una donación al país con la única condición de que la Secretaría de Educación Pública se comprometa formalmente a hacer las reproducciones*

[1249] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 370

[1251] To know more about this subject see for instance Gurría Lacroix, Jorge, *Hernán Cortés y Diego Rivera*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1971.

[1251] Fernández, Justino, *Arte Moderno Contemporáneo de México*, Prólogo de Manuel Toussaint, XXII, [Historia del Arte en México, 3], Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1952, p.346.

en color de ambos cuadros, al tamaño de los originales, para obsequiarlos a todas las escuelas de la República. Lo anterior fue informado por la señora María del Carmen Rubio, quien manifiesta que también lo notificó al Secretario de Educación Pública, licenciado Manuel Gual Vidal, a efecto de que resuelva sobre la proposición de referencia. [1252]

Wolfe comments:

Indeed, as we go through the vast body of painting by Rivera, it is hard to think of any passages of real anger and hatred. One finds neither the bombastic rhetoric so frequent in Siqueiros's social painting, nor the prophetic denunciation which at times moves Orozco. When Rivera strove hardest for such effects, what he achieved was sardonic laughter or mocking caricature. Only rarely, when he lost his remarkable control of his medium or tried to shout too loud, was he likely to degenerate into melodrama, as in the excessive number of what are intended to be piteous red wounds in the children strewn around the foreground of his Guatemala poster. Or the ludicrous, overliterary imprecation in his "scientific" portrait of the knock-kneed, chicken-breasted Cortés in his later painting. Rivera was not born to be a Savonarola in paint as Orozco was, nor a strident soap-box orator like Siqueiros. [1253]

Antonio Rodríguez put this question: "How was a microcephalic idiot and imbecile able to conquer such a vigorous, warlike, daring people, endowed with so much culture, as that which inhabited the Anáhuac?"

A juzgar por su retrato, Hernán Cortés, fué un sujeto física y mentalmente monstruoso. Era exageradamente deforme, vestía como un buhonero, tenía facciones horribles, era microcéfalo y no pasaba de un vulgar imbécil!

Admitamos que un tipo de tal facha, haya podido imponerse sobre un contingente humano aguerrido, emprendedor, dispuesto a todo. ¡Admitámoslo!

¿Y los Aztecas? ¿Y Cuauhtémoc?

¿Cómo pudo un microcéfalo, idiotizado e imbécil, conquistar a un pueblo tan vigoroso, bélico, atrevido y de tanta cultura, como el que habitaba el Anáhuac? [1254]

And further: "By diminishing the importance of Cuauhtémoc's opponents, you maestro Rivera, all you are doing is to reduce the Mexican hero's greatness for antonomasia (sic)."

Cuauhtémoc es uno de los héroes más grandes y sublimes de la historia humana, porque luchó en circunstancias terriblemente desfavorables [...] Al disminuir la importancia de los adversarios de Cuauhtémoc, usted maestro Rivera, no hace más que disminuir la grandeza del héroe Mexicano por antonomasia. [1255]

Another complicated controversy revolved around this mural. In an article in *The New Masses*, August 16, 1933, Joseph Freeman sought, according to Rivera, to show a degeneration of his art starting from the moment when Rivera was expelled from the Communist Party. One of the accusations was that the original sketch for the mural in the National Palacio showed Mexico as a gigantic woman embracing a worker and a peasant in her arms. According to Freeman the project was altered; because the worker-peasant, was "a painful vision for the government's officials that passed by in front of the mural every day," and Rivera replaced the figure with "such innocuous natural objects as grapes and mangos."

[1252] "Diego Rivera pintará a Cuauhtémoc", *El Nacional*, October 11 1949.
[1253] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 426.
[1254] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Un gran artista no necesita de deformaciones para demostrar que Cortés era cruel y feroz", *Hoy*, nr. 777, January 12 1952, p. 20.
[1255] Ibid.

El artículo original del señor Freeman en The New Masses, pretendió mostrar una degeneración de mi arte a partir del momento en que fuí expulsado del Partido Comunista, y para demostrarlo el señor Freeman falsificó algunos hechos e inventó otros enteramente nuevos. Uno de los que fueron inventados fue la siguiente declaración: El diseño original para el mural en el Palacio Nacional mostrando a México como a una mujer gigantesca cargando a un trabajador y campesino en sus brazos fue alterado; porque el trabajador-campesino, sin duda alguna una visión dolorosa para los funcionarios del gobierno que pasan frente al mural todos los días, fueron substituidos por objetos naturales inocuos tales como uvas y mangos [1256]

Rivera refutes this and say: "This strange invention of Freeman was refuted by *The Worker's Age* of June 15, 1933, by means of the simple method of publishing the original sketch and the finished painting. The original sketch shows a woman covering the worker and the peasant. I considered the figure to be politically false since Mexico is still not a mother that gives food to the workers and the peasants. I eliminated it, as the picture in *The Worker's Age* shows, and I replaced it not with "grapes and mangos" but with the figure of a worker to illustrate the sacrifices made during the agrarian Revolution on the road toward the industrial communism. I put that correction in sketch form in the wall from 1929."

Esta extraña invención de Freeman fue refutada por The Worker's Age del 15 de junio de 1933, mediante el sencillo método de publicar el boceto original y la pintura terminada. El boceto original muestra a una mujer cobijando al trabajador y al campesino. Yo consideré políticamente falsa la figura puesto que México todavía no es una madre que da alimento a los trabajadores y a los campesinos y lo elimine, como lo muestra la foto de The Worker's Age, y lo reemplacé no con"uvas y mangos" sino con la figura de un trabajador mostrando a los mártires de la Revolución agraria el camino hacia el comunismo industrial. Puse esa corrección en forma de esbozo en la pared desde 1929. [1257]

In another statement Rivera claimed that "both the sketch and the finished painting as they were printed in *The Worker's Age* show the mentioned grapes, and both cases relate to Hidalgo who violated the Spanish prohibition against the cultivation of grapes in Mexico and taught the Indians to cultivate and to use the forbidden fruit – an act of defiance similar to the Boston Tea Party and Ghandi's production of salt."

[...] tanto el esbozo como la pintura terminada tal y como fueron impresas en The Worker's Age muestran las uvas mencionadas, y en ambos casos relacionadas con Hidalgo, quien violó la prohibición española contra el cultivo de uvas en México y enseñó a los indios a cultivar y a utilizar el fruto prohibido − un acto de desafío análogo a la Fiesta del Té en Boston y a la expedición para producir sal, de Gandhi. [1258]

This mural project is, as stated above, one of the most admired and frequently reproduced mural works by Rivera. It owes this fame to its being in the National Palace and to its extensive and ambitious theme. It is full of different types of contradictions, which reflect both Rivera's personality and the contradictions of the society in which he lived. Together with the initial postulates of Vasconcelos and also of Bolívar and Martí, the utopia projected by Rivera (and accepted by the society that he represents) forms a logical continuum, as Irene Herner de Larrea points out.

[1256] Rivera, Diego, "Los murales Mexicanos de Rivera", August 4 1933. Letter reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 198.
[1257] Ibid, pp. 198-199.
[1258] Ibid, p. 199.

The goal of Diego Rivera was the world-wide conquering of the paradise of communist happiness from the Soviet point of view. This redemption of the Malinche was also deep-rooted with other American dreams, those of Bolivar and Martí. [1259]

Mexico had never been, was not and would not become a communist paradise. Muralism ended up being self-sufficient and gave way, in the Riverian version, to commonplaces and a decorative tendency that was denounced by many, among them Siqueiros, as "Mexican Curious." "The picturesque attracts him. A strong percentage of folklorism saturates his work. He doesn't abandon his archaeologist mania."

> *Lo pintoresco lo atrae. Un fuerte porcentaje de folklorismo satura su obra. No abandona su manía arqueologista, que consiste en la manera picassiana de chupar con genio estilos de los museos y en general de las culturas tradicionales. Carecen aún sus obras de fuerza impulsiva, siguen siendo místicas, pero muestran indudablemente un gran progreso sobre las anteriores y sobre todo una gran voluntad de marcha hacia un futuro de mejores formas plásticas. ¿Marcará su obra una gráfica ascendente? ¿Abandonará sus maneras turísticas?* [1260]

Paz writes: "In Rivera there is ability, great ability, sometimes mastery, indubitable talent, never or hardly ever passion. External painting, the opposed extreme to that of Orozco. He was an eclectic artist who combined several styles. Rather than invent, he adapted and he combined styles, sometimes with great easiness."

> *En Rivera hay habilidad, gran habilidad, a veces maestría, talento indudable, nunca o casi nunca pasión. Pintura exterior, en el extremo opuesto a la de Orozco. Fue un artista ecléctico que combinó varias maneras. Más que inventar, adaptó y combinó estilos, a veces con gran facilidad.* [1261]

However, there they are to be seen, reproduced and commented as the largest piece of mural work ever done by a single painter, the very biggest of all. Mythomaniac? Contradictory? Demagogic? Yes, of course!

According to the study on visitor preferences, "a numerous group of spectators chose "the whole history", that gigantic panorama that goes from the Kingdom of Quetzalcóatl to the future foreseen by Rivera."

> *Un grupo numeroso de espectadores eligió "toda la historia", ese gigantesco panorama que va desde el reino de Quetzalcóatl hasta el futuro previsto por Rivera.* [1262]

The political background and the expulsion of Rivera from the Mexican Communist Party

Rivera had entered the Mexican Communist Party at the end of 1922. In March 1924, the Union of Workers Painting Technicians and Sculptors began publishing The Machete, in which Rivera participated from the beginning. Right from the very first numbers protests were published against the attacks on muralism. The Union, whose general Secretary was then Siqueiros, issued a proclamation which Rivera did not agree with

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[1259] Herner de Larrea, Irene, *Diego Rivera's mural at the Rockefeller Center*, Edicupes, Mexico 1990, p. 11.
[1260] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 215.
[1261] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 22.
[1262] Schmilchuk, Graciela, "El público del muralismo como creador de significados", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 35.

and he resigned. The relationships between Rivera and the other artists began to deteriorate. There was no longer common ground neither aesthetically nor in their relationships with the Government.

Charlot:

> *The executive committee of El Machete was originally made up of Xavier Guerrero, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera. When Rivera's relation to the Syndicate was violently severed in July 1924, he was replaced by the communist R. Gómez Lorenzo, the first person to work on the Machete who was not an artist. Three months later the paper was transferred from the Syndicate to the Communist Party. Its executive councils gently clipped from the sheet its excess of aesthetic delight, pared down its giant format, hushed its bold illustrations, and introduced halftones to replace the red woodblocks that made so bloody a splash. Cured of art, shrunken in size, and with a text written in an orthodox vein, El Machete survived until 1938 as the official organ of the Communist Party* [1263]

On January 3, 1924, supporters of Adolfo de la Huerta murdered Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the *Revolutionary* politician and former governor of Yucatan, whom Rivera had got to know in 1921, when Vasconcelos invited him to join the cortege of intellectuals accompanying him on his tour to Yucatan. Rivera wrote a protest article entitled *Asesinos*!, in which he expressed sympathy, affection and admiration for Felipe Carrillo Puerto, whom he later painted in the National Palace.

In 1924 Rivera left the Communist Party on the advice of his friend Bertram D. Wolfe. Wolfe contended that Rivera's work could achieve more if he devoted himself completely to it and strove to spread the ideas of the party by means of his art than if he remained a party member. Rivera accepted this argument and presented his resignation. Wolfe:

> *Back in 1924 I undertook to discuss with Diego his relationship with the Communist Party, thereby straining our friendship nearly to the breaking point (I was then a member of the Communist Party of Mexico and its Central Committee, as was Diego) [...] "Diego," I said awkwardly, "I think you should resign from the Party." [...]We walked for a long time without either of us saying a word, while Diego revolved the idea in his mind. At last, he pressed my hand warmly in token that there was no ill will, and we went to his home to draft his letter of resignation together.* [1264]

In 1926, Rivera was readmitted into the Party. He would be expelled in 1929 under circumstances that are highly relevant to an understanding of his artistic production thereafter.

Rivera told Gladys March that he had been expelled from the Party because he included a picture of Carrillo Puerto in the staircases of the National Palace. "However, the immediate cause of my expulsion of the Communist Party was not that I had made a painting, but rather that I didn't make another [...] I replaced the figure of the Homeland with a portrait of Felipe's Carrillo Puerto, an old governor from Yucatan."

> *Me expulsan del Partido.*
> *Como artista, siempre he tratado de ser leal a mi visión de la vida, y frecuentemente he estado en conflicto con quienes han tratado de hacerme que pinte no lo que veo, sino lo que ellos quisieran que viera. Sin embargo, la causa inmediata de mi expulsión del Partido Comunista no fue que hubiera hecho una pintura, sino que no hice otra. A fines de 1929 estaba trabajando en uno de los arcos centrales de la escalera del Palacio Nacional. Mi bosquejo original mostraba una figura que representaba a la Patria de la Revolución, sosteniendo a un campesino en un brazo y a un trabajador en el otro. En el curso de la realización de la pintura altere unos detalles que, en cambio, hicieron que mi*

[1263] Charlot, Jean, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925*, Hacker Art Books, New York 1979, p. 251.
[1264] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 225-228.

representación simbólica de México no pareciera enteramente bien. Reemplacé la figura de la Patria con un retrato de Felipe Carrillo Puerto, un antiguo gobernador de Yucatán, que demostró ser un verdadero hombre del pueblo. Debido a este cambio de mi plan, se me hicieron cargos por medio de un comité encabezado por José Freeman. De Freeman sólo diré que cuando le llegó su turno de que se aclarara su caso también falló, no pudo satisfacer al Partido y fue echado, como en realidad siempre lo había merecido. [1265]

The party gave different reasons for the expulsion. During the period between 1926 and 1929 Rivera had several political activities. He was affiliated to the Anti-imperialist League, where he not only ran its newspaper, *El Libertador*, but was also Secretary. The league wanted to denounce United States abuses in Mexico and in the rest of Latin America and to denounce all the pseudo-leftist groupings which were discrediting, according to the League, the work of the authentic Marxists. He wrote the theses of the Anti-Imperialist League and of the National Peasant League, and the statutes and program of the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino*, Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, to which he was later elected president. As such he directed the presidential campaign in 1928-29 of Rodríguez Triana, the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino*'s candidate who stood against the representative of the official government party, Álvaro Obregón.

The Calles government was facing big problems: on the one hand, difficulties concerning the export of petroleum and minerals and, on the other, political agitation which had increased with the death of Obregón. Rivera's prestige as an artist was growing. Taking advantage of this Rivera published (1927) in El Libertador an analysis of "The Current Situation of Mexico" in which he wrote: "The situation of Mexico in face of the imperialist forces is more difficult every day. The preparations being made in broad daylight mean that everybody knows that in the United States everything is ready for armed action, in case it becomes indispensable, that is to say, if Mexico doesn't give in to US demands for modification of its property legislation [...] or, at least, change its way of applying that legislation, which would be enough if one acts according to the desires of the practical men of imperialism."

La situación actual de México

Actitud visible del imperialismo. La situación de México frente a las fuerzas imperialistas es cada día más difícil. Por los preparativos hechos a la luz del día todo el mundo sabe que en los Estados Unidos todo está listo para la acción armada, en caso de que ella se haga indispensable, es decir, si México no cede a las exigencias de modificación de su legislación sobre la propiedad que le hace esa potencia o, en último caso, de la manera de aplicar esa legislación, la cual puede bastar si se hace según los deseos de los hombres prácticos del imperialismo. Por lo demás esa actitud de los Estados Unidos no es nueva y, en realidad, la política Mexicana durante los últimos diez años ha consistido en mantener impreciso el modo de aplicación de los célebres artículos 27 y 123 de la Constitución de 1917, aflojando si las demandas de las masas proletarias se vuelven muy premiosas, y estirando si los Estados Unidos exigen demasiado fuerte lo contrario. Y como "del otro lado" esta la fuerza muchísimo mayor es natural que en el juego de estira y afloja el proletario Mexicano sea siempre a la postre el que paga. [1266]

The case of Diego Rivera reveals a complicated relationship between the artist and the state, which was defined through his activities as director of the Anti-imperialistic League of the America and the convoluted attitude of this League towards Calles's foreign policy, in particular vis-à-vis the United States. Rivera must have been aware of such serious problems as the expansion of North American imperialism in Latin America and especially in Mexico at that time.

[1265] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 127-128.

[1266] Rivera, Diego, Published in *El Libertador*, Vol. II, Nr. 12, 10 June 1927. Magazine published by the Comité Continental Organizador de la *Liga Antiimperialista de las Américas*, of which Diego Rivera was director and Salvador de la Plaza the administrator.

In 1927 Calvin Coolidge, the president of the United States replaced the US ambassador to Mexico, James R. Sheffield, a diplomat known for his hard line in Latin America, with Dwight W. Morrow, an important partner in the financial group John Pierpoint Morgan, and ordered him to find a peaceful solution with the President Plutarco Elías Calles, for the problems concerning Mexican oil and mineral resources. These were owned by foreign investors, and Mexico wanted to nationalize them. Morrow's brief was to avoid war with Mexico, whilst preserving the property rights of American oil companies.

The ambassador had a clear aim: to establish harmonious relationships with Latin America and especially with Mexico. With the serious crisis of 1929, it was essential for Mexico to maintain good economical relationships with the neighbor of the north and also to be on "friendly" terms with the US , whilst trying to adapt Mexico's own goals to the American government's political projects.This point in particular explains the nature of the relationship between Morrow and Rivera and the support that the former gave the latter during his stay in the United States.

Through Dwight Morrow, Diego established contact with his firm, J.P. Morgan & Company, the investment bankers. Vasconcelos had no doubts about the intentions of Morrow and of Calles: "Some days later a high-ranking executive, a partner in the banking house of Morgan, was named US Ambassador. Mr. Dwight Morrow then began to claim that he had nothing more to do with Morgan. As soon as Morrow arrived in Mexico, insistent, public propaganda began about the close friendship struck up between Calles and the new Ambassador; it was added that Calles had been able to convince the Ambassador on all points. The Ambassador declared that Calles was one of the great statesmen of his time."

> *Unos cuantos días después era nombrado Embajador de los Estados Unidos un alto empleado, un socio de la casa bancaria de Morgan, el Sr. Dwight Morrow, que empezó a jurar que ya nada tenía que ver con Morgan. Tan pronto como llegó Morrow a México se hizo pública e insistente propaganda acerca de la estrecha amistad improvisada entre Calles y el nuevo Embajador; se añadía que Calles había logrado convencer de todos sus puntos de vista al Embajador. El Embajador declaró que Calles era uno de los grandes estadistas de la época. Lo que realmente ocurrió fué que el último punto de las exigencias de Washington contra el programa de la Revolución había sido resuelto en favor de los Estados Unidos. La ley del petróleo quedó prácticamente derogada en lo que hace a los contratos otorgados en la época de Porfirio Díaz, que son todos los contratos importantes en la materia. La derogación no fué expresa como no lo fué la de la ley agraria. Todo lo contrario, el astuto Morrow se declaró desarmado ante la lógica de Calles; las leyes Mexicanas, según dijo, eran justas y válidas, sólo que por vía de concesión amistosa a los Estados Unidos el gran Calles se había dignado aceptar que todas las concesiones petroleras quedasen trasformadas en alquileres por un período de noventa y nueve años; al final de estos noventa y nueve años, las Compañías podrían disfrutar, a su elección, de otros noventa y nueve años; los términos del alquiler fueron los mismos de las viejas concesiones. Y todo se anunció como un triunfo de la cancillería Mexicana. Y en opinión de los bribones y los imbéciles que nunca faltan en ningún cortejo, Calles siguió encarnando la soberanía del Continente.* [1267]

During the Maximato, whilst still talking about America's "Politics of good will", Ambassador Morrow used a mixture of threats and pressure to obtain (in 1927) a modification of the oil law, annulling its retrospective character. The oil law of 1925 had affected the interests of the foreign companies, and it had been rejected as much by them as by the government in Washington. Given the prevalence of foreign capital in the Mexican industrial base the Morrow-Calles agreement was signed with the United States, and the Mexican president's politics turned more to the right. Several laws that regulated property, transport, trains, etc, were relaxed. The oil law was modified in favor of the foreign companies, and Calles won support for his decision to establish closer ties to the United States.

[1267] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, pp. 608-609.

In the same year a cash crisis forced Mexico to suspend debt repayments. Morrow suggested to the government that American financial experts should study the problem. These experts proposed a solution which among other things used part of the resources devoted to the social infrastructure to cover the debt.

Dwight Morrow, with his personal politics of cooperation and trust, managed to achieve a more effective, peaceful dependence by means of giving small concessions to Mexico. The aim was to stop anything that could affect the American interests in Mexico. As a consequence, the United States continued being an impediment, and the Mexican government reverted to the original plan, outlined by the Constitution, of freeing the national economy from foreign hands. By 1929 the prices of raw materials had decreased, thus weakening foreign currency earnings. These factors further weakened Mexican industry and agriculture. Unemployment grew and was accompanied by social agitation and demagoguery. In 1929, it was evident that Calles did not intend to support the labor movement. With Morrow's help, the massive rising known as the *Guerra Cristera* or *Cristiada* (1927-1929) also ended. Calles had begun some contacts in order to resolve the problem, and Portes Gil renewed these contacts in 1929 with the North American ambassador's assistance. As a result, the Church consented to re-open the churches and to disband the Cristero army. For its part, the government, without modifying its original decrees, committed itself to apply them in a more conciliatory spirit. On Sunday, June 30, 1929 the churches formally re-opened for regular religious services.[1268]

During the Maximato, Diego Rivera became the leader of the new institutional muralism movement and worked both in Mexico and abroad; he contributed to the image of openness and liberality that the government wanted to present to the public. Rivera's support for the Calles government transformed him into the most outstanding artistic figure in the Maximato.

By 1928, Diego Rivera had already proved to be the most prolific of the muralists, and the wide acceptance of his muralist work inside and outside of Mexico gave him considerable freedom of action. His sensational and polemic declarations and the scandals that his work provoked further enhanced his popularity. He won the most important contract of the period: the decoration of the National Palace's stairway, and he was appointed director of the School of Plastic Arts in 1929.

Rivera was accused, among other things, of siding with the "repressive" government of Portes Gil, of having received 150 thousand pesos to paint the National Palace, of painting pseudo-socialist or pseudo-Marxist themes that pleased the powers-that-be but did not further the cause of the people of Mexico. In spite of the anti-imperialist rhetoric in the work of Rivera, who presented the *Mexican Revolution* as part of the social Revolution of the world, his critics claim he was superficial and misleading and saw his work as a vulgarization of Marxism, serving the ideological needs of a populist government.

Alicia Azuela de la Cueva writes that "his mural production, except for some works, is superficial and improvised. It carries out the didactic function of reducing to manipulable terms the version of the Mexican Revolution portrayed according to official criteria."

> *Su producción mural, con excepción de algunas obras, resulta superficial e improvisada. Desempeña la función didáctica de reducir a términos manipulables la versión de le Revolución Mexicana dada según criterios oficiales. Diego presenta los distintos hechos sociales en términos de obviedad, en tal manera que sólo muestre las consecuencias lógicas, no los procesos que han dado lugar a esta serie de hechos. Esto convierte al espectador en un ente pasivo, sujeto a las enseñanzas del mural que ha de conducirlo a llevar a su cumplimiento las metas de la "Revolución Mexicana". Esta interpretación histórica es parte de la política populista Estatal. El pueblo, convertido en héroe, se identifica con el mundo utópico del pasado o futuro. Cree que su vida es la representada en los murales, discursos o libros de texto, con lo cual vive enajenando su momento real.*

[1268] For more information about the *Cristero* uprising, read Meyer, Jean, *La Cristiada*, Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico 1974.

> *El deseo original de descubrir una cultura nacional a través de representarse murales épicos y utópicos, degenera en un Nacionalismo cultural, que exalte al pueblo.* [1269]

Wolfe describes Rivera as more of a populist than a Communist.

> *To be sure, this suggests that Diego Rivera was a populist rather than a Communist. And that indeed is what his painting says concerning him.* [1270]

After his expulsion from the Communist Party, an article published in the newspaper *New Masses* of January 1932, entitled "Painting and Politics" gave the Party's reasons for the expulsion. The article was signed by Robert Evans, an alias of Joseph Freeman, an important member of the Communist Party.

According to Freeman, Rivera had made "mendacious statements in the bourgeois press, according to which, making himself out to be a martyr, he said that he had been expelled because of his Trotskyist beliefs," while "the reality is that he was expelled for occupying an important position in the government [Director of the Department of Fine Arts] whilst being a member of the central committee, for cooperating openly with reactionary agrarian elements, and because he refused to sign a petition that protested against the government's counter-Revolutionary course and its terrorism against the Communist Party."

> *Desde que Rivera fue expulsado del Partido Comunista de México, en 1929, el artista no había intentado justificarse públicamente ni había dado más explicaciones referentes a su nueva posición que una declaración mentirosa en la prensa burguesa, donde, haciéndose el mártir, decía que había sido expulsado debido a sus convicciones trotskistas. La realidad es que fue expulsado por ocupar un puesto importante en el gobierno [jefe del Departamento de Bellas Artes] mientras que fungía como miembro del comité central, por cooperar abiertamente con elementos agrarios reaccionarios y porque se rehusó a firmar una petición que protestaba en contra del camino contrarrevolucionario del gobierno y de su terrorismo contra el Partido Comunista.* [1271]

Siqueiros: "However, one year or one year and half later, Bertrand D. Wolf (sic), who had in turn been expelled from the Communist Party of the United States [...] wrote the most abject biography on Rivera that anybody could imagine, defending the painter [...] Inside the pages of Rivera's Biography, written by Wolf (sic), I keep the letter – a document written by himself – which was used for Rivera's expulsion."

> *Sin embargo, un año o un año y medio más tarde, Bertrand D. Wolf, ya expulsado a su vez del Partido Comunista de los Estados Unidos [...] escribió la biografía más abyecta de Rivera que nadie pueda imaginarse, en la que haciendo la apología del pintor, calumnia en proporciones increíbles a los demás artistas que permanecieron fieles a la línea de la Internacional Comunista. Dentro de las páginas del libro Biografía de Rivera, escrito por Wolf, yo guardo la carta − documento escrito por él mismo − que sirvió para la expulsión de Rivera. Difícilmente puede encontrarse otro ejemplo equivalente. El − Rivera maniobrero, siempre dispuesto a tapar las peores actitudes de entrega oportunista al gobierno con grandes discursos de probidad revolucionaria y ortodoxia comunista, aparece representando la profundidad teórica, la clarividencia táctica y la más infinita honradez en su vida política y personal dentro del conjunto del movimiento pictórico y revolucionario Mexicano. Metamorfosis indescriptible que le permite hacer de la tesis la antítesis más excelsa. El conocimiento de ambos documentos no puede menos que llevarme*

[1269] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socios económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, pp. 142-143.
[1270] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 416
[1271] Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, p. 135.

a la conclusión de que la actitud de Bertrand D. Wolf fue una actitud simplemente mercenaria. [1272]

Rivera waited some time before bothering to comment on his expulsion. Referring to the article by Freeman and the attacks that Siqueiros made against him, Rivera says that "they always repeat the accusation of opportunism, which is completely without foundation."

> *Freeman-Siqueiros, por medio de la revista New Masses y en conferencias y discursos de toda una campaña organizada dentro del aparato oficial Stalinista, y en sus organizaciones de periferia, entre las calumnias, inexactitudes y mentiras que han usado contra Rivera, repiten siempre la acusación del oportunismo de éste, la que carece completamente de base. Rivera posee toda clase de documentos que prueban la estimación de su trabajo como pintor muralista por los organismos soviéticos a quienes corresponde el arte y la educación de Moscú, donde fue Rivera en 1927 a la celebración del aniversario de la Revolución de Octubre, invitado precisamente como pintor revolucionario; fue elegido profesor de pintura monumental en la escuela Central de Artes Plásticas de Moscú, se le encargó una serie de frescos para la casa del Ejército Rojo, y le fue encargada otra directamente por los obreros de la fabrica metalúrgica Dynamo para su club. Estos trabajos no se llegaron a ejecutar, a pesar de estar ya hechos los contratos, porque en esa época, hacia mediados de 1928, llegó a la cúspide la agudización de la crisis del Partido Comunista en la lucha entre Stalinistas y bolchevique-Leninistas, que dio por resultado la expulsión del compañero Trotsky y otros colaboradores de Lenin, y de miles de miembros del PCR.* [1273]

But the truth, as usual, was not quite so straightforward. At the time Rivera was famous as a *Revolutionary* artist. In Mexico he was also well-known as a member of the central committee of the Mexican Communist Party. As such he participated in the formulation of crucial decisions. The government, then, was composed of bourgeois reformers who flirted with communism.

In the spring of 1929 a rebellion, headed by General Escobar, tried to restore the power of the church and the old landowners. The Communist Party helped the government to repress this insurrection. The government considered the communist help useful while it was threatened by Escobar's rebellion, but once this revolt had been suppressed, the government began a policy of disarming the peasants and suppressing the Communist Party. Workers and militant peasants were arrested in various parts of the country, their organizations were dissolved, and several communists were murdered.

Diego Rivera was subjected to violent political attacks, denounced as a traitor to the Republic and as a bad painter. Rivera answered these criticisms in a letter published in El Universal 10 August, 1929, in which he defended the artistic merits of his frescos and declared that during three months he had been politically inactive, with permission of the party, because of bad health and his professional commitments. The commitments included the painting of an enormous fresco on one of the National Palace's walls. The campaign of government terror against the *Revolutionary* organizations continued.

In Mexico City, the government suppressed the party's newspaper, *El Machete,* and many similar papers published by the other communist unions, including the *Bloque Obrero y Campesin's* publication, the *Bandera Roja*. Several communists and leftist peasants were disarmed and arrested. In September, the government ordered the state governors to send arrested communists to the penal colony of the Marías

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[1272] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 244.

[1273] Rivera, Diego, "Raíces políticas y motivos personales de la controversia Siqueiros-Rivera. Stalinismo vs. bolchevismo Leninista", Imprenta Mundial, Mexico 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 113-114.

Islands where the worst criminals were held. The Catholic rebels who were prisoners on the Marías Islands were set free in order to make room for the communists.

As president of the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino* and member of the central committee of the Communist Party, Rivera should have clarified his attitude toward a government that pursued, arrested and murdered his comrades. The party asked him to protest against the terror. Even more, as a *Revolutionary* politician as much as a *Revolutionary* painter he should have adopted a clear position as regards the fundamental questions after the terror.

The party also attacked the established agreements between the government and clerical elements, such as the pact with the Church, its cooperation with North American imperialism, represented at this time by Dwight D. Morrow, the reorganization and rationalization of industry to benefit national and foreign capital, and its agrarian politics. This last question was of supreme importance for Diego Rivera as a communist and as a painter.

Besides the reasons given by the party for Rivera's exit, Freeman attributes to Rivera the existence of basic ideological contradictions which prevented the artist from agreeing to the party's ideological constraints. Among these discrepancies Freeman singled out Rivera's attitude to agrarian problems. Rivera was a Zapatist and did not follow the party line on the agrarian question. Zapata appeared in many of Rivera's frescos, and he presented Zapata's principles as the correct course to follow in order to attain victory for the agrarian workers in Mexico.

In the words of Joseph Freeman: "Above all, his frescoes exalt the agrarian Revolution, the hero of his epic poetry in colors is Zapata. However, as member of the central committee of the Communist Party, Rivera agreed with a thesis which was directly opposed to Zapata on the agrarian question."

> *Sus frescos exaltan ante todo a la Revolución agraria, el héroe de su épica a color es Zapata. Sin embargo, como miembro del comité central del Partido Comunista, Rivera estuvo de acuerdo con una tesis cuya línea de pensamiento sobre la cuestión agraria se oponía al zapatismo. Esta tesis, adoptada en el verano de 1929, señalaba que los factores económicos más significativos en el México de entonces eran el acrecentamiento del capitalismo semicolonial, la extensión del imperialismo, la liquidación de la Revolución de 1910 y la preparación para una nueva Revolución obrera y campesina.* [1274]

In the declaration Diego Rivera made to the commission of control of the Communist Party of Mexico, in answer to certain questions addressed to him about his past activities, Rivera made some interesting accusations about freemasonry. He was entrusted with a mission to "investigate the methods of penetration of yankee imperialism in Mexico by means of the so-called secret societies." Rivera: "I penetrated it [La Rosa Cruz]; from there I could myself observe all I needed for the proposed investigation. Having achieved my aims, I did not have any more relationships with the association. That association has a North American "emperor" in New York, and certainly at that time had offices in Wall Street. Members in Mexico: General Plutarco Elías Calles, who was still member of the World Council of the Anti-imperialist League and honorary president of the League in Mexico."

> *7. Diga si ha tenido ligas con la masonería.*
> *Respuesta.*
> *No he tenido ni tengo ligas con la masonería; en la época en que estuve en receso del Comité Central del Partido, donde era secretario político, para hacerme cargo de la dirección de la revista antimperialista El Libertador, junto con Julio Antonio Mella y por*

[1274] Joseph Freeman under the alias Robert Evans, in the newspaper *New Masses* of January 1932, under the title "Painting and Politics: the case of Diego Rivera", published in Appendix as Document number 4. In Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, pp. 83-84.

mandato del Comité Central, se presentó el problema de investigar los métodos de penetración del imperialismo yanqui en México por el canal de las llamadas sociedades secretas; con este fin, y aprovechando mi amistad con el economista licenciado Gilberto Loyo, hoy secretario de la Economía Nacional, que se iniciaba en la sociedad "La Rosa Cruz", penetré a ella; desde ahí y allí mismo pude observar lo necesario para la investigación propuesta. Llenado este fin, no tuve más relaciones con la asociación. Esa asociación tiene un "emperador" norteamericano en Nueva York, y en aquella época, por cierto, con oficinas en Wall Street. Eran socios de México: el General Plutarco Elías Calles, todavía por entonces miembro del Consejo Mundial de la Liga Antimperialista y presidente honorario de la misma en México; su secretaria personal, licenciada Esperanza Velásquez Bringas; el profesor Jesús Silva Herzog, después jefe de Petróleos Mexicanos y subsecretario de Hacienda, embajador en la URSS; Eduardo Villaseñor, banquero; la profesora Eulalia Guzmán; el profesor don Manuel Gamio; el doctor Romano Muñoz, y otros miembros de la alta y mediana burocracia. [1275]

Within his general scheme of cooperation, Morrow gave culture a special role. He transformed it into a conciliatory vehicle by means of which his country could demonstrate its friendship and openness toward the people of Mexico. In accordance with the traditional American political rules of cooperation between the public and the financial sectors, Morrow convinced an important group of American investors in Mexico, to unite their efforts in cultural affairs to ease the political tensions that existed between Mexico and the U.S.A.

This new approach led to the creation, on December 10, 1930, of the American Art Association in the U.S.A. and its pendant, the Mexican Art Association in Mexico. The character of this association is described in an article in the New York Times, published December 13 1930, according to which its purpose was to increase the friendship between the people of Mexico and the North American by means of culture, specifically through the promotion and exchange of arts in all its manifestations. The aim was:

To promote friendship between the people of Mexico and the United States by encouraging cultural relationships and the interchange of fine and applied Arts. [1276]

A collective exhibition of Mexican art took place from January 19 to February 14, 1928 in the Art Center of New York. This exhibition was part of a series of political-cultural events intended to soften the public conflicts between Mexico and United States; in this context the image that Mexico sought to give of its art was highly significant.

The American ambassador's initiative led to this and many other cultural projects being organized from 1928 onwards; the idea was to use cultural activities to support the new program of international politics that would govern the relationships between the United States and Latin America.

Members of the associations included Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., as well as her brother, the banker Winthrop W. Aldrich; Mrs. Morrow, wife of the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico; Mrs. Frances F. Payne, art dealer; the wife of the president of the Metropolitan Art Museum, and other important people from the world of finance, and from the museums and art galleries in the United States, all of whom were directly or indirectly connected to economic interests in Mexico.

David Alfaro Siqueiros: "The government began a change of front faced with the pressure of North American imperialism and parallel to this its demagoguery increased. It sought this way to calm the reactions

[1275] Rivera, Diego. This is a document that Diego Rivera wrote on the request of the commission of control of the Communist Party of Mexico in answer to questions formulated by the commission. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 353-354.
[1276] New York Times, 14, december 1930. Quoted in Cardoza y Aragón, Luis, et al., *Orozco: una relectura*, UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Mexico 1983, p. 185.

of the masses. Its deeds were more and more counter-Revolutionary, but its words were more and more blinding with false Revolutionarism (sic)."

> *El gobierno inició un cambio de frente ante la presión del imperialismo norteamericano y paralelamente aumentó su demagogia. Así pretendía calmar la reacción contraria de las masas. Sus hechos eran cada vez más contrarrevolucionarios, pero sus palabras cada vez más deslumbrantes de falso revolucionarismo.* [1277]

Vasconcelos: "Having achieved this, Ambassador Morrow's primordial concern, after the total surrender of Calles to the designs of North America, was to consolidate power over his docile instrument indefinitely."

> *Consumada como queda dicho, la total entrega de Calles a los designios de Norteamérica, la preocupación primordial del Embajador Morrow fué consolidar en el poder indefinidamente a su dócil instrumento.* [1278]

The alliances that Morrow made were significant for the relationship between Mexico and the United States, and opened the doors for Rivera who received several commissions in the United States, and painted seven murals there between 1931 and 1934.

Alicia Azuela de la Cueva: "The communist and anti-Yankee attitude that Diego Rivera always displayed didn't prevent him from working for the United States. Rivera, seemingly in accordance with the political-pacifist line between United States and Mexico, served as point of union between these two countries":

> *La actitud comunista y anti-yanqui que siempre sostuvo Diego Rivera no le impide trabajar para los Estados Unidos. Rivera aparentemente de acuerdo con la línea político-pacifista entre Estados Unidos y México, sirve como punto de unión entre estos dos países.* [1279]

Rivera in the United States

In 1930 he left Mexico for the United States where he painted a series of murals, mainly for private business and became internationally famous. Rivera says "[The United States] were …the most favorable place to continue my work. For years I waited for the first opportunity that I was offered to take my work to the United States and once there, I tried to complete the experiment that monopolized all my attention."

> *Ahora bien, la economía Mexicana depende de la burguesía norteamericana y los Estados Unidos, país que comparte el mismo suelo de México, por ser parte del mismo continente, es el país en el que la industrialización ha alcanzado el máximo grado de desarrollo, al mismo tiempo que mantiene una fuerte concentración del capital que culmina en el imperialismo. Era, pues, el lugar más propicio para continuar mi trabajo. Durante años esperé la primera oportunidad que se me ofreciera de llevar mi obra a los Estados Unidos y una vez allí, intentar completar el experimento que acaparaba toda mi atención.* [1280]

His first trip to the United States was on 10 November, 1930, and his entrance had many complications because both the authorities and American public opinion considered him undesirable because of his links

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[1277] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 225.
[1278] Vasconcelos, José, *Breve historia de México*, Ediciones Botas, Mexico 1937, p. 610.
[1279] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 126.
[1280] *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 211.

with communism and because he had openly attacked the nation in the frescoes at the Secretariat of Public Education. Thanks to Morrow's intervention, these problems were solved, and Rivera came to be accepted both by the immigration authorities and by a great part of the critics. Diego Rivera's three murals in San Francisco are important aspects in the artist's development. They were carried out in the decade of 1930-1940, and they illustrate his first and last encounter with the United States. Diego Rivera influenced North American artists during the 30's, and he played a crucial role in the development of American muralism.

Rivera wanted to paint in the United States, and he found his opportunity in the state of California. Here he could appreciate and study its way of life closely. California meant for the artist an ideological-artistic confrontation with a country to which he was attracted by its industry and Modernism and which, at the same time, he rejected because of its capitalist system.

According to Rivera, the bourgeoisie wanted to buy *Revolutionary* art: "I am convinced that inside the United States the possibility exists to produce a highly developed Revolutionary art, which spreads upwards, from below. The bourgeoisie will sometimes be convinced so that it buys great paintings despite their Revolutionary character. In the galleries of the richest men there are paintings by Daumier."

> *Estoy convencido de que dentro de los Estados Unidos existe la posibilidad para producir un arte revolucionario altamente desarrollado, avanzando hacia arriba, desde abajo. La burguesía a veces será convencida para que compre grandes pinturas a pesar de su carácter revolucionario. En las galerías de los hombres más ricos hay pinturas de Daumier.* [1281]

For a long time Rivera had admired the industrial world of the United States, which he contrasted with the Latin American, the artists' world, as he said. He thought that if on some occasion the two peoples could be mixed, a new nation would arise consisting of technicians and artists.

At the end of 1930, a Mexican art and crafts exhibition took place in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. This exhibition was born of a suggestion of Morrow's and was organized by the American Federation of Art and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The idea was to show only genuinely Mexican works, and to reject any works which were too 'european'. The works shown were by Orozco, Rivera, Mérida, and other Mexican modern painters.

Wolfe:

An organization was set up to be known as the Mexican Arts Association, Inc. Winthrop W. Aldrich, banker and brother of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was elected president; Mrs. Emily Johnson De Forest, whose husband was president of the Metropolitan Museum, was chosen honorary president; Frank Crowninshield, publisher and trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, was made secretary; and Mr. Aldrich was authorized to name all other officers. The following persons had signified their agreement, since their names appear in the articles of incorporation as members of the Board of Directors: Mrs. Abby A. Rockefeller, W. W. Aldrich, Mrs. Elizabeth C. Morrow, Miss Martha C. Vail, T. B. Appleget, Enos S. Booth, Franklin M. Mills, Mrs. Helen B. Hitchcock, Professor C. E. Richards, Henry A. Moe, Mrs. Mabel S. Smithers, Mrs. Emily J. De Forest, Mrs. Frances Flynn Paine, and Frank Crowninshield. If the inquiring reader will check the list against the family names of the boards of directors of America's leading corporations, he will find that they interlock. Names not to be found thus can be located in a second check-up with a list of directors of the leading New York art museums or foundations. A most distinguished company. [1282]

Rivera: "Many believed that our work was successful because in Mexico a well developed tradition of popular arts existed amongst the people. Thus it was desirable that we proved our theories among the

[1281] Rivera, Diego, *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 6, nr. 3, pages 51-57, Baltimore, Autumn 1932. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 169.
[1282] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, pp. 297-298

workers of the United States who were not influenced by any tradition of rural art. That's why I was delighted to accept the opportunity that I was offered to paint walls in the United States."

> *Muchos creyeron que nuestra obra tenía éxito debido a que en México existía en el pueblo una bien desarrollada tradición de artes populares. Esto hizo deseable el que probáramos nuestras teorías entre los trabajadores de los Estados Unidos que no están influenciados por ninguna tradición de arte campesino. De aquí que aceptara gustoso la oportunidad que se me ofreció para pintar muros en los Estados Unidos.* [1283]

He justifies working in the U.S.A. in these terms: "I came to the United States in my capacity as a guerilla fighter."

> *Cada vez hace lo que puede. Ya sea importante o insignificante, su acción siempre está dentro de la línea revolucionaria. El guerrillero siempre está listo, en el momento de la amnistía, para regresar a las filas y convertirse en un simple soldado como todo mundo. Fue en calidad de guerrillero como yo vine a los Estados Unidos.* [1284]

Rivera quotes Engels: "'Let us hope the Yankees, who seem to go straight for victory, will know how to exploit their natural wealth better, for the benefit of all humanity, than the Mexicans knew how to do, who kept their land in backwardness without effective exploitation uptil now.' That's the law of life, whether we like it or not":

> *Tras la invasión española post independiente vino la primera invasión francesa; fracasadas éstas, vino la norteamericana que, con éxito completo, tomó para Estados Unidos la mejor mitad del territorio Mexicano. Federico Engels dijo entonces con frialdad clarividente: "los yanquis siguen peleando con los Mexicanos, por las tierras del oeste que contiene el oro y muchas otras enormes riquezas naturales. Esperemos que los yanquis, que parecen ir derecho al triunfo, sabrán explotar mejor esas riquezas naturales, para beneficio de la humanidad entera, de lo que habían sabido hasta ahora los Mexicanos que mantenían esas tierras en el atraso sin explotación eficaz". Así es la ley de la vida, gústenos o no.* [1285]

The options and the justifications of these options have their own logic for Rivera. There is no practical correspondence in the social or political context; all that remains is the outward form of the gestures.

According to Alicia Azuela de la Cueva: "Many of Diego Rivera works follow the zigzags of state politics; supporting its various ideologies while granting the quality of reality to imaginary facts."

[1283] Rivera, Diego, "El caso del Centro Rockefeller", Revista de revistas, año XXIII, number 1189, February 26 1933. Reproduced as "The Radio City Murals", *Worker's Age*, New York, June 15 1933.
[1284] Rivera, Diego, "El Espíritu revolucionario en el arte moderno", *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 6, nr. 3, Baltimore 1932, pp. 51-57,
[1285] Rivera, Diego, "La Pintura Mexicana", *Excélsior*, March 18 1942. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, p. 264.

> *Muchas de las obras de Diego Rivera siguen a la vera de los zigzagueos de la política estatal; apoyando sus diversas ideologías al conceder a los hechos imaginarios la calidad de realidad. Preso de un nudo de engaños cae en la inmovilidad. Deja entonces de cuestionar sus propios valores impidiéndose e impidiendo al espectador que a través de sus formas pueda mantener una relación constante con la realidad. Su producción, aunque contenga calidad formal, deja de ser la palabra siempre viva que le da la razón de existir en su tiempo y a través del tiempo.* [1286]

His paintings do not advance social progress in Mexico (nor in the United States); they are just small provocations that provoke smiles. Thus it can be argued that the opposite is the case: his works impede the true struggle, as the illusion is created that what he paints is a "picture" of the reality (social, political reality, etc.) but, in fact, Rivera's work has no connection with reality (real life). Nothing of what he paints happens in the "real" reality. Thus, the struggle exists only on the walls, social change will never be accomplished, and somehow Rivera bears a responsibility for this. Some critics view his work as only "masturbation," which hinders the real struggle, "outside" the murals.

Raquel Tibol sees Rivera as a man of very contradictory facets: "The successive political positions adopted by Rivera [in consequence perhaps of a sometimes insuperable anarchical individualism] allows him to position himself [with all the incongruities derived from such a progression] as Zapatist, Leninist, nationalist, anti-imperialist, communist, Trotskyist, Almazanist, pan-americanist, lombardist, Stalinist and a fighter for the peace, convinced, finally, that all his life would be meaningless if he was not reinstated as militant in the Mexican Communist Party, from which he was expelled in July 1929 and which he had joined at the end of 1922, when he obtained the identification card number 992."

> *Las sucesivas posiciones políticas adoptadas por Rivera [consecuencia quizás de un individualismo anárquico no siempre superable] permiten ubicarlo [con todas las incongruencias derivadas de tal sucesión] como zapatista, Leninista, nacionalista, antimperialista, comunista, Trotskysta, almazanista, panamericanista, lombardista, Stalinista y un luchador por la paz, convencido, por fin, de que toda su vida seria un sinsentido si no se reintegraba como militante al Partido Comunista Mexicano, del que fuera expulsado en julio de 1929 y al que ingresó a fines de 1922, cuando obtuvo el carnet número 992.* [1287]

Cortés Palace in Cuernavaca

Diego Rivera was a key figure inside a political game, and I believe he knew that. It was not by chance that Ambassador Morrow's first move in Mexican politics was to give the people of Mexico a mural in the Palacio of Cortés, Cuernavaca, painted by Diego Rivera. The mural, although it was severely criticized, mainly by the Communist Party, fulfilled the requirements of Morrow, who granted his support to Rivera to paint in the United States from that moment, which proved the perfect way to improve diplomatic relationships with Mexico.

Diego Rivera began the cultural exchange between the two countries in December 1929 with the murals in the Palacio of Cortés. He justified his collaboration with the United States with a utopian version of his desire to unite the whole American continent by means of a cooperation between the workers of the North and the peasants of the South, and the factories of the United States with the raw materials of Latin America. This ideological justification reflected the operation of Mexico's dependency on the United States, and the mechanism was presented in such a way that it became an ideal to follow.

[1286] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 148.
[1287] Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, prólogo, pp. 13-14.

After his expulsion from the Mexican Communist Party and his unpleasant experiences in the USSR, where the obstacles put up by the Moscow bureaucracy prevented him from producing a mural, Rivera became of interest for the North Americans, who were aware of what he was worth, and wished to use him as part of the "good neighbor" politics which they were following. There should be no illusions on this point: the Americans were well-informed about Rivera's political activities, they knew that he was a member of the Communist Party, and they knew that he had painted apparently anti-capitalist representations at the Secretariat of Public Education, where he had painted Rockefeller and others as negative symbols of American capitalism. This they knew – but they knew also that they could use Rivera and that Rivera was willing to be used. [1288]

Rivera was the only one of the muralists who had been backed by the government for a longer period of time and at this time, for Rivera, the most important thing in life was to find walls to paint. [1289]

In 1935 a public argument took place between Siqueiros and Rivera, which lasted several sessions. In the second of them, in the Palacio of Fine Arts on August 29, Siqueiros said: "during the Revolution, Diego was in Europe locked in his studio making snobbish works. When he came to Mexico, snobbish as he was, he appropriated, snobbishly, the Revolution. He has painted fat, plump, well nurtured, pompous Indians, in a word, happy, and this because he is a bourgeois. He was the official painter of the bourgeoisie, the painter of Morrow, his intimate friend who paid him twelve thousand dollars to paint Cortés and to execrate the work of the Colony. He painted the Cortés of four hundred years ago and not the Cortés of the time that was the master of Mexico."

> *En Europa, Diego, durante la Revolución, estaba encerrado en su gabinete haciendo obra de snob. Al venir a México, como era snob, se apoderó, en snob, de la Revolución. Ha pintado indios gordos, rechonchos, bien nutridos, rozagantes, en una palabra, felices, y esto porque es un burgués. Fue el pintor oficial de los burgueses, el pintor de Morrow, su amigo íntimo, que le pagó doce mil dólares por pintar a Cortés y execrar la obra de la Colonia. Pintó al Cortés de hace cuatrocientos años y no al Cortés de la época, que era el amo de México.* [1290]

Siqueiros: "Rivera who once up on the time had served the Revolution, moved to Cuernavaca to fulfill the commission of Ambassador Morrow, whom the party of which Rivera was a member attacked as a representative of North American imperialism. He ended up accepting the task of painting murals in the Palacio of Cortés in Cuernavaca, as Morrow had predicted that he would, since Rivera was only a communist 'because he thought that a red tie went well with a blue shirt.'"

> *Rivera, quien en un tiempo había servido a la Revolución, se trasladó a Cuernavaca para cumplir con un encargo del Embajador Morrow, a quien el partido del que Rivera era miembro atacaba como representante del imperialismo norteamericano. Llegó a aceptar la tarea de pintar murales en el Palacio de Cortés en Cuernavaca, como Morrow había*

[1288] See for instance Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985. The author states that this mural in Cuernavaca already formed part of that project designed to give the appearance of "good will," but which in reality represented the intrusion of North-American interests in Mexico. The author also considers that Rivera was "used" by the Mexican government as part of a political game.
[1289] On this see Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 222-223.
[1290] Siqueiros, David Alfaro. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, p. 437.

predicho que lo haría, ya que Rivera era un comunista sólo "porque pensaba que una corbata roja iba bien con una camisa azul". [1291]

Rivera would excuse himself saying: "As for Morrow, I should say that I was not his friend, that he commissioned me for the painting of Cuernavaca through a middleman, and that I didn't receive twelve thousand dollars, but twelve thousand pesos. Of that money, two thousand were for the middleman, five thousand to fix the walls, and the rest for those who helped me in my work that lasted six months."

En cuanto a Morrow, debo decir quo no fui su amigo, que por un intermediario me encomendó la pintura de Cuernavaca, y que no recibí doce mil dólares, sino doce mil pesos. De ese dinero, dos mil fueron para el intermediario, cinco mil para arreglar los muros, y el resto para los que me ayudaron en mi trabajo, que duró seis meses". [1292]

However, he told Gladys March that he received 12,000 dollars:

En 1930 me apartó de mi trabajo en el Palacio Nacional Dwight W. Morrow, embajador de los Estados Unidos en México, quien me llamó para pintar un muro del Palacio de Cortés, en Cuernavaca, en el Estado de Morelos. Se me dio completa libertad para escoger el tema y la suma de 30,000 pesos [cerca de 12,000 dólares], de los cuales, sin embargo, tenía yo que pagar mis ayudantes y comprar mis materiales y equipo. Decidí hacer escenas de la historia de la región en dieciséis paneles consecutivos, comenzando con La Conquista española. Los episodios comprendían la toma de Cuernavaca por los españoles, la construcción del palacio por el conquistador y el establecimiento de las refinerías de azúcar. El último episodio era la Revolución campesina dirigida por Zapata. En los paneles que pintaban los horrores de La Conquista española, hice un retrato del inhumano papel de la vieja Iglesia dictatorial. [1293]

Further: "My contract with Morrow had been fixed by my friend the American architect William Spratling who had come to live in Mexico and who was looking for a way to earn a living in my country. I expected him to accept the usual commission for the agents, but this was not the case. Knowing his need, I used an indirect way to make the payment. I requested him to buy me a house in Taxco, and I notarized the property in his name, like a donation. Of the 23,000 pesos that I had left after the purchase of the house, I spent 8,000 restoring the arcade that was literally falling down. That left me 15,000 pesos, on which I had to live, to pay my assistants and to buy supplies during the seven months that it took me to paint the murals. When I finished the work I was totally broke."

Mi contrato con Morrow había sido arreglado por mi amigo el arquitecto estadounidense William Spratling, que había venido a vivir a México y estaba buscando la manera de ganarse la vida en mi país. Yo esperaba que aceptaría la acostumbrada comisión de los agentes, pero no fue así. Conociendo sus necesidades, empleé un medio indirecto para hacer el pago. Le pedí que me comprar una casa en Taxco, y le escrituré la propiedad a su nombre, como una donación. De los 23,000 pesos que me quedaron después de la compra de la casa me gasté 8,000 en la restauración del soportal, que literalmente se estaba

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[1291] Summary of the Resolution adopted by the Mexican Communist Party in September 1929 on the expulsion of four members of the central committee, one of which was Rivera, published by Joseph Freeman under the alias Robert Evans, in the newspaper *New Masses*, of January 1932, under the title "Painting and Politics: the case of Diego Rivera", published in Appendix as *Document number 4*. In Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, p. 86.

[1292] Rivera, Diego, chronicle in *Excélsior*, August 30 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 438-439

[1293] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 131-132.

viniendo abajo. Eso me dejó 15,000 pesos, de las que tenía que vivir, pagar a mis ayudantes y comprar los abastos durante los siete meses que tardé en hacer los murales. Cuando terminé el trabajo estaba completamente quebrado. [1294]

According to Wolfe, "Rivera would have to purchase materials, pay his workmen, pay commission to a go-between, [...] maintain and pay himself." [1295]

In accordance with Wolfe, the go-between was William Spratling:

In this case William Spratling, who refused his commission, but to whom Diego gave a painting. [1296]

Wolfe, again:

The offer came from an unexpected source, that of the American Ambassador, Dwight W. Morrow. Having taken up residence in Cuernavaca, lovely capital of the near-by State of Morelos, Morrow conceived the idea of promoting good will between the two countries by donating a mural to the town. Simultaneously he helped a local curate to restore a chapel, and the Morelos government to repair the Palace of Cortés, now a government office building. Thus he helped state and church, right and left, at the same time. Painter and "good-will" ambassador sized each other up at table in Morrow's Cuernavaca home. Diego was a good mixer and gracious by nature, except when he was annoyed or his inner fury beset him. Dwight Morrow was an accomplished diplomat. But Diego had strange notions concerning a Yankee ambassador and Morgan partner, while Ambassador Morrow had heard weird tales concerning Diego. Now they ate and drank together, Frida adding charm to the gathering with her swift wit and impulsive gaiety, and Mrs. Morrow contributing the graces of an accomplished hostess. No onlooker would have suspected any strain. Like the men of the world they both were, they talked of anything but the one thing that had brought them together. When at last they got to the point, all was over and settled almost in an instant. The amount Morrow offered was twelve thousand dollars. [1297]

The payment of twelve thousand dollars was definitely the largest Rivera had ever received. Rivera was free to choose topic and style, as Bertram Wolfe tells us, on condition that it was something "acceptable to the authorities of Morelos, to whom the gift was to be presented ", because the mural was a gift from the American Embassy to the authorities of the State of Morelos." Wolfe writes:

He might decorate as much or as little of the open loggia or balcony wall as his desires and aesthetic feelings and the sum of money permitted. As usual Diego elected to do more rather than less; above the doors, on the side walls as well as the main one, and below the main panels pseudo-bas-reliefs; thanks to his gluttonous appetite for all space and his fecund imagination, the commission netted him but little. Yet dollars were not pesos, and meager as his "profit" was for five months labor, it was still the best paid of his Mexican mural ventures. Price settled, they went to the question which was worrying the titan of finance as much as the titan of painting: subject matter. But that was arranged even more easily than the price. Morrow disarmed the painter by agreeing that he might select his own theme and execute it as he pleased, with no more censorship than might be involved in painting something acceptable to the authorities of Morelos, to whom the gift was to be presented. The proposal was worthy of the diplomat: in an instant the silent tension was as silently discharged. It is true that Morrow once or twice during the progress of the work

[1294] Ibid.
[1295] Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 272.
[1296] Ibid.
[1297] Ibid, pp. 271-273.

suggested, diplomatically, as always, that Diego's clerics were unflattering to the Church and religion. But Diego answered, no less diplomatically, that he was attacking no one, merely presenting the history of Morelos and the Conquest. He pointed out that he was also including good priests: Las Casas, protector of the Indians against the fury of the conquerors, Motolinía, teacher of the arts and crafts of the conquering Europeans. "I do not know whether the Church will like it," said Diego, grinning disarmingly, "but both the good priests and the bad, and the role played by Christianity in the Conquest, are the truth of history; and, being the truth, every friend of truth will like it." Thereafter the Ambassador held his peace. [1298]

This mural was also cited in the campaign against Diego after his expulsion of the Communist Party. The painter was described as an:

[...] agent of American imperialism and the millionaire Morrow [1299]

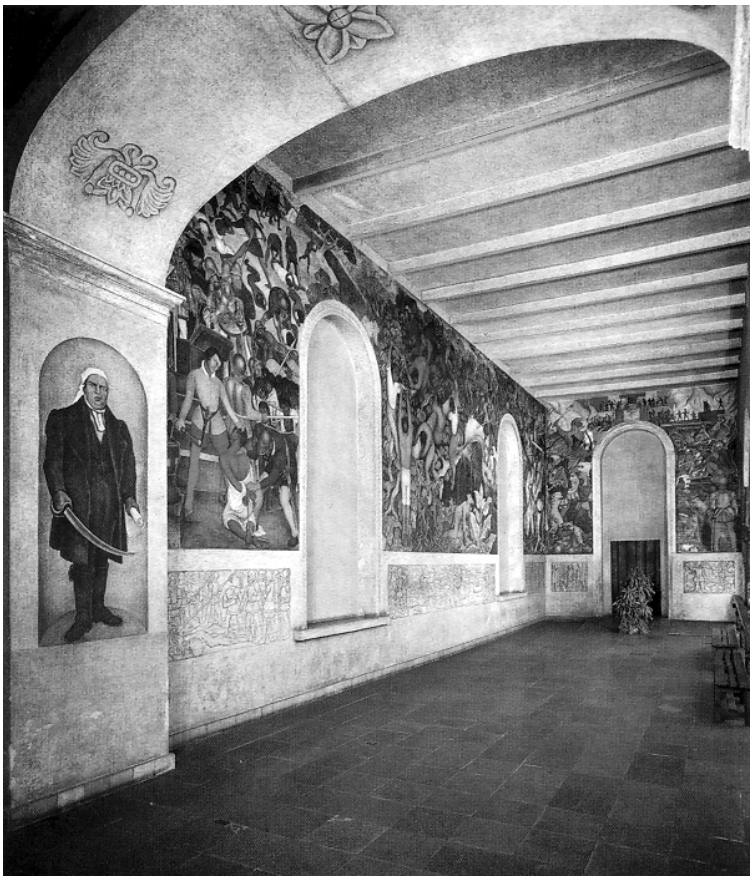
Letters were published in the Mexican press protesting against the mural's patron. [1300]

Siqueiros again: [...] "in Cuernavaca Rivera painted a fresco condemning the Spanish colony, that is to say, an already dead imperialism, and he made it in fact serving Ambassador Morrow who represented North American imperialism in Mexico in a time of great pressure. Rivera's work was given by Ambassador Morrow to the city council of the city. Feudal politics hindered the penetration by Yankee imperialism. And in Mexico Spanish capital was the most exact manifestation of the feudalism. To combat it, it was necessary to mobilise all the hate of the masses against it. Rivera's unilateral work favored the maneuver."

[...] Rivera pintó en Cuernavaca un fresco condenando a la colonia española, es decir, a un imperialismo ya muerto, y lo hizo sirviendo precisamente al Embajador Morrow que representaba en México al imperialismo norteamericano en una época de gran presión. Esta obra de Rivera fue regalada por el Embajador Morrow al ayuntamiento de la ciudad. Al imperialismo yanqui le estorbaba la política feudal para su acción de penetración. Y el capital español era en México la manifestación más exacta del feudalismo. Para combatirlo, había que exasperar contra él todo el odio de las masas. La obra unilateral de Rivera favorecía la maniobra. [1301]

[1298] Ibid.
[1299] Ibid, p. 281.
[1300] "El pseudo-pintor bolchevique Diego Rivera contratado por el banquero diplomático Mr. Morrow", *La Chispa*, June 18 1932.
[1301] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 226-227.

Figure 86. Diego Rivera: *History of the State of Morelos, the Conquest and Revolution*, Palacio Cortés, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, 1930/31. [1302]



In the mural of the Palacio of Cortés, in Cuernavaca (**Figure 86**), Rivera expressed his concept of the history of Mexico, choosing as his themes the History of the State of Morelos, the Conquest and Revolution, and continuing until the agrarian insurrection of Emiliano Zapata. Rivera traces the panorama of pre-Hispanic Mexico with unchecked sympathy, glorifying the resistance of the natives and vehemently condemning the ravages of The Conquest. The mural is thematically close to the frescos that he was doing at the same time in the National Palace. In order to treat this theme Rivera looked for all objects of pre-Hispanic art that he could find: ceramic objects, sculptures of jade, stone, or terracotta, pieces of gold, shells, feathers, mural paintings. He examined Codexes and read Sahagún, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Durán, and other sources.

Rivera, justifying himself: "I took the trouble of authenticating each detail by means of a precise investigation, because I didn't want to give anybody the slightest opportunity to try to discredit the murals as a whole on the pretext that some detail was an invention."

> *Tuve el cuidado de autenticar cada detalle mediante una investigación precisa, porque no quería dar la menor oportunidad a nadie para que tratara de desacreditar los murales en su conjunto con el pretexto de que algún detalle fuera una invención. En algunos paneles mi héroe era un sacerdote, el valeroso e incorruptible Miguel Hidalgo, quien no había dudado en desafiar a la Iglesia para ser leal a su pueblo y a la verdad.* [1303]

Apparently, Rivera was worried about being accused of falsifying the truth; he was well aware that his works often provoked polemics.



Figure 87. Diego Rivera: Emiliano Zapata. Palacio Cortés, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, 1930/31. [1304]

[1302] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 40.
[1303] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 131-132.
[1304] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 40.

In his study on the iconography of the murals of Cuernavaca, Stanton Catlin claims that Rivera's sources for the central panel, which shows the battle between the Aztecs and the Spaniards, included such publications and hand-written Codexes as the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, the *Matrícula de tributos*, the *Códice Florentino* of Bernardino de Sahagún and his *Primeros Memoriales*, the *Códice Mendoza,* and the study of a vast number of archaeological monuments and artefacts in the National Museum and other places. According to Catlin, Rivera could have seen various sculptures in the Museum of Anthropology, and he might have incorporated them into the mural. [1305]

Rivera decorated all the usable walls of the corridor on the first floor; he painted his ideas about the history of Mexico, including themes from The Conquest, indigenous life, the campaigns of Morelos and the Zapatist Revolution. (Figure **87**) shows the agrarian leader Zapata. The mural is painted in a continuous series of panels. In the lower parts he painted, using a *grisaille* technique, some scenes from the Conquest. Both Cuauhtémoc and Cortés appear in this mural. One panel shows Cortés taking inventory of the captured gold, and the next panel shows his investiture as the Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca after having taken possession of Cuernavaca. Cuauhtémoc is presented in a discreet way, very similar to the representation at the National Palace, as a character dressed like an eagle and holding a sling. Cuauhtémoc's death is portrayed in a *grisaille*. The Torture of Cuauhtémoc is taken from the scene represented in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. Yet Rivera does not paint the character of Hidalgo in this work, but that of Zapata.
Zapata is celebrated once again in this mural, which did not seem to upset the work's sponsor. Rivera did not paint Villa here, as he had done in the National Palace, and this omission was clearly deliberate. The character of Villa would have been unacceptable for the United States, as Villa had invaded the U.S.A.

Azuela: "Zapata, the only figure (of the Revolution) to which he makes reference in this period, appears as a supernatural being that, hidden beneath the robes of a prophet, speaks to us of the promises of the future."

> *[...] Zapata, única figura a la que se hace referencia dentro de este período, aparece como un ser sobrenatural que, encubierto con la investidura de un profeta, nos habla de las promesas del futuro.* [1306]

According to Vasconcelos, it was in the interest of the U.S.A. to attack Hispanic culture, Catholicism, and the Conquest. This way the Americans, through Rivera, could neutralize the pre-Hispanic revolutionary potential. José Vasconcelos reiterates, in 1957, his old Hispanist position, declaring that the mural in Cuernavaca is infamous because it seeks "[...] to revile the work of Spain in America, and Diego's blood was ninety percent Spanish. But this is not the worst, but rather the work is discredited because it was paid for by an ambassador from North America, who was the most disastrous that Mexico ever had."

> *[...] denigrar la obra de España en América, y Diego en el noventa por ciento de su sangre, era español. Pero no es esto lo peor, sino que la obra de descrédito la hizo por pago de un embajador de Norteamérica, que es de los más nefastos que haya tenido México.* [1307]

And further: "The typical mestizo must receive money from a yankee ambassador to defame, in a mural painting which symbolizes an epoch, the memory of a man who gave Mexico Alaska and Honduras as its borders."

[1305] See Catlin, Stanton Loomis, *Political iconography in the Diego Rivera frescoes at Cuernavaca*, Mexico, 1979, and Catlin, Stanton Loomis, *Some Sources and Uses of Pre-Colombian Art in the Cuernavaca Frescos of Diego Rivera*, XXXV Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, México, pp. 439-449.
[1306] Azuela, Alicia, *Diego Rivera en Detroit*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Imprenta Universitaria, Mexico 1985, p. 20
[1307] Vasconcelos, José, "Sobre Diego Rivera", *Hoy*, December 28 1957. Quoted in *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 66.

Y lo demás, lo que venía con nosotros, el mestizo fuerte y ambicioso [...] ése era un bastardo que renegaba de Cortés y el encomendero de hace cien años, pero se doblegaba sumiso a la influencia extranjera de la hora, mucho más opresora que la antigua. El típico mestizo habría de recibir dinero de un embajador yanqui para infamar, en pintura mural que es símbolo de una época, el recuerdo del hombre que dio a México por fronteras Alaska y Honduras. A la vez, para halagar al heredero de Zacarías Taylor, que izó la bandera de las estrellas en el Palacio de los Virreyes y para arriarla se hizo ceder media nación. ¡Pobre México! El pulso de su tragedia inenarrable nos despertó una noche a horas avanzadas con fuertes golpes en la puerta del zaguán de nuestro palacio de ocho días. [1308]

[1308] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias I: Ulises Criollo, La Tormenta*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1983, p. 621.

A short general resumé of Rivera's life and work after completion of the mural in Cuernavaca.

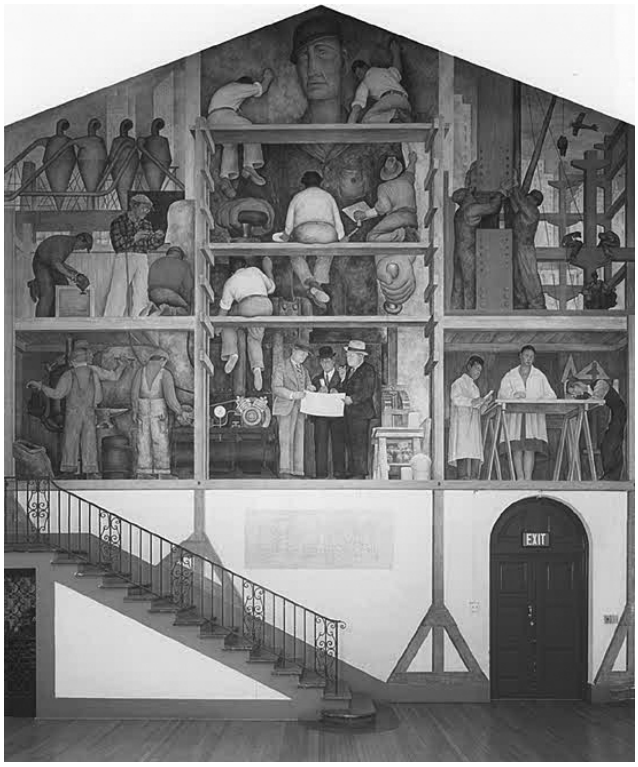


Figure 88. ***Diego Rivera: The making of a fresco*****.**
California School of Fine Arts, 1931. [1309]



89. Diego Rivera: ***Allegory of California*****,**
Luncheon Club of the San Francisco Pacific Stock Exchange, 1930/31 [1310]

In 1930 Rivera moved to the United States, where he showed works of easel painting in the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, in San Francisco, California.

During 1930/31 he worked in San Francisco, where he painted a mural (the making of a fresco) in the California School of Fine Arts (**Figure 88**) and another (an allegory about the great natural and industrial wealth of California) in the Luncheon Club of the San Francisco Pacific Stock Exchange (**Figure 89**).

Rivera had a retrospective at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1932 Rivera designed sets and costumes for Carlos Chavez's ballet *Horse Power*. The Art commission of the City of Detroit approved a proposal commissioning Rivera to paint murals for the Detroit Institute of Art. Rivera was commissioned to create a mural at the lobby of the RCA at the Rockefeller Center building in New York.

[1309] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 48.
[1310] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 47.



Figure 90. Diego Rivera: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1932/33. Detail.

In 1933 he completed the Detroit murals. There was a small scandal caused by his portrayal of a scene in which a doctor vaccinates a child. Rivera was accused of sacrilege because the scene resembled the scene of the adoration of Christ (**Figure 90**).

He began to paint a mural at the RCA: *Man at the crossroads looking with hope and high vision to the choosing of a new and better future*, [1311] which incorporated a portrait of Lenin (see **Figure** 56, page 291)

Nelson Rockefeller asked Rivera to replace the face of Lenin with that of an anonymous individual. The painter refused which led to the RCA dismissing Rivera. He then began painting at the New Workers' School.



Figure 91. Diego Rivera: *El Hombre Controlador del Universo.* Palacio de Bellas Artes. Mexico City, 1934/35. [1312]

In December he made a public presentation of the New Workers' School panels. Rivera and Kahlo sailed back to Mexico and on arrival moved into their newly finished residence in San Angel.

In February 1934 the RCA murals were destroyed. In June of the same year Rivera signed a contract to reproduce a smaller version of the RCA mural at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City (**Figure 91**) and began work in November. [1313]

[1311] There are several names applied to this painting: *El Hombre Controlador del Universo* or *El Hombre en la Máquina del Tiempo* or *Man at the crossroads looking with hope and high vision to the choosing of a new and better future*. Wolfe calls it *Man at the crossroads looking with hope and high vision to the choosing of a new and better future*. See Wolfe, Bertram D., The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 317.

[1312] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 133.

[1313] In the period 1934-1940, with the exception of the mural at *Bellas Artes* and that in the National Palace, Rivera was excluded from the government's cultural plans, because of his having been a committed painter under the Calles regime, and having painted murals for the Americans, and for his political action in general. Thus, he was forced to dedicate himself to easel painting.

In 1935 Rivera concluded the work at the stairway at the National Palace. Siqueiros and Rivera had violent public discussions that year, attacking each other with provocative rhetoric.

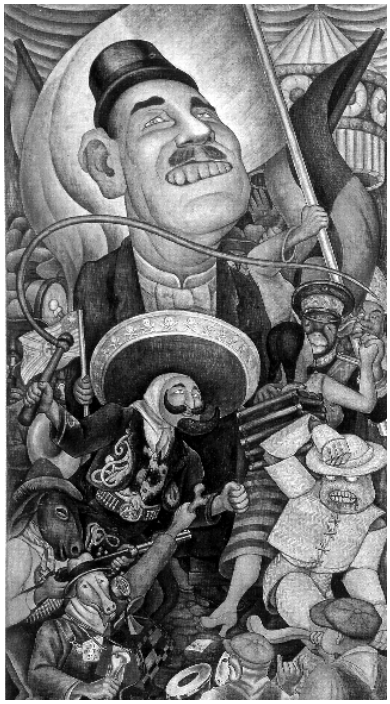


Figure 92. Diego Rivera: *The Dictatorship. Giro's Bar* in the *Hotel Reforma*, Mexico City, 1936. [1314]

In 1936 Alberto Pani commissioned murals for Giro's Bar in his new *Hotel Reforma* in Mexico City. Rivera painted four frescoes, in which he attacked Mexican political figures (**Figure 92**). The frescoes were removed.

In 1936 Rivera intervened with President Lázaro Cárdenas, on behalf of León and Natalia Sedova Trotsky who were seeking political asylum in Mexico. In 1937, the Trotskys lived in the Rivera's Coyoacán home.

In 1938 André Breton and his wife Jacqueline Lamba Breton arrived in Mexico. They stayed with Rivera and Frida Kahlo at San Angel. Rivera, Breton and Trotsky wrote declarations together. They socialized and traveled together with their respective families. Personal and political conflicts developed between Rivera and Trotsky. In 1939 Trotsky and Rivera broke with each other. Rivera and Frida Kahlo separated. Trotsky announced that he no longer feels "moral solidarity" with Rivera's anarchistic ideas. The Mexican section of the IV international accused Rivera of betraying socialist ideas and supporting the conservative presidential candidate Juan Andrew Almazán.

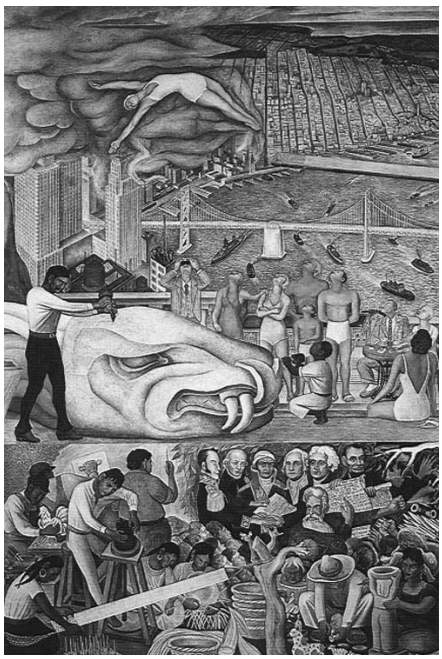


Figure 93. Diego Rivera: *Unidad panamericana*, San Francisco City College, 1940 [1315]

In 1940 Rivera and Kahlo were divorced. David Alfaro Siqueiros led an assassination attempt on Trotsky in the Coyoacán house. In June Rivera arrived in San Francisco. Rivera painted ten murals in San Francisco for the Golden Gate International Exposition (**Figure 93**). In August Trotsky was assassinated by Ramón Mercader, a Spanish-born agent of the Soviet secret police, on Stalin's orders. Kahlo traveled to San Francisco and a reconciliation with Rivera took place. While in San Francisco he married Frida Kahlo for the second time.

In 1941/42 Rivera worked mainly on easel paintings. However he also received permission to paint frescoes in the upper corridor of the inner courtyard of the National Palace. That same year Rivera began to build the "Anahuacalli", a building which would house his collection of pre-colonial objects and works of art.

1943 − Rivera undertook a mural project in Mexico City at the *Instituto Nacional de Cardiología* (**Figure 94**). He taught composition and painting at the Escuela Nacional de Pintura y Escultura (La Esmeralda).

[1314] Rivera, *Dictatorship*, 1936. Now in Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 66.
[1315] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 72.

Rivera painted two murals, devoted to the history of cardiology, for the National Institute of Cardiology. He became one of the first members of the National College and held a number of conferences on art, science and politics.



Figure 94. Diego Rivera: *Instituto Nacional de Cardiología*, Mexico City, 1943. Detail.

In 1944 Rivera began the mosaic decoration of Anahuacalli with pre-conquest motifs. He returned to the National Palace and painted The Great City of Tenochtitlán.

In 1945 he continued work on the National Palace.

In 1947 Rivera began a mural commission, "Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alameda", for the newly constructed *Hotel del Prado*. With Orozco and Siqueiros, he formed the Commission of Mural Painting, an arm of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA).

In 1948 Rivera completed the *Hotel del Prado* mural. His inclusion of Nigromante's slogan "God does not exist" caused a scandal, with the result that the mural is kept from public view for several years.



Figure 95. Detail of Rivera's *Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alameda, Hotel del Prado* [1316]

In 1949 Rivera presented his plan for additional murals on the second floor of the National Palace. That year was the fiftieth anniversary of Rivera's artistic career, which was marked by a large exhibition organized by INBA at the Palace of Fine Arts.

In 1950 Rivera illustrated the limited edition of Pablo Neruda's Canto General together with Siqueiros. With David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco and Rufino Tamayo Rivera represented Mexico at the Venice biennale. He was awarded the National Prize for Plastic Arts.

In 1951 Rivera executed murals in polystyrene and liquid rubber, which were intended to be submerged underwater murals in the "Cárcamo del Rio Lerma", Mexico City. Rivera created a vast mosaic, depicting the rain God Tláloc.

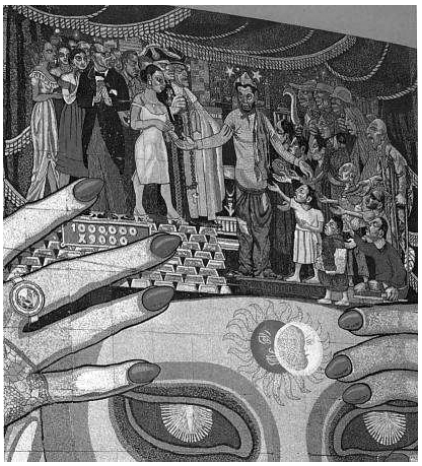
In 1952 Rivera painted a portable mural, *The nightmare of war and the dream of peace* **(Figure 96)**, for the exhibition Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art which was to travel round Europe. The Director of INBA, Carlos Chávez, refused to exhibit the work and removed the painting from Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes, because of the portrayal of Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. Possibly it was later donated to the People's Republic of China. In 2000 the daily Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* had a photo of *The nightmare of war and the dream of peace*, announcing that the painting had been found in a warehouse of the *Pushkin Museum*.

[1316] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 160.



Figure 96. Diego Rivera: *The nightmare of war and the dream of peace*, 1952. [1317]

Figure 97. Diego Rivera: detail of the mural in glass mosaic *in Teatro de los Insurgentes*, 1953. [1318]



In 1953 José María Dávila commissioned Rivera to create a mural in glass mosaic on the facade of the new *Teatro de los Insurgentes*, which caused a scandal because of the association he made between the comedian Cantinflas and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe (**Figure 97**). That year he painted two large oils for the Cuernavaca home of Santiago Reachi.

Rivera begins the mural *The people's Demand for better health* for the *Hospital de la Raza* **(Figure 98**), Mexican Institute of Social Security, where Rivera painted a representation of Tlazoltéotl (**Figure 99**).

At the same time finished work on the front of the Olympic Stadium on the *campus* of Mexico University.

In 1954 Rivera paints the mural *Glorious victory* to denounce USA's imperialistic intervention in Guatemala (**Figure 100**). This mural provokes a new controversy. [1319] With Frida Kahlo Rivera took part in a demonstration protesting against the involvement of the C.I.A. in the ouster of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. This was Kahlo's last public appearance. In July Frida Kahlo died. In September that year, after several attempts, his application to rejoin the Mexican Communist Party was accepted.

In July 1955 Rivera married the publisher and dealer Emma Hurtado. He set up a trust fund through the *Banco de Mexico* to administer the buildings and collection of Anahuacalli and Kahlo's Coyoacán home as public museums. He took a trip to the Soviet Union at the end of the year to undergo medical treatment.

[1317] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://redescolar.ilce.edu.mx/redescolar/biblioteca/literatura/special/Rivera/Riveramural.htm

[1318] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 81.

[1319] See Rivera's ¡YO NO MIENTO! MIS AFIRMACIONES EN EL MURAL SON EXACTAS, in Appendix XXII.

In April 1956 Rivera returned to Mexico. He convalesced at the Acapulco home of his friend Dolores Olmedo. Rivera decides then, finally, to erase the sentence "God doesn't exist", changing it to "Conference of Letrán in the year of 1836" **(Figure 101**). On April 14 the newspaper Excélsior reported: "Diego cambió la frase: admira a la Guadalupana, dijo", "Diego changed the sentence: he admires the Guadalupana, he said."



Figure 98. Diego Rivera: *The people's Demand for better health*, *Hospital de la Raza*, Mexican Institute of Social Security, Mexico City. [1320]

Figure 99. Tlazoltéotl (or Ixcuina) from *Codex Borbonicus*. [1321]



In December that year the nation paid homage to him on the occasion of Rivera's seventieth birthday.

On 24 November 1957 Rivera died of heart failure in his San Angel studio in Coyoacán. His will stipulated that his ashes be mingled with those of Frida Kahlo at the "Blue House". Despite this stipulation, he was buried in the *Rotunda de los hombres Ilustres* at the pantheon of Dolores, Mexico City. At the beginning of the fifties, it was customary to say that Frida and Diego were something like the Popocatépetl and the Ixtaccíhuatl, the guardian volcanoes of the Valley of Mexico, occupying the pages of all newspapers. There was no public event where they were not present, so big was their prestige.

According to Raquel Tibol, General Lázaro Cárdenas also looked at Rivera's work with a politician's eyes, adding to his own prestige by honoring the artist during the celebrations of Rivera's seventieth birthday. Cárdenas's personal appreciation for Rivera's work, affected by his own sociopolitical conceptions, was expressed fifteen years after he had renounced power. As a guest in 1955, he decided to pay homage to Rivera in these terms: "Rivera is an indigenist proud of our autochthonous layer; his artistic personality is impregnated with a great innovative sensibility which expresses itself in terms of progress and human brotherhood."

> *Rivera es un indigenista orgulloso de nuestra capa autóctona; su personalidad artística está impregnada de una gran sensibilidad innovadora que se prodiga en expresiones de progreso y fraternidad humana. Es un abanderado que con su pincel combatiente acompaña a las huestes de la Independencia y de la Reforma, reclamando la libertad de los esclavos, la libre expresión del pensamiento y la reivindicación del patrimonio*

[1320] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 181.
[1321] Reproduced in Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, p. 74.

nacional. En las paredes de los palacios de Cortés y de los virreyes estampa los adelantos de nuestra cultura aborigen y anatematiza las crueldades de La Conquista, de la Inquisición y de las invasiones extranjeras. En sus murales es como un campesino que reclama su tierra; como un líder en las gestas del lo. de Mayo; pero es también un maestro que imparte cátedras en los corredores de los edificios públicos y en dondequiera que su talento se imprime, exige justicia para el esfuerzo humano productivo, condenando a las minorías explotadoras y estériles. En el anfiteatro de la Preparatoria, en Chapingo y en el Palacio de Bellas Artes, interpreta la creación del hombre brotando de la energía primaria, modelándose en la evolución biológica y social, y culmina augurando la victoria final de la ciencia y de la técnica en la cosecha pacifista de la futura edad atómica. [1322]



Figure 100. Diego Rivera: *Glorious victory*, 1954. [1323]

Figure 101. Rivera erases in 1956the sentence "God doesn't exist", changing it to "Conference of Letrán in the year of 1836".



Alberto Híjar Serrano: "Rivera hardly experienced de-Stalination as he was already seriously sick; nor did he experience the opportunism of the left which glorified all that he had previously condemned. He was hospitalized in Moscow, having already been readmitted to the PCM."

La desestanilización apenas fue vivida por Rivera ya enfermo de gravedad; tampoco vivió el oportunismo de izquierda de la desestanilización que glorificó todo lo que antes fue condenado. Fue hospitalizado en Moscú ya readmitido en el PCM. [1324]

Octavio Paz: "My admiration for the muralists became impatience first and, later, stricture."

Mi admiración por los muralistas se transformó primero en impaciencia y, después, en reprobación. Con la excepción honorable de Orozco, unos eran los apologistas y otros las

[1322] Lázaro Cárdenas. *Epistolario*. Tomo 2, México, Siglo XXI Editores, S.A., 1975, pp. 313-314. Quoted by Tibol, Raquel, "El nacionalismo en la plástica durante el cardenismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 244.
[1323] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2000/mar00/000302/cul3.html
[1324] Serrano, Alberto Híjar, "Diego Rivera: contribuición política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, p. 60.

tapaderas de la dictadura burocrática de Stalin. Además, se habían vuelto la nueva Academia, más intolerante que la otra. Me parecían el equivalente estético del Partido Nacional Revolucionario, que en esos días había cambiado su nombre, no su composición, por el de Partido de la Revolución Mexicana. Mis reservas frente a los muralistas eran políticas, morales y estéticas pero, sobre todo, eran legítimas y necesarias: su retórica ahogaba a los artistas jóvenes. Yo quería respirar el aire libre del mundo. [1325]

And further: "in its best and more intense moments the Mexican mural painting is something more, and something different, than the ideology of those painters and of their patron, the Mexican government. The painter Rivera, luckily, denied the ideologist Rivera many times."

[...] en sus mejores y más intensos momentos la pintura mural Mexicana es algo más, y algo distinto, de lo que fue la ideología de esos pintores y de su mecenas, el gobierno Mexicano. El pintor Rivera, por fortuna, desmintió muchas veces al ideólogo Rivera. [1326]

Alberto Híjar Serrano: "The long gloss of the thesis of Rivera as a Trotskyist had to be introduced at the moment when we intended to describe his North American scandals."

La larga glosa de las tesis del Rivera Trotskista ha sido necesaria para insertarla en el momento en que nos proponíamos describir sus escándalos norteamericanos y en especial, lo ocurrido en Nueva York donde fue destruido su mural en el que significó grotescamente a los personeros del imperialismo y exaltó a los de la clase obrera. Esta lectura del discurso riveriano es necesaria porque al fin de cuentas el haberse valido de los patrocinios de Morrow o Rockefeller realmente sirvió a la causa socialista. Pero ésta nunca es abstracta y universal para Rivera, sino se inserta siempre en situación Mexicana y en todo caso americana. Es el internacionalismo de su práctica como dirigente de organizaciones antiimperialistas y sus prédicas sobre la historia de México lo que le da poder significante a cada acto de su vida. Aun el empeño burgués por reducir a escándalos pintorescos estos actos no logró entonces desubicarlos de la totalidad a la que se refieren. Otra cosa es ahora, cuando muerto y sin defensa ideológica, ha sido reducido a exposición itinerante patrocinada por la gran burguesía de Detroit con el aval de instituciones estatales Mexicanas. [1327]

For Armando Torres-Michúa: "He was institutionalized, his became the government's official art, [the government] not only gained prestige by adopting it, but rather used it as a way of proclaiming their understanding for the dissidents [which didn't prevent the government, in the strictly political arena, from imprisoning and fighting them]."

Se le institucionalizó, se le convirtió en el arte oficial del gobierno que no solo ganaba prestigio al prohijarlo, sino que lo empleó como una forma de pregonar su comprensión para los disidentes [lo que no implicó que en el terreno estrictamente político, los encarcelara o los combatiera]. De ahí, la repetición, la imagen fácil, el estereotipo Mexicanista y anecdótico de lo más pintoresco de nuestra historia patria y, especialmente de la Revolución [por ejemplo el mural del edificio del PRI], o del patrioterismo fácil. El

[1325] Paz, Octavio, "Repaso en forma de preámbulo", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 28.
[1326] Paz, Octavio, "Re/visiones: La pintura mural", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*. Vol. III: *Los privilegios de la vista. Arte de México*, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1989, p. 41.
[1327] Serrano, Alberto Híjar, "Diego Rivera: contribuición política", *Diego Rivera Hoy: Simposio sobre el artista en el Centenario de su natalicio*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico 1986, pp. 55-56.

verde, blanco y colorado iluminó el ocaso de un arte de batalla. Además, debe tenerse presente que su afán innovador técnico, nada despreciable de parte de los artistas, se abandonó. [1328]

In the words of Gurría Lacroix: "It will be said that Diego paints the ugly face of our history, the negative values, especially those events dominated by the Conservatives; everything with a high demagogic sense, full of effects. But I consider that this should not be strange to us in Rivera's thought, because in this respect it is necessary to remember that he and his group paint for the people; that the idea of a mural painting was for them as much putting " art to the service of the workers", "to materialize a valuable art for the people, to produce beauty that encourages the struggle[...] """

Se dirá que Diego pinta la cara fea de nuestra historia, los valores negativos, especialmente aquellos sucesos cometidos por la línea conservadora; todo ello con un alto sentido demagógico, efectista. Mas considero que esto no debe extrañarnos en el pensamiento de Rivera, pues a este respecto hay que recordar que él y su grupo pintan para el pueblo; que la idea de una pintura mural era para ellos tanto como poner "el arte al servicio de los trabajadores", "materializar un arte valioso para el pueblo, producir belleza que sugiera la lucha e impulse a ella". [1329]

The character of Rivera, as well as that of Frida Kahlo, continues to fascinate and to sell. Being part of a collective image of mythological dimensions, their characters are recalled at the movies of Hollywood. Recently an American experimental play, *The Cradle Will Rock*, written by Marc Blitzstein in 1938, became a film picture in 1999, written and directed by Tim Robbins. John Cusack (Nelson Rockefeller), hires the painter Diego Rivera (played by Ruben Blades) to create a mural in the lobby of his new Rockefeller Center, and fires him when he discovers the image of Lenin in it. There is also a fascist sympathizer and propagandist Margherita Sarfatti (Susan Sarandon), a former mistress of Mussolini who uses her charm to gain entrance into the heart of the American power. Highly successful as an art broker, as well as ghostwriting articles for Mussolini, she raises funds for her fascist activities by selling masterpieces to Rockefeller and his peers.

More recently the film *Frida*, starring Salma Hayek and directed by Julie Taymor had its premiere. The film is based on Hayden Herrera's book, *Frida Kahlo*. Earlier the singer Madonna had been interested in Frida's character, and Marlon Brando was named to play Diego Rivera, alongside Madonna, a project that in the end never came to fruition.

In my opinion the film *Frida* shows a succession of clichés, and reinforces even more the already superficial ideas about the artist, about Rivera and about the period that it intends to explore.

Before the first showing Joy Press, the chief book and TV critic at the *Village Voice* wrote in May 2002:

[1328] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., p. 34.
[1329] Gurría Lacroix, Jorge, *Hernán Cortés y Diego Rivera*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1971, pp. 54-55.

> *Every era chooses its own heroes, and Frida Kahlo was the perfect feminist heroine for the '80s. Hayden Herrera's Frida, the first biography of the then obscure Mexican artist, was published in 1983, just as Madonna and Cindy Sherman were parlaying experiments with female self-representation into a mainstream spectacle. [...] More than just a poster girl for artsy adolescents or a Latina role model, Kahlo is now a coffee mug, a key chain, and a postage stamp.* [1330]

And the critic continues, quoting the director Julie Taymor:

> *Julie Taymor, Frida's director, thinks Kahlo's reputation needs an update. "People always think of her as the tortured artist, like Saint Sebastian with the arrows going through him," she says. "I think what turns us all on is the humor and foul mouth and free sexuality of Frida—that's what makes her interesting to do as a film."* [1331]

Rivera and Vasconcelos had different views on the pre-Hispanic past and also about the Conquest and its consequences. However, I find that they both searched for the same thing: in the historical moment in which they lived with its pronounced change of values, they both found it necessary to find the identity of Mexico as a nation in the new reality that the Revolution brought. They looked for that identity in the pre-Hispanic past and in the historical outburst of 1521, the year of the fall of Tenochtitlán, with all the consequences that that entailed. Vasconcelos started but was forced to leave. Rivera continued, and created a visual myth, which it is now impossible to dismantle.

Rivera and Vasconcelos argued with one another and were never reconciled. For that reason it is difficult to associate their ideas together in a peaceful way. Rivera is unassailable, whilst hardly anybody is prepared to defend Vasconcelos.

In 1924, Rivera participated in the construction of the National Stadium (which was demolished in 1950 to build an apartment block). Vasconcelos was in charge of the decoration of this building. Rivera expressed then what he felt about Vasconcelos: "Lastly (Rivera), surrenders a vibrant homage to the will and the clairvoyance of Vasconcelos who has known how to gather around him artists who work in agreement with popular needs and sensibilities."

> *Por último (Rivera), rinde un vibrante homenaje a la voluntad y la clarividencia de Vasconcelos, quien ha sabido reunir a su alrededor a artistas que trabajan de acuerdo con las necesidades y la sensibilidad populares.* [1332]

I believe that despite their apparent differences, Vasconcelos and Rivera had a common project. One of its components was Vasconcelos's thinking about the racial coalition, which I think Rivera borrowed and is present in many of his mural works, carried out in Mexico and in the United States of America. A few examples of this follow.

Rivera: "In this mural I projected the idea of the coalition of the genius of the South (Mexico), with its religious ardor and its gifts for plastic expression, and the genius of the North (the United States), with its gifts for creative mechanical expression."

[1330] Press, Joy, "The Return of the Kahlo Cult: Frida Icon", May 15 − 21, 2002, Retrieved 2003-06-22 from http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0220/press.php

[1331] Ibid.

[1332] "Diego Rivera arremete contra los 'Galindos' de las Bellas Artes a propósito del estadio", Boletín de la Secretaria de Educación Pública, n, 5-6, p. 547-552. Quoted in Fell, Claude, *José Vasconcelos: Los años del Águila (1920-1925)*, UNAM, Mexico 1989, p. 461.

En este mural proyecté la idea de la fusión del genio del Sur (México), con su religioso ardor y sus dotes para la expresión plástica, y el genio del Norte (los Estados Unidos), con sus dotes para la expresión mecánica creadora. [1333]

Further: "It is for this reason that in America, social as well as artistic development depends on individuals of the western races, or on the Jews [not on the Latins who have deteriorated in artificial cultures], transplanted and well rooted in this continent, or the members of pure and autochthonous races, who today in Mexico produce examples of a wonderful popular art."

Es por eso que en América, tanto el desarrollo social como el artístico dependen de individuos de las razas occidentales, o de los judíos [no de los latinos, que están deteriorados con culturas artificiales], trasplantados y bien enraizados en este continente, o los miembros de razas puras y autóctonas, que hoy producen en México ejemplos de un maravilloso arte popular. [1334]

A large part of Rivera's discourse concerns the racial element, from his own origins to the themes of some of the murals he painted in the United States.

But, Vasconcelos never forgave Rivera. For Vasconcelos, Rivera is only a toad, "a toad that is at the same time a great painter."

Un sapo, que es a la vez un gran pintor [1335]

Figure 102. Diego Rivera: Portrait of Natasha Zakólkowa Gelman, 1943. [1336]



Rivera did not only paint murals. He produced an enormous number of easel paintings, including mundane portraits of various society ladies. When asked by Cardona Peña "if you are an artist of the people, why do you paint portraits of the bourgeoisie?" Rivera answers: "Because there is nothing I like so much in life as a pretty woman, and fortunately beauty takes different forms in all social classes. To those who say that I make incidental painting for tourists, they can go to hell. In the indigenous themes I achieve more depth because they are those that I love more."

Porque nada hay que me guste tanto en la vida como una mujer guapa y afortunadamente la belleza se produce con características diferentes en todas las clases sociales. Al que

[1333] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, p. 190. The mural is the *Unidad panamericana o Unión de la expressión artística del Norte y del Sur en este continente*, 1940, City College of San Francisco

[1334] Rivera, Diego, "De la libreta de apuntes de un pintor Mexicano" [English translation by Katherine Anne Porter], *Arts*, Vol. 7, nr. 1, pp. 21-23, New York, January 1925. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 71-72.

[1335] Vasconcelos, José, *Memorias II: El Desastre, El Proconsulado*, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1984, p. 718.

[1336] Reproduced in Kettenmann, Andrea, *Rivera*, Taschen, Cologne, 2001, p. 88.

diga que yo hago pintura circunstancial para turistas, que vaya mucho al diablo. Los temas indígenas adquieren en mí más profundidad porque son los que más amo. [1337]

The majority of people who were asked to choose which painting they would like "to take home" chose those located on the walls of the stairway in the National Palace, that is to say, the epic synthesis of the social and political history of Mexico.

El giro dado a la pregunta "cartel o foto" y el "en su casa" implícito, fue dado buscando un alto grado de reflexión y de apropiación t motiva, para encontrar un espacio íntimo, de baja sujeción a criterios de autoridad [política, ideológica, estética], es decir, para distinguir discurso privado de discurso público. [...] Las imágenes de los tiempos prehispánicos pintadas por Rivera provocaron explicaciones e interpretaciones de una singular riqueza de significados en los espectadores. Muchas de las preferencias por uno u otro fragmento fueron fundamentadas desde las vivencias de la identidad prehispánica. [...] Los preliminares estadísticos son los siguientes: en primer lugar, la gente eligió "llevarse a casa" las pinturas ubicadas en los muros de la escalera [34%], es decir, la síntesis épica de la historia social y política de México: "Toda la historia en vivos colores". Tal parece que eligieron apropiarse de la memoria histórica, hacerla presente vivo. [1338]

For Luis Suárez writes that "Diego died without rectifying statements which conventional minds judge to be monstrous."

Diego murió sin rectificar afirmaciones que a mentes convencionales restarán monstruosas. [1339]

Also his former mistress, Angelina Beloff, felt sour about Rivera, but "then I saw the frescos at Chapingo, those at the National Palacio and many more. I didn't like some of the portraits that he made for money but when I saw his museum I forgave him everything, even his intimate deceptions, because it is not easy to be the wife of a genius."

Después vi los frescos de Chapingo, los del Palacio Nacional y otros muchos. No me gustaron algunos de los retratos que hizo por dinero pero cuando vi su museo le perdone todo, hasta mis propias e íntimas decepciones, pues no es nada fácil ser la esposa de un hombre genial [1340]

[1337] Cardona Peña, Alfredo, *El monstruo en su laberinto*, Editorial Diana, Mexico 1980, pp. 38-39.
[1338] Schmilchuk, Graciela, "El público del muralismo como creador de significados", *Signos, El arte y la investigación*, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Dirección de Investigación y Documentación de las Artes, Mexico 1988, p. 30.
[1339] Suárez, Luis, *Confesiones de Diego Rivera*, Ediciones Era, Mexico 1962, p. 16.
[1340] Beloff, Angelina, *Memorias*, Textos de Humanidades, UNAM, SEP, Mexico 1986, p. 86.

CHAPTER VI. LATER PHASES OF *MEXICAN MURAL MOVEMENT* AND THE META-MYTH OF MEXICANIDAD

For more than 50 years, from the beginning of muralism in Mexico in 1921 until the death of Siqueiros in 1974, Mexican mural painting was one of the most successful artistic movements in the entire Americas. Admired and appreciated in Mexico and abroad, it influenced artistic movements in other Latin American countries as well as in the United States and Europe.

The cultural nationalism in the Mexico of the 1920s had seen imperialism as the main cause of the country's stagnation. In Vasconcelos's eyes, the United States represented an immediate danger, and Vasconcelos saw an urgent need for his cultural project, which would give Mexicans the moral strength to resist that danger. The project would erect cultural barriers against infiltration and reinvent the whole cultural heritage, rescuing the past and building a new program at all levels. Mexico needed to recover lost time and to overcome the traumas of the Conquest and of the humiliating defeat in the war with the United States; the nation had to be modernized spiritually and culturally. In other words, it was necessary to create a myth. Muralism was one of the building blocks for this nationalist myth.

After Vasconcelos's resignation, the governments that followed saw muralism as an opportunity for external and internal propaganda. At this time, one painter dominated mural production in Mexico: Diego Rivera. It was only during the government of General Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-1940, that the production of murals became more broadly based with the advent of new painters and a new ideological content in the works, largely motivated by the antifascist struggle that escalated in that period.

During the 1930s, muralism consolidated as a fully recognized movement, and museums became interested in the murals. Several stimuli encouraged the production of murals: the Cultural Missions, the creation of the *Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios*, League of Writers and Revolutionary Artists (LEAR), and the constitution of the *Alianza de Trabajadores de las Artes Plásticas*, the Alliance of Workers of the Plastic Arts. These progressive organizations played an important role, and they were fully supported by Cárdenas. During this period, new educational policies emphasized the needs of the indigenous peoples and special programs for indigenous education were created. In 1936, President Lázaro Cárdenas created the *Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas*, the Autonomous Department of Indigenous Affairs, an institution for the protection of the domestic ethnic groups. The following year, the Secretary of Public Education created the *Departamento de Educación Indígena* (the Department of Indigenous Education), which furthered the expansion of centers of indigenous education.

The Secretariat of Public Education encouraged the creation of didactic paintings in schools, where the "civic conscience" of the children was to be formed by instructing them in the outlines of native history. The Department of the Federal District sponsored an ambitious project to paint murals, illustrating what the Revolution had achieved for the citizens, at local market squares.

The institutional use of muralism increased. Several institutions tried to take advantage of the prestige that muralism enjoyed. Managers ordered murals for banks and hotels; however, they used only what suited their interests, often omitting the aspects of the *Revolutionary* struggle that some murals depicted. Hotel managers tried to use murals to attract tourism and to convince tourists that Mexico was a civilized and progressive country.

In the early 1930s, Siqueiros outlined his theses against what he termed *Mexican Curious,* or commercial folklorism. The terms of this anti-imperialist aesthetic reflected his discussions with the Soviet film director Eisenstein and the North American poet Hart Crane, with whom he cultivated an intense friendship. Siqueiros, together with Pablo O'Higgins, Leopoldo Méndez, and Juan de la Cabada, founded the *Lucha Intelectual Proletaria* (Proletarian Intellectual Fight). Between January 25 and February 18, 1932, in the Spanish Casino in Mexico City, Siqueiros developed his theses against the *Mexican Curious*. Raquel Tibol describes Siqueiros's standpoint: "After pointing out the positive aspects of popular art: the documentation of tradition and beauty carried out by professional artists, he showed that, in its character as a degraded

cultural manifestation, in its *pintoresquismo*, the biggest danger that the Mexican pictorial movement faced was *Mexican Curious."*

> *Después de señalar lo positivo del arte popular: tradición, belleza, documento para el artista profesional; demostró que por su carácter de manifestación cultural degradada desembocaba, por el camino del pintoresquismo, en el mayor peligro que tenía ante sí el movimciento pictórico Mexicano: el Mexican Curious. Hace notar que su desarrollo paralelo al turismo no se puede tomar sino como un efecto de la penetración imperialista. Recrimina a los pintores y escultores que se someten a esa corriente desvirtuando los más profundos valores nacionales. Pide, invocando la gran herencia artística, que los artistas se rebelen contra esa tendencia perniciosa sin caer por ello en el arqueologismo ni en un nacionalismo cerrado, y señala por último que el deber de los artistas Mexicanos es vencer localismos y aportar a la estética universal los valores plásticos que tienen a la mano. Aquel discurso en el Casino Español fue la primera batalla de una contienda que todavía no ha terminado.* [1341]

In the magazine *New Masses* (May 29, 1934), Siqueiros published the article "Rivera's Counter-Revolutionary Road".

Raquel Tibol says: "In an analysis provoked by a number of immediate political factors, Siqueiros confronted his hypothesis for a painting of agitation and subversive propaganda with Rivera's works. After dismissing him as snobbish, folklorist, indigenist, archeologist, and chauvinist, he reproached him for letting circumstantial and regional aspects prevail over class conflicts."

> *En un análisis violentado por una carga de factores políticos inmediatos, Siqueiros confrontó su hipótesis para una pintura de agitación y propaganda subversiva con las realizaciones de Rivera. Después de tacharlo de snob, folklorista, indigenista, arqueologista, chauvinista, le recriminaba haber hecho prevalecer lo circunstancial y regional por sobre los conflictos de clase; de haberse sometido al gobierno-patrón del trabajo mural; de haber idealizado al indio y al campesino; de no haber fundamentado una tecnología ni un método apropiados para un arte revolucionario; de no haber tenido inventiva para revolucionar la técnica; de prestarse como pintor al flujo y reflujo de la demagogia oficial; de no haber comprendido que la pintura mural llevaba de cualquier manera a un peligroso oportunismo pues la auténtica pintura mural revolucionaria pertenecía a la sociedad del próximo futuro; que sus pinturas en México sólo contenían asuntos generales, símbolos abstractos, lecciones seudoMarxistas, discursos académicos en lugar de lemas para una acción inmediata; que siendo tan afecto al retrato como documento histórico y político evitaba poner los rostros de los imperialistas de hoy y de sus víctimas latinoamericanas contemporáneas; que era valiente con los muertos y cobarde con los vivos.* [1342]

And Siqueiros' final sentence: "The Mexican muralist movement is a utopian movement on the road toward Revolutionary painting. From its tremendous and frequently repeated errors we can learn some useful lessons. It has already qualified us to start the international team of Revolutionary painters."

> *"El movimiento muralista Mexicano es un movimiento utópico en el camino hacia la pintura revolucionaria. De sus errores tremendos y frecuentemente repetidos podemos sacar algunas lecciones útiles. Él ya nos ha capacitado para poner en marcha el equipo internacional de pintores revolucionarios".* [1343]

[1341] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 33.
[1342] Ibid, pp. 67-68.
[1343] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, pp. 67-68.

Siqueiros's accusations continued in 1935 in a much more visible and dramatic way. The confrontation developed in September at the Palacio of Fine Arts. An organization of American educators were holding a congress, and they invited Siqueiros to speak on Mexican art on August 28. The previous night Diego Rivera had expounded on "The arts and their Revolutionary role in the culture". In his speech, Siqueiros severely criticized Rivera. In the middle of the conference, Rivera made a spectacular entrance, brandishing a pistol and demanding the opportunity to respond and to defend. Reinforcing the myths about Rivera, Hayden Herrera, among others, reported the scene. Herrera writes that Rivera frequently used his pistol to establish a psychological balance with Frida Kahlo, brandishing it to defend not only his masculine pride but also his political ego. [1344]

Emanuel Eisenberg, who attended all the meetings, comments:

> *México is probably the only country in the world where a controversial meeting of two painters, in much less than a day's notice, could be calculated to attract a thousand people. In an overwhelmingly illiterate country pictures perform the most immediate communication in the arts, and the tradition carries through to the intellectual world.* [1345]

The discussion about muralism in 1935 polarized the artists around Rivera and Siqueiros. At the end of several public discussions, they reached an agreement that contained nine points. The agreement contained a joint criticism of the first phase of muralism; they agreed that "Mexican muralist painting, due to the faulty or non-existent ideological and political preparation of the painters, had in some cases served more the demagogic interests of the government of Mexico than the interests of the workers' class and peasants."

> *La pintura muralista Mexicana, debido a la poca y defectuosa preparación ideológica-política de los pintores, en algunos casos sirvió más a los intereses demagógicos del gobierno de México que a los intereses de clase de los obreros y campesinos.* [1346]

That agreement, according to Raquel Tibol, was only for the sake of appearances: "Rivera and Siqueiros reached an apparent agreement of nine points that both signed in front of witnesses; for appearance only, because immediately Rivera circulated an offensive-defensive pamphlet which denounced the political reasons of the polemic, invalidating it and describing it simply as a tactical action."

> *Rivera y Siqueiros llegaron a un aparente acuerdo de nueve puntos, que ambos suscribieron ante testigos; aparente, porque de inmediato Rivera hizo circular un folleto ofensivo-defensivo en el que denunciaba las razones políticas de la polémica, la invalidaba calificándola de simple acción táctica faccionaria. Pero la sinceridad o la simulación fueron en este caso factores secundarios, pues el acuerdo era, concretamente, la primera autocrítica colectiva que llevaron a cabo los fundadores del movimiento plástico Mexicano. Conjuntamente reconocieron la necesidad de impulsar un nuevo movimiento de mayor utilidad para la masa obrera y campesina que el embrión inicial minado por el individualismo, por los intereses demagógicos del gobierno, por la desorganización y por el equivocado criterio de que la pintura mural era arte revolucionario por antonomasia. La falta de un local apropiado truncó la controversia. Enfermedades reales o imaginarias de*

[1344] Herrera, Hayden, *Frida Kahlo: En Konstnärs liv*, Bokförkaget Forum, Juva 1993, pp. 192-193. Title of the original American edition: *Frida. A Biography of Frida Kahlo*, Harper & Row Publishers Inc, New York 1983.

[1345] Eisenberg, Emanuel, *New Masses*, December 10, 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 70.

[1346] Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, "El nacionalismo en la plástica durante el cardenismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, pp. 240-241.

> *los polemistas la pospusieron indefinidamente. De nada valió que la Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (que respaldaba a Siqueiros) publicara carteles instando a la continuación A principios de noviembre Siqueiros regresaba a Nueva York donde se le ofrecía la posibilidad de dirigir un taller experimental. Ni él ni Rivera modificaron sus posiciones estéticas a causa de la controversia.* [1347]

During the 1930s, Siqueiros's activities appeared very agitated. He traveled, held conferences, and painted murals. At the beginning of 1937, he joined the people's army in the Spanish Civil War. He became an assistant to General Lister and to Commandante Modesto; he commanded the 82nd Brigade, the 45th Mixed Brigades, and lastly the 29th Division as a lieutenant colonel.

Siqueiros's participation in the Civil War in Spain and his military role ("They called me the *Coronelazo*") have assumed mythological proportions. His achievements in the Spanish Civil War led Cárdenas to present him with a revolver. Some have claimed that he attempted to kill Trotsky with this very revolver. [1348]

According to Lawrence Hurlburt "Siqueiros' art, Revolution and gangsterism were inseparable":

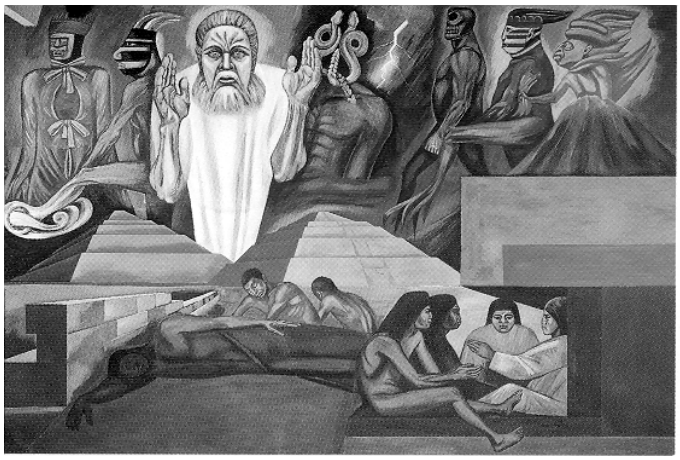
> *The man in charge of this attack was to be David Alfaro Siqueiros, Rivera's former friend, the celebrated painter, Communist, and leader of Mexican miners. The year before he had returned from Spain, where he commanded several brigades during the Civil War – he withdrew from fighting at the head of only two or three score survivors. That so eminent and even heroic an artist should have agreed or volunteered to become Trotsky's murderer speaks volumes about the morals of Stalinism in these years [...] Siqueiros' art, Revolution and gangsterism were inseparable – he had in himself much of the Latin American buccaneer. In Spain he had entered into a close connection with the G.P.U. and, some say, with the Mercader family. Yet, despite the zealous service he had rendered, the Communist Party had censured him for a misdemeanor in his handling of party funds. He was hurt and eager to regain favor by a conspicuous and hazardous act of devotion. He worked out the plan of an armed raid on Trotsky's house and for its execution he called on men who had fought under him in Spain, and on Mexican miners.* [1349]

[1347] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, pp. 69-70.

[1348] According to Siqueiros, it was a gun with cheek of gold that General Cárdenas had given him during the quick trip that Siqueiros made from Spain to Mexico on November, 20 1937 to speak with Cárdenas. See Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, p. 353.

[1349] Hurlburt, Laurence, "David Alfaro Siqueiros' Portrait of the Bourgeoisie", Artforum, February 1977, 15:6, pp. 43-44. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, p. 28.

Figure 103. José Clemente rozco: *The arrival of Quetzalcóatl*. Dartmouth College, United States, 1932.



The mythological program of muralism, which Vasconcelos had begun and Rivera had developed, combined pre-Hispanic and *Revolutionary* elements, a formula used by Rivera with success. Consequently, the images of Zapata and Quetzalcóatl co-existed in several murals. However, it took many more years before Pancho Villa's image was accepted on public walls. José Clemente Orozco continued to paint Villa as a terrifying highwayman, as shown in the murals at Dartmouth College in the United States (1932). Orozco, who had a very personal vision of the world, captured the myth of Quetzalcóatl in the panels of the mural that corresponded to the arrival and the departure of the mythological being, representing him as the priest-ruler, a white and bearded man, whose appearance inspires fear. (Figure **103**) shows *The arrival of Quetzalcóatl* and in **(Figure 104**) we can see *The departure of Quetzalcóatl*.



Figure 104. José Clemente rozco: *The departure of Quetzalcóatl*. Dartmouth College, United States, 1932. [1350]

When the *Revolutionary* government became institutionalized, it favored artistic expression in tune with the times, and the nationalist message of muralism reached a great climax. As of 1940, there was a cultural stabilization based on industrialism and international integration. The *vasconcelist* publication *El Maestro* was replaced by a new publication *El Maestro Rural*, and the populist pedagogical muralism replaced the "cosmic" utopias of Vasconcelos's allegories.

> *La SEP cardenista lanzó panfletos socialistas en vez de clásicos: El Maestro Rural sustituyó a El Maestro, y la pedagogía populista del muralismo a la utopía "cósmica" de las alegorías de Vasconcelos* [1351]

For many, Mexican history and mythology, as well as racial subjects, continued to be the scene for the projection of ideologies. The problem of the conquest and the subject of national identification were still unsolved. Heroes from the past were to serve as examples for the future, but that mythical past and its heroes had been relentlessly idealized. Cárdenas and his team were convinced that the native was the living symbol

[1350] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 103 and p. 104.
[1351] Blanco, José Joaquín, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos: Una evocación crítica*, Vida y Pensamiento de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1993, p. 127.

of *Revolutionary* Mexico; as proof of his *indigenismo*, he named his son Cauathémoc. The painter Frida Kahlo wrote a letter to Dr. Leo Eloesser dated March 15, 1941 and signed it with "La Malinche. *Frida*". [1352]

In 1940 the *Departamiento de Asuntos Indígenas* was set up to serve and protect Indian interests. The Department's first director was Luiz Chávez Orozco. He believed that the Indians have the right to develop their own cultural personality and that their languages and traditions should be protected and respected. The study of Indian culture, past and present, was encouraged and, to this end, the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* was founded. In 1940, Mexico hosted the congress that established the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano*, which was run by Manuel Gamio until his death. In 1947, the *Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas* was replaced by the *Dirección General de Asuntos Indígenas*, which was part of the Secretariat of Public Education. In 1948, President Alemán founded the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*.

Siqueiros had been forced to abandon Mexico after the attempted murder of Trotsky. According to Hayden Herrera:

> *On May 20, 1940, Trotsky's bedroom was machine-gunned by a group of Stalinists that included the painter David Alfaro Siqueiros. The assassination attempt failed. Trotsky and Natalia rolled behind their bed to escape the bullets [...] They put Siqueiros in jail but Cárdenas was his "cuate." Siqueiros was released less than a year later on condition that he leave the country. He went to Chile to paint murals.* [1353]

Figure 105. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *Cuauhtémoc against the Myth*, 1944. [1354]



In the Library of the School of Mexico in Chile, Siqueiros painted *Death to the invader* (1941), in which he treated the Mexican people's liberation struggles from Cuauhtémoc until Cárdenas. The mural showed Cárdenas, Juárez, Hidalgo, Morelos, Zapata, and others and summarized the basic facts and concepts of these struggles.

In 1943, Siqueiros painted *Alegoría de la Igualdad y Confraternidad de las Razas blanca y negra en Cuba* (now destroyed).[1355] When he returned to Mexico at the beginning of 1944, Siqueiros painted *Cuauhtémoc against the Myth* (**Figure 105**) in the hall of a house belonging to one of his relatives at Sonora Street, Num. 9. The mural contrasts the defeatism of Moctezuma with the heroic resistance of Cuauhtémoc. In 1966 the mural was transferred to the recently restored Tecpan of Tlatelolco, D.F. [1356] In its original location, the polychromatic reproduction of the snake's head, copied from the well-known pyramid of Quetzalcóatl in Teotihuacán, went to the foot of the stairway, with the colored crown of

[1352] Quoted in del Conde, Teresa, *Frida Kahlo: La pintora y el mito*, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Monografías de arte, nr. 20, Mexico 1992, p. 124.
[1353] Herrera, Hayden, *A biography of Frida Kahlo*, Harper & Rowe, New York 1983, p. 296. Note: "cuate" is Mexican slang for buddy.
[1354] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 189.
[1355] A sketch of the work is in the Museum of Lund, Sweden.
[1356] Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, Mexico 1972. p. 56.

feathers on the wall. The relationship between the pre-Hispanic god as a cultural symbol and Cuauhtémoc is obvious, although the piece was directly copied from the original. [1357]

According to Armando Torres-Michúa, "The Centaur wounded by a dart rushes past Cuauhtémoc, rears up and shows a cross-sword, an allusion to the two conquests, the military and the religious. The indigenous king's victorious attitude contrasts with his predecessor Moctezuma's defeatism, who seems to implore, on a pyramid, for celestial help. It is a singular form of interpreting the confrontation between the Western and the indigenous civilization and of portraying the specific synthesis in which *Mexicanidad* originated. The *indigenismo* of Siqueiros is historical and not simply anecdotal."

> *Herido el Centauro por un dardo lanzado por Cuauhtémoc, se encabrita y muestra una cruz-espada, alusión a las dos conquistas, la militar y la religiosa. La actitud triunfal del rey indígena contrasta con el derrotismo de su antecesor Moctezuma, quien parece implorar, sobre una pirámide, la ayuda celestial. Singular forma de interpretar la confrontación de las civilizaciones occidental e indígena y de apuntar la síntesis específica donde se originó la Mexicanidad. El indigenismo de Siqueiros es histórico y no simplemente anecdótico.* [1358]

Shifra Goldman says, "In *Cuauhtémoc against the myth*, a mural of 1944, Siqueiros used the Aztec emperor as a symbol for the possibility of fighting against forces that seem overwhelming."

> *En Cuauhtémoc contra el mito, mural de 1944, Siqueiros hizo uso del emperador Azteca como símbolo de la posibilidad de luchar en contra de las fuerzas que parecían avasalladoras.* [1359]

According to Raquel Tibol: "For Siqueiros, Cuauhtémoc was not – as Octavio Paz describes him – 'the young god that dies fighting to give life', a Promethean vision; but instead the symbolic hero of the fight against the invaders, the rulers; an anti-colonial statement, a realistic allegory."

> *Para Siqueiros, Cuauhtémoc no era − como apuntara Octavio Paz − "el dios joven que muere peleando para dar vida", visión prometeica; sino el héroe simbólico de las luchas contra los invasores, los dominadores; afirmación anticolonial, alegoría realista.* [1360]

Siqueiros arrived in Havana in 1943 after traveling through Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Panama on a campaign for "an American art dedicated to the victory of democracy". In Havana, he painted two murals and the portraits of José Martí and Abraham Lincoln. He gave several lectures that were enthusiastically received. However, the US government refused to let him visit the United States.

In 1945, Siqueiros published *No hay más ruta que la nuestra* (There Is No Other Road Than Ours), a collection of ten of his articles on various art topics. The article that gave the collection its title defined his purpose: to aspire to no other form of expression except muralism.

The contradictions in the framework of mural production were huge. The government used muralism as a magnificent propaganda instrument, especially internationally, and the artists complied; at the same time, new promoters such as banks and private foundations appeared, taking advantage of the myth which had

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[1357] See **Figure 17**, p. 77.
[1358] Torres-Michúa, Armando, *La pintura contemporánea (1900-1950)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, Departamento de Humanidades, Material de lectura, 8, Serie Las artes en México, Mexico, n.d., pp. 27-28.
[1359] Goldman, Shifra M., *Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, p. 12.
[1360] Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 107.

been created and the prestige of its main characters, who were supposedly Revolutionaries in their attitudes and in their rhetoric. According to Carlos Monsiváis: "The function of the 'culture of the Mexican Revolution' has been, most of the time, to legitimize the régime in power by contributing a flexible and adaptive atmosphere to diverse political circumstances, able to go from the monolithic watchword, 'there is no other road than ours' to the simultaneous patronage of opposed currents" and "in the basic idea, Mexico belongs unconditionally to the western culture, to whose banquet it arrives late but with enthusiasm."

> *La función de la "cultura de la Revolución Mexicana" ha sido, las más de las veces, ir legitimando al régimen en turno aportando una atmósfera flexible y adaptable a las diversas circunstancias políticas, capaz de ir de la consigna monolítica "No hay más ruta que la nuestra" al mecenazgo simultáneo de corrientes opuestas. Esta labor se mueve en el contraste: lo que el Estado suele proclamar, sin mayores ánimos de ser creído (el nacionalismo que debe cohesionar a una colectividad) se ha enfrentado, de modo débil y aislado, a la proliferación victoriosa de la cultura neocolonial [...] y a las dificultades de ubicar críticamente lo que significa la alta cultura, sus formas expresivas y su noción fundadora: en lo básico, México pertenece incondicionalmente a la cultura occidental, a cuyo banquete se llega tarde pero con entusiasmo. El uso político de esta "cultura de la Revolución Mexicana" ha invalidado cualquier examen crítico de la tradición (por lo contrario, ha estimado que tradición es acumulación acrítica) y ha conducido al manejo superficial e incrédulo de las prácticas nacionalistas.* [1361]

For António Rodrigues, "the title of Siqueiros's book, *There Is No Other Road Than Ours,* is, without doubt, very unfortunate. It not only led to many attacks on Siqueiros, but also on the Mexican School of Painting, which was apparently guided by that sectarian sentence."

> *El título del libro de Siqueiros − No hay más ruta que la nuestra − es, sin duda, poco feliz. Dio origen a muchos ataques no sólo contra Siqueiros, sino también contra la Escuela Mexicana de Pintura, que parecía guiarse por aquella sectaria sentencia* [1362]

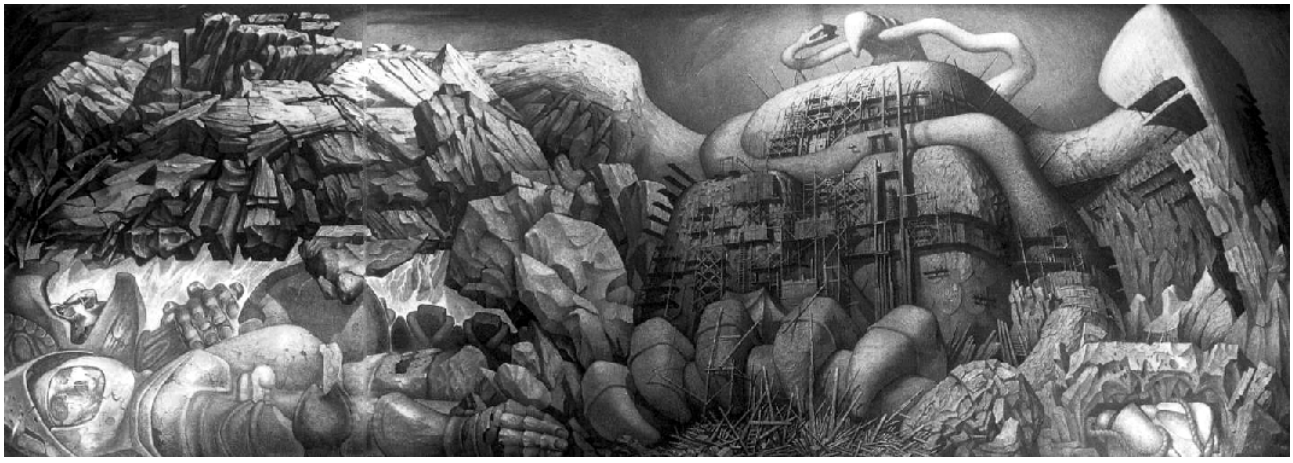


Figure 106. Jorge Gonzáles Camarena: *Mexico*, mural in the lobby of the building of the *Seguro Social* (Public Health), Mexico 1950.

During the 1950s, there was another boom in mural production. The tendencies opposed to art with a socio-political content became stronger, and the links to the art market in the United States were consolidated and imposed other aesthetic-political orientations. The artistic crisis became palpable in the rebelliousness of the

[1361] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudos Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, pp. 1379-1380.
[1362] Rodríguez, Antonio, "Siqueiros, teórico e innovador". In de Micheli, Mario, *Siqueiros*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1985, p. 29.

new generation of painters, who protested against the asphyxiating dogmatism of the document published by Siqueiros and the dogmatic principles of the *Mexican School*. (Figure **106**) shows Jorge González Camarena's *Mexico*, mural in the lobby of the building of the Seguro Social (Public Health), Mexico 1950. [1363]

Figure 107. José Luis Cuevas: autoportrait.



In 1956, José Luis Cuevas published his personal manifesto, *La Cortina de Nopal*, in *México en la Cultura*, the cultural supplement of *Novedades.* The article sparked a huge argument in Mexico between those who defended institutionalized muralism and those who wanted to broaden the artistic landscape. [1364]

Cuevas says: "The alliance of the leaders of the mural movement with the state cultural projects was remarkable". Cuevas denounces the political opportunism of Siqueiros as much as that of Rivera, "since it is inexplicable how, showing off a leftist ideology, they identified themselves humbly with the post-Cardenist governments. And when they expressed dissent it was simply an element of blackmail and of pressure (knowing the importance attached to their criticism) in order to get new mural projects":

> *Fue notable la alianza de las cabecillas de la corriente mural con los proyectos culturales estatales [...] el gran oportunismo político en que cayeron tanto Siqueiros como el propio Diego Rivera, ya que resulta inexplicable cómo, presumiendo de una ideología izquierdista, se identificaran dócilmente con los gobiernos poscardenistas. Y cuando mostraban su inconformidad era solo un elemento de chantaje y de presión (conscientes del peso de su crítica) para conseguir nuevos encargos murales.* [1365]

In the *Nopal curtain*, Cuevas inveighs against nationalism, which he accuses of being retrograde and provincial. Cuevas refers to "the Mexican peculiarity that I hate most of all [...] Against that thick-soled, limited Mexico, provincially nationalist, reduced in its reach, fearful of what's foreign because it is insecure of itself, against that Mexico I pronounce myself":

> […] *la peculiaridad Mexicana que más detesto [...] Contra ese México ramplón, limitado, provincianamente nacionalista, reducido en su alcance, temeroso de lo extranjero por inseguro de sí mismo, contra ese México me pronuncio.* [1366]

In a wider context, these attacks on behalf of freedom of speech and Cuevas's anti-nationalism were very much to his own personal advantage. He garnered unprecedented publicity abroad, and in Mexico many viewed Cuevas's reaction as a sign of *his* opportunism. It seems that Cuevas attacked the *Mexican School* so violently, because it was the only serious target and because it brought him personal fame.[1367]

For Shifra Goldman, "Although his international career was based on attacking the Mexican School, attacks which were continued for many years, the ambitions cherished by Cuevas were to paint murals."

[1363] Sketch in ADK of Lund, Sweden. Retrieved 2003-09-14 from http://www.cafesusanet.com/sites/pintores/gonzalez/mexico.html

[1364] It was reissued later with the title "The Cactus Curtain."

[1365] Interviews that José Luis Cuevas granted Rita Eder during the months of September and October 1985. Eder, Rita, "Las artes visuales en México, de 1950 a 1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 339.

[1366] Cuevas, José Luis, *Cuevario*, Ed. Grijalvo, Mexico 1973, p. 21.

[1367] According to António Rodríguez, in my interview with him in 1991, Cuevas simply wanted to create space to assert himself, more than anything else.

> *[...] la participación de Cuevas en el Muralismo Mexicano para completar nuestra visión de su compleja y controvertida personalidad. A pesar de que su carrera internacional se elevó sobre una plataforma de ataque a la Escuela Mexicana y prosiguió sin mengua durante muchos años las ambiciones acariciadas por Cuevas consistían en llegar a pintar murales.* [1368]

José Luis Cuevas headed the rebellion, attacking the ultra-nationalism that muralism and the *Mexican School* symbolized. Cuevas and his followers opposed the oppressive restrictions of living inside a socio-political order that seemed to approve of an "official art". The select minority of old-guard muralists and artists dedicated to art with social ends were the only ones who had access to space in non-commercial galleries, museums, exhibitions, responsibilities, and patronage.

Cuevas explains, "I was conceptually radical as I felt that art had landed in a dead end; the painters kept repeating old formulas that caused asphyxia among the young artists. Now I can make a more serene analysis of muralism and point out its enormous virtues and merits; but at that time it was necessary to overthrow the dictator and to renew Mexican painting."

> *Fui radical en los conceptos ya que consideré que el arte había caído en un callejón sin salida, que los pintores de entonces seguían repitiendo viejas fórmulas, que provocaban la asfixia entre los artistas jóvenes. En la actualidad ya puedo hacer un análisis más sereno del muralismo y señalar sus enormes virtudes y méritos; pero en aquel entonces se trataba de derrocar al dictador y renovar la pintura Mexicana.* [1369]

With Alberto Gironella, Manuel Felguérez, Vicente Rojo, Lilia Carrillo, Gilberto Navarro and others, José Luis Cuevas was a member of the so-called "Generation of the Rupture" that influenced the Mexican plastic arts during the 1950s. "The rupture" was the term that Octavio Paz coined to signify the rejection of the official muralist movement on the part of a group of his contemporaries, including Carlos Mérida and Rufino Tamayo, who had gained recognition in the United States. Tamayo had been one of the first who refused to follow the road traced by the founders of the Mexican modern painting, disappointed with what he considered to be empty rhetoric. The difference between Tamayo and other painters of the *Mexican School* was that, in contrast to Rivera, Siqueiros, and even Orozco, he claimed to be a non-political painter, stating that he was unwilling to play the game of nationalism and folklorism and proclaiming his break with that trend. [1370]

The dissident group needed a market and new means to spread their ideas and sell their works, since the existent ones were monopolized by the monolithic current of official art. Some accused Cuevas of parricide, to which he answered: "In a way, yes. Yes, I have always felt an aversion to dictatorial attitudes, and David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera were still alive when I began, true? They represented in a way the father tyrant that ordered the youths to follow the route that they had traced somehow; they were grouchy and overbearing parents, and I opposed that authority."

[1368] *Goldman, Shifra M., Pintura Mexicana contemporánea en tiempos de cambio*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Editorial Domés, Mexico 1989, p. 175.

[1369] José Luis Cuevas. Quoted in Eder, Rita, "Las artes visuales en México, de 1950 a 1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 349.

[1370] Despite Tamayo's claims, the temptation was too big, and he was often entangled in contradictions, painting themes that were fashionable at the time. For example: Monument to Juárez, 1932; Homage to Zapata, Call of the Revolution, 1935, Revolution, 1938; Francisco I. Madero, 1948; Homage to the Indian race, 1952; Birth of our nationality, 1952; Today Mexico, 1953; The day and the night, [pyramids of Teotihuacán], 1954; America, 1955-1956, Woman of the Tropics 1959 Duality [Quetzalcóatl and the god jaguar], 1964; Carnival, 1967; The Mexican and his world, 1967; Portrait of José María Morelos y Pavón, 1984. The Homage to Zapata [1935] is probably the painter's best work inside this thematic. Tamayo represents the Revolutionary as a worthy and respectable man.

De alguna manera sí. Sí, yo siempre he sentido aversión ante las actitudes dictatoriales, y David Alfaro Siqueiros y Diego Rivera que aún vivían cuando yo me inicio, ¿verdad?, ellos representaban de alguna manera al padre déspota que ordenaba a los jóvenes que siguieran la ruta que ellos habían trazado; eran padres regañones y despóticos, y frente a esa autoridad yo me opongo. Y coincide también con un rompimiento de la autoridad paterna. Así como rompo con David Alfaro Siqueiros y Diego Rivera así también decido yo vivir fuera de la casa y vivir fuera de la autoridad de mi padre, a quien considero yo una especie de minidictador. Era un hombre violento, había sido un boxeador que detestaba el arte y toda manifestación cultural. Y yo me rebelo contra él, o sea es un fenómeno de rebelión frente a la imposición de los mayores. [1371]

But the contradiction between the myth created by institutionalized muralism and the social reality of those whom muralism tried to represent was huge. In the words of Octavio Paz: "In this respect, I remember as a child watching Mexicans who laughed in front of the murals of Diego. The so-called message communicated in the language of that mural was a myth that only the painters themselves believed in."

Al respecto, guardo entre mis recuerdos de infancia el haber contemplado a gente del pueblo de México que se reía frente a los murales de Diego. Por ello el tan mencionado mensaje que comunicaba el discurso mural era un mito que solo lo creían los propios pintores. De ahí que yo piense que el arte es por esencia elitista, y de este determinismo aún no nos hemos podido liberar; desde luego que la intención del artista es mucho más generosa que los resultados reales que logra con su obra, ya que el creador intenta siempre llegar a un público mayoritario, pero desgraciadamente en arte aún no se cumple con este objetivo, pues sólo un público minoritario sensible, que no necesariamente es el comprador, es el que entiende el significado de la obra plástica. [1372]

In the 1950s, muralism in Mexico had reached a high level of development, and modern research and technology provided new materials such as artificial resins and paints. Muralism was a public art with a didactic, testimonial, and exemplary character. During this decade, many murals were painted on the theme of the Conquest and on similar mythological and historical themes. Some of the sketches in the Museum of Sketches in Lund are from this epoch.

The problem of the Indian as "flesh and blood" had not attracted the attention of two of the main characters of the muralist movement, namely Orozco and Rivera. In the case of Rivera he preferred to paint utopian idealizations. Orozco is above all interested in the dramas of the human existence, not particularly the indigenous problem as a special problem. For Siqueiros, the living Indian symbolized the infinite march of the hungry and the needy who can only beg for help.

The only figure out of Mexico's Indian past that Siqueiros celebrated was Cuauhtémoc, and he did so without any attempt at historical truth. In 1951, Siqueiros painted the *Torture of Cuauhtémoc* (**Figure 108**), and *Cuauhtémoc's Rebirth* (**Figure 109**) in the Palacio de Bellas Artes. [1373]

[1371] Cuevas, Jose Luis, *La Jornada Semanal*, Nueva época, No. 89, February 24 1991, pp. 36-37.
[1372] Cuevas, Jose Luis, Quoted in Eder, Rita, "Las artes visuales en México, de 1950 a 1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, pp. 352-353.
[1373] Pyroxaline on masonite. Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 190 and p. 192.

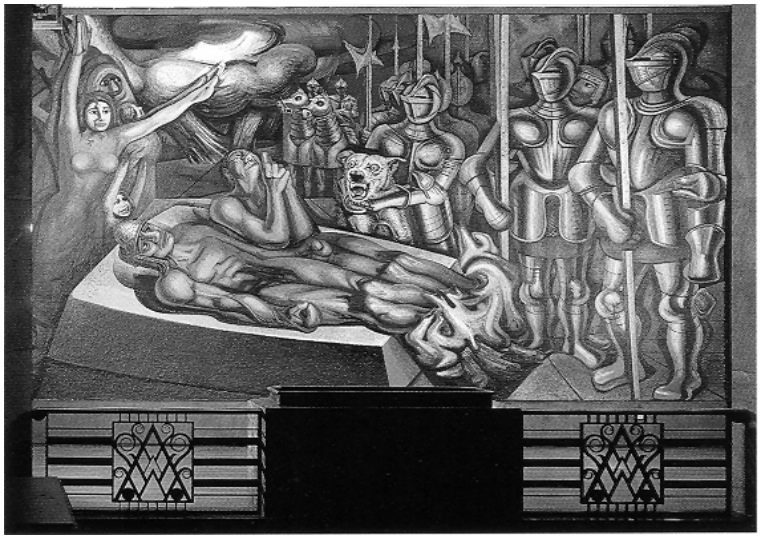


Figure 108. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *Torture of Cuauhtémo*c, 1951. [1374]

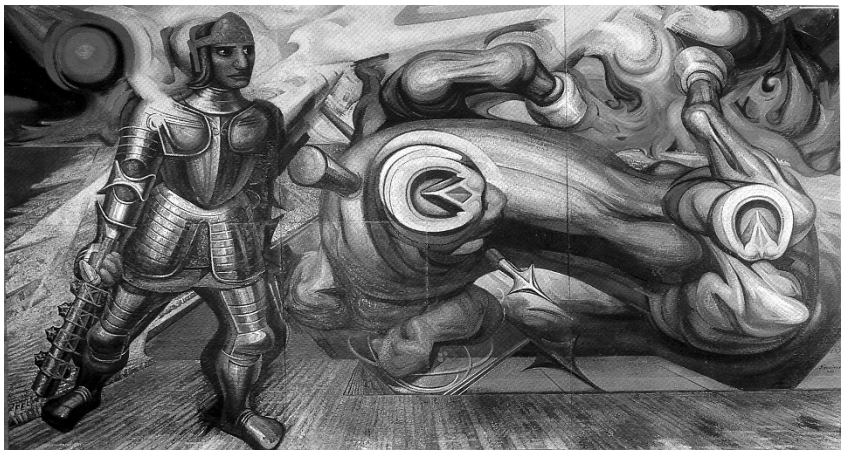


Figure 109. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *Cuauhtémoc's Rebirth*, 1951.

Mario de Micheli comments: "It is no accident that Siqueiros returns to the theme of Cuauhtémoc that year, the old hero who destroys the myth of the invulnerability of Cortés' soldiers."

> *No es casual que Siqueiros ese año vuelva al tema de Cuauhtémoc, el antiguo héroe que destruye el mito de la invulnerabilidad de los soldados de Cortés[...] Siqueiros volvió al tema de Cuauhtémoc en 1951, en dos murales de 40 m2 cada uno, que llevan por título Cuauhtémoc redivivo. Los murales están divididos en dos temas. La tortura y La resurrección. En esta composición el Centauro, que en el mural de Cuauhtémoc contra el mito se levanta amenazante, aparece abatido, trastornado por el espasmo de la agonía, mientras que Cuauhtémoc se ha puesto la coraza del invasor, simbolizando con esto que es necesario apoderarse de la técnica del enemigo para usarla contra el enemigo mismo.* [1375]

Justino Fernández says:

[1374] According to Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, Introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 181. According to Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico 1972, p. 56, the mural is from 1950.
[1375] de Micheli, Mario, *Siqueiros*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1985, pp. 61-64.

"Siqueiros is the only Mexican painter of our time who has given stature to the historical figure of Cuauhtémoc." [1376]

In Siqueiros, the true agent of history is the worker, whom he represents as such in the mural *Por una Seguridad completa para todos los Mexicanos*, in the *Hospital de la Raza*, 1952-1954. In 1955 Siqueiros reaffirmed the position he had elaborated as early as 1921, declaring his opposition to the folkloric and archaeological art with which Rivera is usually identified:

It has been a fashion to deplore the folkloric, the decorative, the lovely, and the opulent in recent Mexican painting. Beauty is a word for the moment out of fashion. "I say we have had enough of pretty pictures of grinning peons in traditional Tehuana dress," Siqueiros rudely told the press in his last attack on Rivera less than two years before Diego's death. "I say, to hell with ox carts – let's see more tractors and bulldozers. Mexican art is suffering from primitivism and archaeologism." [1377]

During the fifties Siqueiros continued his efforts to reclaim the historical past and its most prominent characters, giving to that past and to those characters a social dimension and a comprehensible symbolism for all the Mexicans (something which Rivera did not; for him that past and its characters was little more than folklore). Many historical and mythological characters were rediscovered by the plastic artists in this period. Among them is the character of Father Hidalgo, the most frequently represented figure after Cuauhtémoc. Other artists also adopted pre-Hispanic themes, such as Morado's *Pre-Hispanic Medicine*, CIBA, 1954.

As in Rivera's earlier paintings, the artists disregarded the historical conflicts between their subjects, and reconciled their subjects on the picture surface. This conciliatory tendency did not differentiate between true *Revolutionary* heroes and those who cannot be considered as heroes, as in the painting *Revolution and Constitution of 1917* by Jorge González Camarena, painted in the Chamber of Senators (1956). There, indeed, the faces of Zapata, Carranza, Flores Magón, and Madero share the same (physical and ideological) space, which unites them without contradiction. They illustrate thus the conciliatory discourse of the *Mexican Revolution*. Within this tendency many murals depicted Quetzalcóatl, Ehécatl, Tláloc, and feathered snakes, together with Montezuma, Cuauhtémoc, Cortés, and others.

In the mural, *Cuauhtémoc and History* by Alfredo Zalce, all the major historical and mythological characters of Mexico, including Cortés, Malinche, Cuauhtémoc, Quetzalcóatl, and the eagle of the foundation of Tenochtitlán, appear. The title of the mural is, according to the data in the ADK, *La Lucha contra los Conquistadores y la Dominación Española* (The fight against the conquerors and Spanish dominance). The title given by Orlando Suárez is *Los Defensores de la Integridad nacional* (The defenders of national integrity).[1378] The left part of the mural is dominated by the pre-Hispanic world and the Conquest, with Cuauhtémoc to the center, and the right by the post-Hispanic period.

Another artist who painted Zapata was Raúl Anguiano in the mural *El Maíz en la Revolución Mexicana* (The corn in the *Mexican Revolution*). Painted in 1956, it was later destroyed.[1379]
Carlos Mérida also handled the topic of miscegenation in his mural *The Mestizo Race in Guatemala*, 1955-56 (sketch in ADK of Lund, Sweden).

[1376] Fernández is quoted in "Pinacoteca de los genios: David Alfaro Siqueiros", Buenos Aires 1965, n. p. Quoted in Keen, Benjamin, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1971, p. 533.
[1377] New York Times, 11 December, 1955. Quoted in Wolfe, Bertram D., *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1968, p. 431.
[1378] Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, Mexico 1972, p. 312.
[1379] Sketch in the Museum of Sketches, Lund, Sweden.

The 1950s produced a succession of platitudes and every conceivable mythological or historical character found a place in the murals. In reality, the warnings of Siqueiros went unheeded. For Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, "it is interesting to point out, although it is schematic, that the iconography and the symbology of the mural painting, because it is a more or less faithful reflection of the rhetoric and the language used by the theoreticians and politicians of the Revolution, like a very used pack of cards, decanted a language which is known to all but that slowly has worn out. As much in political rhetoric as in the murals, these symbols, that I have pointed out, conformed exactly to the ideals of the stereotyped *Mexican Revolutionary* language. The thousands of kilometers of colored walls in the whole country have big moments but also many very sad examples, especially in those murals made after 1950":

> *Es interesante apuntar, aunque sea de manera esquemática, la iconografía y la simbología de la pintura mural porque es el reflejo más o menos fiel de la retórica y el idioma utilizado por teóricos y políticos de la Revolución, que, como en una baraja muy usada, fueron decantando un lenguaje que nos es común pero que lentamente se ha desgastado. Tanto en la retórica política como en la mural, estos símbolos que he apuntado conformaron con vigor los ideales de nuestro estereotipado lenguaje revolucionario. Los miles de kilómetros de muros pintados en todo el país tienen grandes momentos pero también muy tristes ejemplos que abundan en los que se hicieron, sobre todo, después de 1950.* [1380]

Rita Eder's commentary: "The 50s: endless lengths of wall, trying to tell nonexistent epics, full of ghostly heroes and vanished figures whom the artists represent in a game mirroring the former *Revolutionary* rhetoric, which represented the fusion between history and art."

> *Década de los cincuenta: extensiones de muros sin fin intentan contar epopeyas inexistentes con héroes fantasmales y figuras desdibujadas que el artista plasma en un juego de imitación a la retórica revolucionaria precedente, que significaba la unión entre la historia y el arte.* [1381]

The proclamation of the wealth of the pre-Hispanic world reached an extraordinary climax in the National Museum of Anthropology in 1962. The platitudes and the self-celebration continued. [1382]



Figure 110. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *La marcha de la humanidad*. Polyforum, Mexico City, 1971. Detail. [1383]

[1380] Prampolini, Ida Rodríguez, "Las artes visuales en México, 1910-1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 319.
[1381] Eder, Rita, "Las artes visuales en México, de 1950 a 1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 337.
[1382] For those interested in studying this period there are a large number of sketches in the Museum at Lund.
[1383] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 217.

The climax of the fight between figurative and abstract art occurred in 1966. The disputes between Siqueiros and Cuevas signaled the end of the muralist movement. Most of the artists were now obsessed with observing what happened in New York, Paris, and London.

In a sense, one can say that David Alfaro Siqueiros began the *Mexican Mural Movement* with his *Tres llamamientos*, written in 1921 and published in the American magazine *Life,* and that Siqueiros also closed the movement with his work *La marcha de la humanidad* (**Figure 110**) in the Polyforum, Mexico City, inaugurated in 1971, fifty years after the publication of the *Manifesto*.

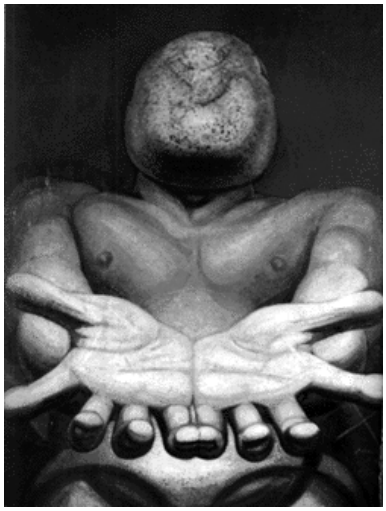


Figure 111. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *La marcha de la humanidad*. Polyforum, Mexico City, 1971. Detail [1384]

For Rita Eder, "This mural, a swan song, concluded the trajectory of the monumental art."

> *Este mural, a semejanza del canto del cisne, concluyó con la trayectoria del arte monumental. Sólo que en esta ocasión el patrocionador de la grandilocuente retórica mural no será más el Estado, sino uno de los integrantes de la floreciente burguesía nacional, que como una suerte de mecenas renacentista, apoyó el proyecto y construyó el espacio adecuado en el Hotel de México para su exhibición terminal.* [1385]

Siqueiros had been detained in jail at Lecumberri between August 9, 1960 and July 13, 1964. It was unlikely that the government would commission paintings from him after his stay in prison, but the Mexican Manuel Suárez used his influence to liberate Siqueiros and commissioned him to carry out *The March of Humanity,* as recounted by von Honts:

> *In summation, Don Manuel Suárez y Suárez had a great deal of influence over many aspects of the Polyforum. He was responsible for the first design of the original building, the changes of the title, and many changes in subject matter on the interior mural "La Marcha de la Humanidad" as well as on the exterior panels. His political influences effected Siqueiros' release from Lecumberri so that this project could commence. It was originally Don Manuel's ambition that both the mural and the still unfinished Hotel de México be the largest in the world; it was also his goal to inaugurate the Polyforum in time for the 1968 Olympics. Siqueiros' rapidly declining health resulted in a portion of the mural remaining in an unfinished state. Both their politics and personalities clashed. Sufficient evidence has been unearthed to prove to the author that falsification of Siqueiros' easel paintings did occur. One must, however, understand that this is within the social and political system in Mexico. It is almost impossible to negotiate in this society, especially when one is short of money, without working within the system. In defense of Don Manuel, it must be said that his impossible goal was to complete the Polyforum, even after no money remained for its completion. He did succeed in this goal. It is this present*

[1384] Retrieved 2003-09-11 from http://www.unam.mx/latinart/sique.gif. Sketche in the Museum at Lund.
[1385] Eder, Rita, "Las artes visuales en méxico, de 1950 a 1985", *México, 75 años de Revolución, IV: Educación, cultura y comunicación 1*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1988, p. 357.

lack of money, however, accentuated by Mexico's present financial crisis, that prevents needed restoration. [1386]

Siqueiros worked on this project from 1965 to 1971. He built a large shop; in homage to the women, he called the shop La Tallera. *The March of Humanity* consists of twelve geometric forms, like dice, that stand out from the architectural body; these forms harbor symbolic images that commemorate various important stages in humanity's historical progress, either religious, mythical, or ritual. In one panel, one sees Hernán Cortés and Malinche, both naked, in the circular pyramid of Quetzalcóatl **(Figure 112**). The external section covers 4600 square feet.



Figure 112. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *Hernán Cortés and Malinche.* Detail of *La marcha de la humanidad.* Polyforum, Mexico City, 1971.

Originally, the topic of this section of the mural was to be *Stop the war in Vietnam*. In 1967, Siqueiros won the Lenin Peace Prize, instituted by the Soviet Union, and he donated the rubles from this prize to the people of Vietnam in solidarity with their liberation struggle.

El primer tema fue "Alto a la Guerra en Vietnam." Hay un Científico [...] estaba una mujer Vietnamita. Por mucho tiempo nosotros estuvimos pensando en ese tema y en eso, pero en un momento dado Suárez modificó la temática y entonces me dijo a mí la primera vez "que buena idea ha tenido usted, Ceniceros" − "¿Cuál idea?" − "Pues la idea de cambiar, con que sea éste, como que Vietnam, que sea H. Cortéz y la Malinche" − "No se me ha ocurrido a mi, a usted se le ocurrió." La siguiente vez me dijo la mismo, la tercer vez lo mismo, y Siqueiros estaba afuera; cuando regresó Siqueiros de su viaje, le dijo "Ceniceros ha tenido una idea, de pintar en este panel el tema de H. Cortés y la Malinche." Siqueiros no le hizo caso, siguió caminando y después Siqueiros dijo "No le hagan caso a Suárez." Fue idea da Suárez y yo después salí en ese tiempo para preparar mis exposiciones, y a mi regreso vi que estaba cambiado [...] yo estuve trabajando meses particularmente en ese, pero después cuando yo me cambié a otro, alguien vino y tapó lo que yo hice entonces. Era muy usual eso, el trabajo de uno lo tapaba otro y el de otro, otro y así. Entonces algunas veces quedaba la experiencia de todos en conjunto y otras veces quedaba la experiencia del último, nada más. [1387]

[1386] von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, pp. 63-64.

[1387] Personal interview with Guillermo Ceniceros, in December 5 1985. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, p. 95.

Figure 113. David Alfaro Siqueiros: *La marcha de la humanidad*. Polyforum, Mexico City, 1971. Image of the Christ. [1388]



According to Guillermo Ceniceros, an assistant and pupil of Siqueiros, Manuel Suárez changed the topic from Vietnam to Cortés and Malinche. Siqueiros was already very old and threatened by cancer; the size of the project was daunting. Suárez wanted the biggest mural in the world, eight thousand square meters.

> *La primera es que la idea inicial del mural era "La Marcha de la Humanidad en América Latina," y era un mural totalmente de carácter político, era un mural de protesta ante el coloniaje [...] Suárez terminó por imponer en ciertos aspectos, este, su personalidad e hizo que Siqueiros fuera cambiando la idea de la temática del mural que inicialmente era otra idea. Entonces, este proyecto se volvió más ambicioso que es "La Marcha de la Humanidad en la Tierra y Hacia el Cosmos." Porque en eso se vino La Conquista del espacio [...] El cambio vino de Don Manuel Suárez, la idea fué de Don Manuel y Siqueiros [...] él era muy político, pero en esa época Siqueiros ya está muy viejo, con la amenaza del cáncer encima y le piden una obra de este tamaño [...] Suárez fue él que quería el mural más grande del mundo, ocho mil metros cuadrados de pintura.* [1389]

Suárez was able to impose his will in other issues as well. Guillermo Ceniceros explains why Siqueiros included a large image of the Christ in the mural **(Figure 113**): "At that time the wife of Moya Palencia, a politician of great importance, asked him to paint especially for her a small painting of Christ. [1390] Siqueiros accepted, but later on she donated it to the Vatican. Because of the publicity in the newspapers, Suárez, who was a skilled opportunist and a very astute man, told Siqueiros: 'If the Vatican has the small painting, I want the big one; I want Christ in the mural,' and he had his way. Suárez already had a tremendous hold on Siqueiros, who was growing sicker and weaker. With great stress and great anguish, knowing that he was dying, he wanted to finish the mural; so he agreed to paint Christ."

> *[...] pero a pesar de que Siqueiros pintó muchos Cristos en toda su vida, él siempre tenía la idea de que para él Cristo era un líder subversivo en su momento. Nunca se prestó para hacerle el juego, sobre todo por el compromiso que tenía con el partido, nunca le hizo el juego al Vaticano. En aquel tiempo la esposa de Moya Palencia, que era un político de gran peso, le pidió que le pintara para ella en especial un pequeño Cristo. Siqueiros aceptó pero posteriormente ella lo donó al Vaticano. De la publicidad que tuvo en los periódicos ese cuadro el Cristo; Suárez, que es un hábil oportunista y un tipo muy astuto, le dijo: "Si el Vaticano tiene el cuadro pequeño yo quiero el grande, yo quiero el Cristo en el Mural" y lo impuso. En ese tiempo Suárez tenía ya una prepotencia tremenda contra Siqueiros, y era la época en que Siqueiros estaba más enfermo, más débil. Con gran*

[1388] Reproduced in Rochfort, Desmond, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros*, Laurence King Publishing, Singapore 1993, p. 214.
[1389] Personal interview with Jorge Flores in October2 1985. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, p. 43.
[1390] A sketch of the Christ is in the Museum of Lund, Sweden.

"stress" y gran angustia de ver terminada su obra, el sabía que se moría y quería ver terminado el mural; entonces aceptó pintar el Cristo [...] [1391]

Raquel Tibol writes: "I believe that the Polyforum is a gigantic expression of *Mexican curious*, that particular deformation of national art caused by the development of tourism, that was combated for years by Siqueiros with arguments and sound reasoning."

Creo que el Polyforum es una gigantada expresión de Mexican curious, ese particular deformación de arte nacional producida por el desarrollo del turismo, la que al fue combatida durante años por Siqueiros con argumentados y justas razones. A las clasificaciones de funcionalista, orgánica y metabólica, habrá que agregar ahora la de arquitectura plastificada puesto que lo orgánico de su función, así como su relación viva con el medio, es la que enseña una decoración, que por desmedida y impositiva pervierte a la arquitectura deshumanizándola, a la vez que convierte la integración de las artes en fenómeno pintoresco y, por lo mismo, monstruoso. Durante décadas trabajó teórica y artísticamente para un espectador dinámico. El Polyforum no podrá sino tener espectadores en movimiento, porque él que se puede quedarse quieto se sentirá aplastado por esa pesada masa de metal coloreado que se dice representa "La Marcha de la Humanidad en la Tierra y Hacia el Cosmos"; aunque en verdad es una caótica y angustiante antología de árboles creados por Siqueiros. [1392]

After the death of David Alfaro Siqueiros, the last of the so-called 'Big Three', muralism as an artistic phenomenon continued until our time. The representatives of the so-called New Muralism, such as Arnold Belkin, repeated to the point of exhaustion the themes and characters used by their predecessors, such as the pre-Hispanic past, the theme of the conquest, and the heroes of the Revolution, as evidenced in Belkin's mural *Discovery and Conquest of the New World* in the Public Library of Popotla, SEP, Mexico 1988-89. The remains of the *Tree of the Sad Night* are also here. This mural shows, without confrontation or conflict, the figures of Cortés and the missionaries, Coatlicue, the contributions of European science, and Prometheus, the new man.

The mystification concerning muralism and the muralists continued. Later, Frida Kahlo, who never painted murals, achieved prominence in this context. Although her life was always linked to Diego Rivera, she achieved independent stature as a feminist martyr and heroine.
Francisco Reyes Palma speaks of her as one of the "Big Four."[1393]

It was only until the 1980's when a woman succeeded in deposing the "Big Four" in regard to reviews and marketing, while at the same time generating the first liminal heroine: Frida Kahlo. High priestess of dualism, she duplicated her corporal image along with her own sexuality, officiant of her own condition as a woman, she reiterated her image in an insatiable interplay of mirrored pain. Even her rites of passage were repeated over and over again: the mutilation caused by her accident and the operating room; her thwarted motherhood and the operating room; her dismemberment and the operating room --always the operating room--, until the repose of death. However, what transforms Frida Kahlo into a mythical heroine is not the repetition but rather the difference: her pictorial

[1391] Personal interview with Guillermo Ceniceros, in December 5 1985. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, p. 47.
[1392] Raquel Tibol, "Curiosidad Mexicana", Magazine Dominical, *Excélsior*, December 12, 1971, unpaginated. Quoted in von Honts, Jacqueline Jay, *A study of the three-dimensional art work in Siqueiros' Polyforum and The Creation of a series of sculptured wall works by the artist-investigator*. Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1987, pp. 216-217.
[1393] There are those who include Rufino Tamayo as the "Big Fourth" (alongside Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros)

> *series on the I; her fondness for the glitter of the popular Mexican art; her Indian attire; her rediscovery of the vernacular; her love for the child Diego and above all, her vibrant yearning. Capable of overcoming the tortuous paths of globalization and multiculturalism, the Frida myth is a living example of the phenomenon of fascination engendered by North American academicians in their approaches to the genre, but even more of the voracious market for the exotic and the absolute lack of decorum exhibited by the mass media. This decade still gave rise to an incipient mythical hero, Julio Galán, built up by the critics within the Fridean pattern and the postulates of the neo-Mexicanistic trends.* [1394]

What was an anti-colonialist initiative in the early 1920s became nationalist demagoguery and folklore for tourists. The opening of Mexico and of a large part of the rest of the world to North-American and Western values led to the widespread use of the myths of the *Mexican Revolution* in art and culture, often in a care-free and superficial way. Many of the figures that became contemporary myths, including those that represented opposition forces in the context of the societies in which they lived, such as Che Guevara and Zapata, were depreciated, neutralized and commercialized. In spite of their symbolic value, they became icons of a collective cultural patrimony in which commercial use was more important than *Revolutionary* content.

In that context, the idea of *Mexicanidad*, that is to say, the sense of national unity with roots in Mexican traditions, served as an excuse for all kinds of representations. The final stage of the *Mexican School of Painting* represented the pathetic end of a movement and laid the foundation for an official rhetoric full of references to the rural origin of the *Revolutionary* struggle, the reclamation of land and freedom, and the legitimization of pre-Hispanic references.

Vasconcelos and the muralists were the first utopians of the Mexican and, indeed Latin American century. They dreamt of a just society, a permanent popular insurrection, progress for indigenous humanity, and history on the moral basis of the condemnation of the exploiters. Perhaps it was a naive attitude and an impossible project. The political and social evolution of Mexico and of the world led to the failure of this utopian dream, and there were many, both individual painters and unscrupulous politicians, who took advantage of this mythical construction.

As Julio Castellano says: "Imperialism not only absorbs all the fundamental forces of the country, it not only imposes itself on a country's political development, but it also takes possession in the most varied ways of art in Mexico, and subjects it to tourist commercialism. It is unquestionable that the Mexican artists of the present time, with the hope of obtaining some sales to relieve their poverty, surrender, making concession after concession, to the dictates of 'Mexican curious' which imperialism demands."

> *El imperialismo no solamente absorbe todas las fuerzas fundamentales del país, no solamente coacciona el desarrollo político del mismo, sino que se apodera de las más variadas formas del arte en México, para someterlas a un comercialismo turístico. Es incuestionable que los artistas Mexicanos de la época presente, con la esperanza de obtener algunas ventas que resuelvan en parte nuestra miseria, nos vamos entregando, de concesión en concesión, a los dictados del arte "Mexican curious" que propaga el imperialismo.* [1395]

[1394] Reyes Palma, Francisco, "Mythical Structures in Perceptions of 20th Century Mexican Art", *Curare* Nº 9, Otoño 1996, Retrieved 2002-09-30 from http://www.laneta.apc.org/curare/myth.html

[1395] Castellanos, Julio, "Influencia de la crisis económica del capitalismo sobre los artistas de la plástica", *Revista Futuro*. V. IV, nr. 8, September-October 1935, pp. 616 ff. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, "El nacionalismo en la plástica durante el cardenismo", *El Nacionalismo y el arte Mexicano*, (IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte), Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios de arte y estética 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1987, p. 245.

The *Revolutionary* worker-peasant triumphed in the murals, above all in Rivera's murals, but the bourgeoisie was victorious outside of the walls, ordering the death of the Revolutionaries. It was entirely a game, without reference to reality. But, in appearances, the *Revolution* triumphed.

> *La mejor etapa del Nacionalismo cultural, el muralismo, ha cifrado su propaganda en la excepcionalidad de la empresa: ninguna otra nación dispone de tan iluminadora pedagogía radical. Y sin embargo − nuevo consenso que cunde entre los intelectuales − el muralismo ha devenido en autoplagio y elogio burocrático de los héroes, ilustración para un infinito libro de texto (recuérdese la frase de Rufino Tamayo: "Los campesinos han triunfado en México solamente en los murales"). Lo específico se apaga en el "Mexican curious" y al indígena se le confina entre los temas románticos de la cultura urbana.* [1396]

Mexican Muralism was not a mirror of the events of real life; rather, it was a substitute, a utopian image. The program of Mexican Muralism represented the heroes and the characters of Mexican mythology and history, such Quetzalcóatl, Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo, Zapata, and others as symbolic and decorative elements.

Mexicanidad, or miscegenation, the "Cosmic Race," was a national project that involved all Mexicans. Vasconcelos was the first to formulate it in theoretical and artistic terms. Rivera adapted it to the political and ideological circumstances and gave it the shape it is known by, a visual myth. The Mexican state's political practice did not correspond to the rhetoric of the walls; instead, it paid Rivera to create a visual myth as a substitute.

One of the components of muralism was the pre-Hispanic period and the Conquest. The image of the Conquest was a reconstruction of several tendentious interpretations of history. The representation of myths and historical facts on the walls by the artists referred always to original sources such as Sahagún, among others. Often these sources were untrustworthy, which led to a mystification of the facts. The Conquest as painted on the walls became in this way a double or triple historical reconstruction influenced by the process of cultural and ideological legitimatization of the moment.

Alicia Azuela de la Cueva writes: "Rivera's nostalgia to create unity between the peoples of America, does not remind us of José Vasconcelos. Vasconcelos was very aware of the danger *yankee* imperialism represented for Latin America, he thinks of a unity based on mutual respect at all the levels, while Rivera, recently converted to the theories of Morrow, makes a utopia of Latin American neo-colonialism":

> *La nostalgia de Rivera por crear una unidad entre los pueblos de América, no deja de recordarnos a José Vasconcelos. Solo que Vasconcelos muy consciente del peligro que para Latinoamérica significa el imperialismo yanqui, piensa en esta unidad basada en un respeto mútuo a todos los niveles, mientras que Rivera recién convertido a las teorías de Morrow, hace una utopía del neo-colonialismo latinoamericano.* [1397]

In the same way, the so-called *Mexican Revolution* was also mystified and a complex process of fights and internal contradictions gave way to such characters in the mythological pantheon as Rivera's Zapata.

The construction of a national identity, of the myth of *Mexicanidad*, was an urgent national project, consciously involving several people and groups. However, with respect to the aesthetics of the coalition of races, the whole project was José Vasconcelos's responsibility. Despite his early departure from the Secretariat, and the later rejection of his ideological position, the project lasted for a long time. Muralism had the great merit of carrying out the experiment that Vasconcelos wanted: the establishment of relationships

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[1396] Monsiváis, Carlos, "Notas sobre la cultura Mexicana en el siglo XX", *Historia General de México*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Mexico 1988, p. 1487.
[1397] Azuela de la Cueva, Alicia, *La obra mural de Diego Rivera y los cambios socio económicos -1920, 1934*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico 1974, p. 127.

between art, the artist, the public and the state. Vasconcelos initiated muralism and provided its mission. The painters followed him and created other attitudes, more or less opportunistically, but the seed was sown.

Many people participated in this construction. The myth gave place to simplifications and several generalizations and settled into the collective imagination. Betty Ann Brown writes:

> *The only modern artists who have approached Rivera in bringing pre-Columbian imagery to the masses are George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, who employed the Mayan site of Tikal as the rebel camp in the film Star Wars and a golden version of the Aztec Tlazolteotl in Raiders of the Lost Ark. If you have seen images of the pre-Columbian world on a streetside mural in East Los Angeles, or on a restaurant menu, or on a souvenir box, odds are they were derived from the work of Diego Rivera, rather than from pre-Columbian originals.* [1398]

If the Hollywood image appropriates reality and manufactures myths, other artists, such as Rivera and Siqueiros (who realized this) had great influence: "Without any doubt, although without knowing it, Rivera and I were contributing then to the tremendous international contra-Revolutionary campaign of *yankee* origin against Mexico."

> *Ese estado mental nuestro, de Mexicanismo a ultranza, nos conducía también a apreciaciones en extremo exageradas sobre cuestiones políticas. Rivera y yo, al unísono, o cada uno por su parte, sosteníamos la primacía, cuando menos cronológica, de la Revolución Mexicana sobre la Revolución Rusa. La nuestra se había manifestado en movimientos armados desde las postrimerías del siglo pasado y en los primeros años del siglo xx; en cambio la rusa había tenido su primer estallido de valor substancial político sólo en 1905 y habla culminado en 1917, esto es, el año en que nosotros ya habíamos promulgado nuestra Constitución, Carta Política que sin duda alguna era la mejor del mundo y de todos los tiempos, y de la cual los soviéticos podrían tomar muchas enseñanzas. Felizmente para nosotros, "el gran amigo" de Diego, Lenin, ya no se encontraba en París, si no lo hubiéramos avergonzado con nuestro gran debate patriótico. Sin duda alguna, aunque sin saberlo, Rivera y yo estábamos contribuyendo entonces a la tremenda campaña internacional contrarrevolucionaria de origen yanqui en contra de Mexico. Todos los filmes hollywoodianos de entonces mostraban a un México de matones y traidores, de asesinos implacables y de anarquistas desorbitados. Creo que fue entonces cuando Cocteau y Buñuel hicieron aquella famosa película que mostraba a un hombre observando por la cerradura de la llave de las puertas de todos los países y al llegar a México la escena era simple y sencillamente una descarga cerrada sobre un grupo de infelices prisioneros. Algo debemos haber hecho en favor de la leyenda de Pancho Villa y de sus tremebundas anécdotas.* [1399]

As Paz says, "*Mexicanidad* is but another example, another variation, of that changing identical plural creature that each one of us is, we all are no one."

> *La Mexicanidad no es sino otro ejemplar, una variación más, de esa cambiante idéntica criatura plural que cada uno es, todos somos ninguno.* [1400]

[1398] Brown, Betty Ann, "The past idealized: Diego Rivera's use of pre-Colombian Imagery", *Diego Rivera: a retrospective*, Detroit Institute of Arts/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, Norton, New York 1986, p. 155.
[1399] Alfaro Siqueiros, David, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Editorial Grijalbo, Colección Testimonios, Mexico 1987, pp. 158-159.
[1400] Paz, Octavio, *Posdata*, Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico 1971, pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intention of the present work was to analyze the origins of the Mexican mural program, initiated by the minister José Vasconcelos in 1921, and to identify the structural logic and the instrumental aspects of the myths; my interest in both the myths portrayed on the walls and the myths which appropriated the murals to express other, linked myths led me to analyze what could be termed the meta-myth, the idea of *Mexicanidad* itself, which for some has almost become synonymous with muralism.

One of my main objectives was to analyze who built the complex mythological web that is Mexican muralism, when it was built and how. To this end, I analyzed the different types of discourse of some of its main characters, with the help of texts and quotations from them and from the most influential writers about muralism or about individual artists. Thus I used many quotations from such sources. I did this, not because those quotations correspond to the objective truth but because many of them, full of inexact or inaccurate statements and generalizations which have been repeated incessantly by several authors, help us to understand the reasons for the persistence of certain myths connected with Mexican muralism.

Figure 114. Diego Rivera: Rivera's *New Deal*, one of the twenty-one movable panels at the New Workers' School. [1401]



In the vast bibliography consulted, in my conversations with artists, historians, critics, etc., in the other sources used (searches in the Internet, use of discussion forums, chats, etc.) the vast majority of references to muralism revolve around the same set of generalizations and common places, i.e., the association of muralism with the *Mexican Revolution*, with Social Realism, the "gestures" of Rivera, of Frida Kahlo, etc. The most frequent references relate to Rivera's representation of Lenin in the Rockefeller Center, the sentence "God does not exist", and other rhetorical and mythological constructions of Rivera's. Other frequent references and associated concepts are: Zapata, Marx, communism, *Indigenismo*, Quetzalcóatl, Cuauhtémoc, Tenochtitlán, *New Worker's School*, Rockefeller, Lenin, etc. The name of Vasconcelos, to whom I devoted an important part of this study, is found only sporadically.
Mexican muralism is based on certain preconceptions. One of these relates to a perception of the historical past and of the mythological narratives which is full of conjectures and speculations of the most varied nature. Mexican muralism is under the thrall of vague generalizations, suppositions, speculations, mythological constructions and even lies. There is no scientific evidence about the origins of the Mexicans and their history and myths. The missionaries have distorted, voluntarily or involuntarily, the sources, and no-one can scientifically prove the existence of, or the facts about, Cuauhtémoc, the episode of the *Noche triste*, etc.

Typically, the *Mexican Mural Movement* is represented as a collective, or it is reduced to the figures of the "Big Three," Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco. Lately, Frida Kahlo's name has appeared with increasing frequency, and she has been the subject of several studies, often leading to further mystifications of her, Rivera, and the movement as a whole. The generalizations and the commonplaces are frequent, and they do not facilitate the study of these themes. An objective judgement as Francisco Reyes Palma makes clear, is very difficult.

> *Today, more than ever, we know that art and history, those ancient strategies of the senses and of memory, are immersed in a paradox of representational rituals based on the invocation of reality by incorporating illusion as an act of power. We are thus able to trace an infinite number of mythical structures that traverse these reflective practices in the history of art and even in art criticism itself. Furthermore, despite the scientific resolve*

[1401] In the Museum of Sketches − Archive for Decorative Art, Lund, Sweden.

> *manifested in many recent studies on Mexican art, they harbor traces of fabulization, shamelessly cohabiting with the much desired objectivity, with the insistent quest for theoretical justifications and methodological obsessiveness. I do not attempt to validate a principle of truth over a fictional principle; both are legitimate, though divergent, representations in cultural terms. In the case of fictional structures, one must acknowledge their capacity for symbolic emanation and for generating a collective effect.* [1402]

My study concentrated on the mural production of the 1920s, more precisely, between 1921 and 1930. It proved necessary – alongside the contextual knowledge of that time, with its social, political, ideological, artistic and aesthetic developments, and of the people and movements directly involved in the process of mural production – to carry out a more detailed study of Mexican history and mythology as a whole, in order to understand the discursive materializations of muralism in its complexity and the formation of its myths.

Therefore I examined the origins of the process of mythological construction, a process that obviously precedes the *Mexican Mural Movement* itself. The mythological idea of Mexico was built and developed in the sub-conscious of Mexicans over the centuries after the conquest. Starting from 1921, it became visible in the painted walls, which helped to form a sort of collective memory. This construction or visual myth, the painted *Mexicanidad*, functions as an excuse for, or rationalization of, the problems and traumas deriving from the process of the Conquest, since all kinds of problems and conflicts seems to be solved in the murals, which also provide hope of a rebirth for the martyred Mexican race.

I tried to identify the processes, the mechanisms and some of the main individuals associated with the construction and sedimentation process of some of the main myths which form what could be termed *Mexicanidad* and which appear in the murals. However, the basic, prevailing ideas about the Mexican muralism are contaminated or corrupted by many misunderstandings and generalizations that do not facilitate this type of work at all.

In my extensive research of the existing sources on Mexican muralism and on its main representatives, the dominant idea that emerges is that the movement was intimately linked to the *Mexican Revolution*. The murals of Diego Rivera, the artist who is often taken to represent the whole movement, were instrumental in establishing this connection to a past, which is more or less remote and confused. The observer is left with an idea of a distant Utopian idealization, and is led to believe that another kind of idealized society can be built – the Marxist social utopia which Rivera made "visually" possible seems to be attainable in the real world.

Conscious or sub-consciously, a collective myth, *Mexicanidad*, was formed out of the traumas and myths in Mexican society, a meta-myth which performs the functions of a surrogate of a reality impossible of reaching, and that if it turns real does so only on the walls.

The myth of *Mexicanidad* was born out of a need for national affirmation. There were several people, groups, etc., that were more or less consciously involved. And in practical and pragmatic terms, supreme ideological responsibility lay with José Vasconcelos. In the construction of a utopia, of a myth, everyone cooperated with each other: José Vasconcelos, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, etc., starting from different points of view, with different preconceptions, but contributing to the same end, *Mexicanidad*, an abstract but urgently needed concept of national identity.

Vasconcelos was deeply concerned about the United States, and the function of the cultural affirmation, which inspired Vasconcelos's cultural program and muralism in Mexico in the 1920s, was for him, first and foremost, to provide a bulwark against the US. In the end Vasconcelos lost the battle against North American influence; the weight of economic power, Vasconcelos's departure from the Secretariat, the skilful politicking of Ambassador Morrow, Rivera's opportunism − all combined together to turn Muralism away from this initial *vasconcelist* conception.

[1402] Reyes Palma, Francisco, "Mythical Structures in Perceptions of 20th Century Mexican Art", *Curare* Nº 9, Otoño 1996, Retrieved 2002-09-30 from http://www.laneta.apc.org/curare/myth.html

The construction of modern social myths is not an isolated individual's work. It is a complex process that picks up the strategic will of a series of specific authors to appear as something spontaneous. Mexican (and also foreign) intellectuals, artists, students and politicians, from Vasconcelos to Octavio Paz, from Diego Rivera to Carlos Fuentes, have constructed a Mexican mythology. I would also like to include Bernardino de Sahagún, Díaz del Castillo, Cortés, Calles, Cárdenas, Siqueiros, Orozco, Cuevas and many others as contributors to this mythology. From my perspective, the positions of those characters, although contradictory, enable the construction of the meta-myth, and this use is far more important than their individual meanings.

The construction of the myth of *Mexicanidad*, in particular by means of the mural movement, was started by the two characters I studied, José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera. Naturally, Rivera's contribution is more immediately visible, and this factor, coupled with Vasconcelos's later resentments and repudiations, has led to the historical marginalization of the minister. Both the minister, José Vasconcelos, and the painter, Diego Rivera, are indispensable for an understanding of the myths surrounding the *Mexican Mural Movement*.

Rivera's muralism shows a people and a Revolution that never existed. He promoted demagogic and facile representations of a utopian reality, very different from the reality existing away from the walls. However, resistant to all attempts at deconstruction, the murals are there and with their existence testify to another kind of "truth."

To summarize my ideas I conclude, paraphrasing António Rodrigues, that Mexican muralism is the mirror of a Revolution that never existed; it exalted a historical past and rediscovered a national mythology in order to release the nation from its historical traumas. Muralism became part of a project of national redemption, with promises of a better future that would never become reality; its chief protagonist was one of the largest mythomaniacs in the history of the modern art.

I believe that future studies will shed more light on this subject. It will be necessary to carry out more detailed studies that include the analysis of documents up to now not available (above all, from the Rivera estate) in order to have a more complete idea of the decisive role of Rivera in the construction of the complex and extremely fascinating web that is Mexican muralism. To understand and to reappraise Vasconcelos's contribution, it would be necessary to approach his work without prejudices, knowing that the one who builds the boats is as essential as the one who sails them across the seas. But I don't have any illusions about the mythological constructions. Those myths came to stay.

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[1403] The list presented here doesn't pretend to be exhaustive or up-to-date. I believe however it covers a wide range of the most important questions in this study.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I: A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Mexico	Europe	World
Preclassic period • Olmec Culture	• Classic Greek Culture (1200 BC to 323 BC, the year of Alexander the Great's death) • Foundation of Rome (753 BC) • Republic and Roman Empire	• The Pyramids of Egypt (2613-1530 BC) • Mesopotamia: Code of Hammurabi (first half of the 18th century BC) • Buddha is Born (563 BC) • The Great Wall of China (221 BC) • Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem in Judea (between 8 and 4 BC?)
Classic period • Teotihuacán • Mayan culture • Zapotec culture • Monte Albán • Invasion of the barbarians from the north (the Chichimec)	• The Huns invade several regions of Europe (375-425) • Fall of the Roman Empire (476) • The Middle Ages (395-1453) • The Muslims defeats the Visigoths in the Battle of Río Barbate in Spain (711) • Charlemagne King of the Franks (768-814) and Holy Roman Emperor (800-814)	• Emperor Justinian I builds the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople between 532 and 537. • The Chinese invent porcelain (approx 650) • The Prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam, emigrates from Mecca to Medina (622); the beginning of the Muslim era.
Postclassic Period • Toltec, Mixtec and Mexica or Aztec Cultures • Foundation of Tenochtitlán (1325) • Tenochtitlán among the world's largest cities (1500?) • Columbus reaches the *New World* (1492) • Cortés disembarks and Veracruz is founded (1519)	• The Crusades begin (1096) • The University of Cambridge is founded (1209) • The English *Magna Carta* (1215) • Boccaccio writes *Il Decamerone* (1348 – 1353) • Brunelleschi develops linear perspective (1420 – 1436) • The Gutenberg Bible (1450 – 1456) • Ferdinand and Isabella unite the Kingdoms (1469) • The Acme of the Renaissance (1500) • Leonardo da Vinci paints *La Gioconda* (1503-06) • Carlos I of Spain is elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as Carlos V (1519)	• The Byzantine Church breaks with Rome (1054) • The Inca Empire of the Andes (1100) • A Venetian, Marco Polo, travels to China (1271-1295) • Constantinople falls in the hands of the Turks (1453) • Suleiman the Magnificent rules the Ottoman Empire (1520 – 1566)

The Conquest and Colony • Cortés conquers the Aztecs (1521) • The Virgin of Guadalupe appears to an Aztec man named Juan Diego (1531) • University of Mexico, the continent's first university (1551) • The House of Currency is established (1535) and the continent's first printing press starts operating (1549) • The Cathedral of Mexico is inaugurated (1656) • The expulsion of the Jesuits (1767)	• The Protestant Reformation (1521) • Michelangelo paints *The Last Judgment* on the wall of the Sistine Chapel in Rome (1534-1541) • Copernicus writes that the Sun is the center of the system, the Earth rotates around it (1543) • Galileo's Law of Falling Bodies (1604) • The *Encyclopedia* (Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert) is published (1751) • The French Revolution (1789) • Napoleon defeats the King of Spain • Napoleon overthrows the Fernando VII King of Spain, and places his brother Joseph on the throne (1808) • The Industrial Revolution in England (1760-1851)	• Sir Walter Raleigh founds Virginia, the first English colony in North America (1587) • The Taj Mahal is built in India (1631-1653) • The French found New Orleans in Louisiana (1718) • Benjamin Franklin, who inspired the Independence of the USA, invents the lightning rod (1752) • The Tea Act and the Outbreak of Fighting (1773) • Declaration of Independence by the thirteen English colonies (4 July, 1776) • USA buys the territory of Louisiana from France (1803)
• Independence (1810-1821) • The Liberals against the Conservatives • The loss of Texas and Upper California (1848) • The Liberal Reformation (1855-1857) • The Empire of Maximilian (1864-1867) • The Restored Republic (1867-1876) • The Porfiriato (1877-1911)	• The Holy Alliance is created to defend absolutism (Austria, Russia and Prussia) (1815) • The Victorian Era in England (1837-1901) • The Curies discovers radiation (1898)	• Independence of Colombia (1810), Venezuela (1811), Argentina (1816), Chile (1818), Peru (1821), Brazil (1822) and Uruguay (1825) • The American Civil War (1861-1865) • USA buys Alaska from Russia for seven million dollars (1867) • The Channel of Suez is opened (1869)

• The *Mexican Revolution* (1910) • Institutional Single Party system (1926 − 1993) • A period of relative social peace (1926 − 1993) • The *Cristero* Rebellion (1927-1929) • Free Trade Treaty is signed with USA and Canada (1992)	• The German-American theoretical physicist Albert Einstein develops his special theory of relativity (1905) • The Russian Revolution (1917) • The British Empire becomes *The Commonwealth* (1926) • Benito Mussolini establishes *fascism* in Italy (1922-1943) • Hitler comes to power (1933) • The Spanish Civil War (1936) • The Treaty of Rome is signed by France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, establishing the European Economic Community (1957) Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom initial the Stockholm Convention establishing the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1959 as a counterpart to the Common Market • The Treaty of Maastricht unites Europe (1993)	• First World War (1914-1918) • Second World War (1939-1945) • The Japanese city of Hiroshima is bombed (August 06, 1945) • The UN is created (1945) • Mao Tse-Tung takes power in China (1949) • Castro institutes a communist regime in Cuba (1959) • The North Americans reach the Moon (1969) • The USSR and Eastern Europe abandon the socialist system (1989-1991)

	HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC EVENTS IN MEXICO AND IN THE WORLD	LIFE AND WORK OF THE MEXICAN MURALISTS
1883	Manet, Marx, Wagner and Turgenev die.	Orozco is born on November 23 in Ciudad Guzmán (Zapotlán el Grande)
1886	The Statue of Liberty is inaugurated in New York	Diego Rivera is born on December 8 in Guanajuato.
1890	Vincent van Gogh dies.	Orozco enrolls himself in the Magisterial School of Mexico City. He meets the engraver José Guadalupe Posada.
1896	The first modern Olympiad in Athens.	Siqueiros is born on December 29 in Santa Rosalía de Camargo, Chihuahua
1897	The sculptor August Rodin creates his *Monument to Balzac*.	Orozco enrolls himself in the agrarian school of St. Jacinto and he loses his left hand in a chemistry experiment.
1898	René Magritte is born.	Rivera attends the evening courses of the Academy of Mexico.
1907	The Triplex agreement is signed. Pablo Picasso paints *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.	Rivera moves to Spain and studies with Eduardo Chicharro.
1908	The Psychoanalytical Society is founded in Vienna.	Orozco enrolls in the Academy of Bellas Artes. Siqueiros studies with Eduardo Solares Gutiérrez.
1909	Marinetti publishes the Futurist Manifesto in "Le Figaro."	Rivera departs for Paris from where he visits London.

1910	The *Mexican Revolution*. First abstract watercolor by Kandinsky. Technical Manifesto of Futuristic Painting of Umberto Boccioni	Rivera exhibits in the *Société Artistes Indépendants* in Paris. In October he returns to Mexico.
1911	Francisco Madero becomes president of the Mexican Republic. Founding of *Der Blaue Reiter* in Monaco.	Rivera returns to Paris. Siqueiros enters the academy. Orozco draws caricatures for the newspaper *El Ahuizote.*
1912	Arizona and New Mexico become part of the United States.	Rivera completes brief trips to Spain.
1913	Huerta overthrows the Madero government. First ready-made by Duchamp. In Russia Kasimir Malevich develops suprematism.	Siqueiros enrolls in the open air school of Saint Anita. After the strike and disorders, he takes part in the armed struggle against Huerta.
1914	The Carranza liberals force the dictator Huerta into exile. The followers of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata do not recognize Carranza; they back the disorders. The First World War breaks out.	Rivera meets Delaunay, Léger and Chagall. Siqueiros becomes an officer in the Estado Mayor's Western Division. Orozco writes for the newspaper *La Vanguardia,* founded by Doctor Atl.
1915	Porfírio Díaz dies in Paris at the age of 85.	Rivera paints the *Zapatist Landscape*
1916	The Dada movement Dada is born at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich.	First exhibition of Orozco's work, in the bookstore Biblos.
1917	New Mexican constitution. Revolution in Russia. Publication of *Visión de Anahuac*.	Orozco goes to the United States, to San Francisco and New York.
1918	Austria surrenders. In Germany the republic is proclaimed. Apollinaire, Klimt and Schiele die.	Siqueiros meets the *Grupo Bohemio* of Guadalajara. He marries Graciela Amador. Rivera leaves his first wife and has a liason with the Russian Marevna Vorobëv-Stebelska.
1919	Versailles Peace Treaty	Siqueiros arrives in Paris and meets up with Rivera.
1920	November 15, League of Nations Convenes. Murder of Carranza. Obregón is elected president.	Rivera and Siqueiros visit Italy.
1921	Sack and Vanzetti case in USA.	Rivera returns to Mexico.
1922	Advent of fascism in Italy.	Siqueiros returns to Mexico. Frescos of the National Preparatory School: works by Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and Revueltas. Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros, Guerrero and Leal found the Union of Workers, Technicians, Painters and Sculptors. Rivera enters the Communist Party and marries Guadalupe Marín.
1923	General Huerta leads the revolt against Obregón who, supported by the United States, defeats him.	Rivera starts work on the frescos of the Secretaría de Educación Pública. Siqueiros writes the Manifesto of the Labor union. Orozco marries Margarita Valladares.
1924	Elias Calles succeeds Obregón. Lenin dies, and Stalin assumes the power. Breton writes the Surrealist Manifesto.	Rivera starts working on the autonomous university of Chapingo. Siqueiros, Rivera and Guerrero found *El Machete*, the newspaper of the Labor union and later of the Communist Party.
1925	Trotsky is expelled from power in the Soviet Union. *The Battleship Potemkin*, by Eisenstein.	Orozco exhibits in the Gallery Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. Rivera leaves the Communist Party. Siqueiros is arrested

		several times for his political activities; he is transferred to Guadalajara, where he becomes the secretary of the Workers' Confederation of Jalisco and President of the Committee for the union of Latin America workers.
1926	Ernst exposes his "frottages" in Paris. Gaudí dies.	Rivera starts work on the frescos for the chapel of Chapingo.
1927	Civil war in China. Lindbergh completes the first flight from New York to Paris. Inauguration of the Bauhaus in Dessau. Juan Gris dies.	Orozco goes to New York and enters the literary circle around Alma Reed. Rivera completes a trip to the USSR. He becomes editor of the *Libertador,* the newspaper of the Anti-imperialist League of America, and he and his wife separate.
1928	September 15, Discovery of penicillin. Obregón is re-elected as president but is killed a few days later. Emilio Portes Gil succeeds him.	Orozco exhibits in the Marie Sterner Gallery in New York. Rivera meets the painter Frida Khalo in the house of Tina Modotti, the photographer.
1929	Wall Street Collapse 1929 – 1941, Worldwide Depression. Trotsky is expelled from the USSR.	Rivera marries Frida Khalo. He is expelled from the Communist Party because he is too close to the theories of Trotsky.

1930	Calles returns to the presidency with right-wing policies, stops the reforms. Suicide of Mayakovsky. Sergey Eisenstein in Mexico to film *Que viva Mexico!*	Orozco works in the Pomona College of Claremont in California. Alma Reed's Delphic Studios gallery in New York opens with an exhibition of his work. Rivera goes to New York and San Francisco where a large retrospective of his work is organized. Siqueiros is imprisoned.
1931	In Spain the Republicans win the elections. The first Quadrennial is inaugurated in Rome.	Rivera exhibits in the Moma in New York. Siqueiros is sent to confinement in the village of Taxco.
1932	Roosevelt becomes President of the United States.	Orozco travels in Europe. Rivera starts work on the murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts. A second retrospective of his work is shown at the Moma in New York. Siqueiros goes to Los Angeles.
1933	Roosevelt promotes the New Deal. Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany and closes the Bauhaus. 1933 – 1945, The Holocaust in Europe. *The Dance* by Matisse.	Rivera begins the panels of the RCA Building in New York and the murals of the New Workers' School. In Montevideo Siqueiros founds the Association of Uruguayan Writers and Artists. He is arrested in Buenos Aires and expelled from Argentina for having participated in a union demonstration.
1934	In Mexico the progressive Lázaro Cárdenas is	Orozco paints in the National Instituto de

	elected president. Relationships with the United States become more and more difficult.	Bellas Artes of Mexico City. In New York Siqueiros founds the "Experimental Workshop, a laboratory of modern techniques in art." Rivera returns to Mexico.
1935	Italy invades Ethiopia. The Nazis attack modern art.	Polemic between Rivera and Siqueiros. Orozco, Tamayo and Siqueiros participate in the congress of the Revolutionary artists in New York.
1936	The civil war begins in Spain. García Lorca is murdered by Franco's nationalists. Roosevelt promotes a plan in help of the American artists unemployed.	Orozco starts a series of works in Guadalajara (La Conoscenza). Rivera convinces Cárdenas to welcome Trotsky as an exile in Mexico. Rivera starts the frescos for the Hotel Reforma of Mexico City. Siqueiros fights on the republican side in the Spanish Civil War.
1937	Picasso paints *Guernica*.	Trotsky and his wife are guests of Rivera in Coyocán.
1938	Nuclear Fission.	
1939	The Second World War breaks out. Mexico stays neutral.	Siqueiros reenters in Mexico. Rivera breaks the relationship with Trotsky and divorces Frida Khalo.
1940	Trotsky is murdered. Defeat of France: exodus of artists and intellectuals to America. Klee dies. In Mexico City, Wolfgang Paalen and Cesár Moro organize the international exhibition of surrealism.	Orozco paints the murals for the Gabino Ortíz library in Jiquilpan (Allegory of Mexico). Rivera works in the San Francisco City College. Frida goes back to him and they are remarried. André and Jacqueline Breton, in Mexico, are guests of the Rivera's. Siqueiros participates in the attack on Trotsky which leads to his being exiled to Chillán in Chile.
1941	December 07, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor The United States enters the war. Delaunay dies.	Orozco paints a mural for the Building of Justice of Mexico City. Siqueiros marries Angelica Arenal; he travels to Cuba, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Panama.
1943	German armies defeated at Stalingrad. Armistice between Italy and the Allies. During the period 1943-1945 Jean Fautrier secretly paints 33 abstract paintings showing the partially disfigured faces of the victims of the Nazis. Jackson Pollock has his first one-man exhibition.	Orozco and Rivera participate in the foundation of the new artistic school the *Colegio Nacional*. Rivera paints two murals for the Institute of Cardiology. Orozco receives an honorary degree in architecture from the Architecture Association.
1944	The Allies disembark in Normandy. Kandinsky and Mondrian die.	Siqueiros and his brother-in-law Luis Arenal paint the mural *Cuauhtémoc against the myth* for the *Centro Realista de Arte Moderno* that they founded in the same year
1945	August 06, the bombing of Hiroshima. End of the Second World War. Conference of Yalta. Creation of the U.N. First *Salon de Mai* in Paris.	Orozco paints the panels for the Turf Club of Mexico City and Siqueiros works on the Bellas Artes building.
1946	The Nuremberg Courts are created to try Nazi war criminals. Fontana publishes the White Manifesto in	Orozco receives the National Prize of the Arts and Sciences. Rivera is refused readmission into the Communist Party.

	Argentina.	
1947	The Independence of India. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* is inaugurated Paris. In a speech to Congress, the American President, Harry S. Truman, announces the *Truman Doctrine*	The Instituto de Bellas Artes of Mexico City organizes a major retrospective of Orozco's works.
1949	The Chinese People's Republic is born under the leadership of Mao Zedong. The NATO is created.	On September 7 Orozco dies and is buried in the Pantheon of the capital. Major retrospective of Rivera's works in the Palacio de Bellas Artes.
1950	The Korean War begins. Pablo Neruda writes the *Canto General*. Matisse awarded the Grand Prize at the Venice Biennale.	The works of Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and Tamayo represents Mexico in the Biennale exhibition in Venice.
1951	The UNIVAC, the first computer designed for commercial purposes, is completed.	Siqueiros publishes the mural magazine *Arte Público.* The *José Clemente Orozco Museum* is inaugurated in Guadalajara.
1952	November 01, U.S.A. Detonates the first hydrogen bomb	
1954	Matisse dies. Abolition of racial segregation in the USA.	Frida Khalo dies. The Communist Party readmits Rivera.
1955	Disneyland Opens	Rivera and Siqueiros go to Soviet Union and visit Eastern Europe. Rivera marries Emma Hurtado, his agent since 1946.
1957	The USSR launches the first satellites.	Rivera dies on November 24 and is buried in the Pantheon of Mexico City.
1959		José Vasconcelos dies on June 30 in Mexico City.
1960	John F. Kennedy becomes President of the United States. Inauguration of Brasilia, capital of Brazil. *Pop Art* and *Nouveau Réalisme* are born.	Siqueiros is arrested for his opposition against the government; worldwide intellectuals appeal for his release.
1962	October 16, Cuban Missile Crisis	
1965	Murder of Malcolm X. Churchill dies.	Siqueiros starts the mural for the Building of the Congresses of Cuernavaca, now in the Parque da Lama of Mexico City (The march of the humanity on the earth and toward the cosmos).
1967	December 03, First Heart Transplant Arte povera and Land art are born.	Siqueiros receives the *Lenin Prize for Peace*, which he gives to the Vietnamese people.
1968	The USSR invades Czechoslovakia. Student revolts spreads in Europe from Paris. April 04, Martin Luther King assassinated. Massacre in the *Plaza of the Three Cultures* in Tlatelolco. Octavio Paz resigns as Mexican ambassador in India.	Siqueiros is named President of the new *Academy of Arts of Mexico*.
1969	July 20, 1969, first moon landing	
1971		Siqueiros finishes the mural *The March of the humanity*
1974	In the United States the Watergate scandal forces President Nixon to resign.	Siqueiros dies on January 6 in Cuernavaca and is buried in the Pantheon of the capital.
1989	The Berlin wall is demolished, marking the end of the Cold War	
1990		

1994	The *Zapatista National Liberation Army* (EZLN) leads a revolt in Chiapas. Subcomandante Marcos is the principal figure and becomes a modern myth.	
1995	Octavio Paz wins a Nobel Prize for Literature	

APPENDIX II: COMPLEJIDAD DEL PANTEÓN AZTECA [1404]

Una de las mayores dificultades que se presentan para entender la mitología Azteca es la pluralidad de dioses y la diversidad de atribuciones de un mismo dios. Esto se debe, como ya hemos dicho, a que la religión Azteca estaba en un período de síntesis y se agrupaban, dentro de la concepción de un mismo dios, aspectos distintos que se consideraban relacionados. Quetzalcóatl, uno de los dioses máximos, es también un ejemplo de cómo se sintetizaban en un solo dios aspectos que, desde nuestro punto de vista, parecen sin relación alguna. Así es el dios del viento, el dios de la vida, el de la mañana, el planeta Venus, el dios de los gemelos y de los monstruos, etc.; según estas diversas atribuciones, es conocido con varios nombres: Ehécatl, Quetzalcóatl, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Ce Acatl, Xólotl, etc. El nombre de Quetzalcóatl significa literalmente quetzal-serpiente o "serpiente de plumas", pero como la pluma del quetzal es para el Mexicano símbolo de la cosa preciosa, y cóatl significa también hermano gemelo (de donde nuestro Mexicanismo "cuate"), el nombre de Quetzalcóatl se traduce también, esotéricamente, por el de "gemelo precioso", indicando con esto que la estrella matutina y la vespertina son una sola y misma estrella; es decir, el planeta Venus, representado en la mañana por Quetzalcóatl y en la tarde por su hermano gemelo Xólotl. Por eso Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli aparece con dos caras, una de hombre vivo y la otra en forma de cráneo. Esta identificación de las estrellas matutina y vespertina ha dado origen a múltiples mitos en la humanidad y explica casi todas las leyendas de Quetzalcóatl. En efecto, Venus durante algún tiempo aparece como estrella vespertina; luego permanece invisible y, cuando vuelve a aparecer, lo hace como estrella matutina. Este fenómeno astronómico se interpreta en el mito diciendo que Quetzalcóatl y su hermano gemelo Xólotl bajan al mundo de los muertos y recorren el infierno sufriendo diferentes pruebas a que los someten los dioses infernales. Así cuando Quetzalcóatl decide pedirle al dios de los infiernos los huesos de los hombres muertos para crear con ellos a la nueva humanidad, emprenden el viaje los dos hermanos gemelos y llegan al mundo subterráneo para hacer la súplica ante Mictlantecuhtli, a quien solicitan les entregue los huesos; pero conociendo Quetzalcóatl, como dice el cronista, que el dios de los muertos es "doblado y caviloso", en cuanto recibe los huesos arranca a correr. Ofendido el Mictlantecuhtli de que así se vaya huyendo, echa a correr detrás de él persiguiéndolo, y ordena a las codornices que lo ataquen. Resbala el dios en su huida, al ser atacado por las aves, y al caer rompe los huesos y apenas tiene tiempo de recoger los fragmentos y salir con ellos del infierno. Discuten en seguida los dos hermanos y, a pesar de que el negocio no salió tan perfecto como hubieran deseado, se sacrifica Quetzalcóatl sobre los huesos y al regarlos con su sangre da origen a la nueva humanidad. Pero como los fragmentos son de distinto tamaño, así son los hombres y las mujeres que hay en el mundo, y las codornices por su osadía de haber perseguido al dios serán sacrificadas y, con su sangre, se regaran los altares de sacrificios, pues fueron colaboradoras del dios infernal y trataron de impedir que el héroe cumpliera su misión. Los hombres son, pues, hijos de Quetzalcóatl, y el dios aparece siempre en esta actitud benéfica, como su padre y creador.

El mito de los dos hermanos gemelos desborda los límites de México y la América Central, y se encuentra muy frecuentemente en las religiones de otros pueblos americanos. También la huida de Quetzalcóatl de Tula, para el mítico Tlillan Tlapallan, "la tierra del negro y del rojo", y su promesa de volver por el oriente en el año de su nombre, "Ce Ácatl", no es más que un modo de explicar en forma de mito la muerte del planeta, es decir, su ocultación por el poniente, en el lugar en que se juntan el negro y el rojo, el día y la noche, y el vaticinio de que volverá a surgir por el oriente, transformado en estrella de la mañana y precediendo al Sol. Por eso cuando en el año de 1519, que en el calendario indígena se llamaba precisamente "Ce Acatl" ("1, Caña"), desembarcaron en Veracruz los conquistadores, Moctezuma no dudó ni un momento que era Quetzalcóatl que regresaba a tomar posesión de su reino tolteca, que abandonó cuando su huida a Tlillan Tlapallan. Pero, como dios de la vida, aparece Quetzalcóatl como el benefactor constante de la humanidad y así vemos que, después de haber creado al hombre con su propia sangre, busca la manera de alimentarlo, y descubre el maíz, que tenían guardado las hormigas dentro de un cerro, haciéndose él mismo hormiga y robando un grano que entrega después a los hombres. Les enseña la manera de pulir el jade y las otras piedras preciosas y de encontrar los yacimientos de estas piedras; a tejer las telas policromas, con el algodón milagroso que ya nace teñido de diferentes colores, y a fabricar los mosaicos con plumas del quetzal, del pájaro azul, del colibrí, de la guacamaya y de otras aves de brillante plumaje. Pero sobre todo

[1404] Caso, Alfonso, *El pueblo del Sol*. Figuras de Miguel Covarrubias, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1990, pp. 37-41.

enseñó al hombre la ciencia, dándole el medio de medir el tiempo y estudiar las revoluciones de los astros; le enseñó el calendario e inventó las ceremonias y fijó los días para las oraciones y los sacrificios.Quetzalcóatl es un dios antiquísimo. Lo encontramos con el nombre de Kukulkán y Gukumats entre los mayas y los quichés, y aunque ignoramos su nombre, lo vemos aparecer como serpiente emplumada en las antiquísimas ruinas teotihuacanas, anteriores a la época tolteca. Un dios zapoteca, representado frecuentemente en las urnas de barro, que son tan características de esta cultura y de las que le precedieron en el Valle de Oaxaca, por muchas de sus características parece corresponder a este dios. La multiplicidad de sus funciones también nos indica la gran antigüedad de su culto y la veneración con que se le veía en toda Mesoamérica. Quizá el aspecto más importante del dios, todavía muy poco conocido, es su relación con la idea de santidad y de pecado. Su lucha con su hermano Tezcatlipoca llega a tener en la época tolteca características no sólo míticas sino históricas. En efecto, Quetzalcóatl es el arquetipo de la santidad; su vida de ayuno y penitencia, su carácter sacerdotal, su benevolencia con sus hijos, los hombres, son patentes a través de las noticias que nos han conservado las crónicas y las representaciones de los manuscritos indígenas. Pero al lado de este aspecto de santidad encontramos también en Quetzalcóatl el pecado, que se traduce para los indígenas en la violación de la abstinencia sexual y en la embriaguez. El pecador se representa en los códices como el "comedor de inmundicias": el pecado es eso justamente, una inmundicia moral y llega a alcanzar proporciones de tragedia cuando es el dios mismo, el representante de la santidad, Quetzalcóatl, el que se deja arrastrar a la embriaguez y a la incontinencia. Claro está que es inducido a ella por el dios del mal, Tezcatlipoca, y, como decimos antes, en la larga lucha que sostienen estos dos dioses rivales, que en su combate van creando y deshaciendo el universo para volverlo a construir y desbaratar, Tezcatlipoca, el malvado, empleó al fin la seducción para hacer caer en pecado al santo Quetzalcóatl, como, según otro mito, la diosa del amor y la hermosura, Xochiquetzal, sedujo al virtuoso Yappan, provocando la ira de los dioses que lo convirtieron en alacrán. De este modo la lucha cósmica se transforma en una lucha moral, y más tarde, cuando el rey tolteca, el histórico Quetzalcóatl, es obligado a abandonar Tula, son los sacerdotes y los fieles de Tezcatlipoca los que persiguen al Quetzalcóatl histórico, y lo hacen abandonar la región central de México y huir a las tierras de Veracruz, Tabasco y Yucatán. La hipótesis de que Quetzalcóatl sea una importación de ideas europeas al suelo de América debe ser totalmente descartada. Mucho antes que se descubriera el Continente americano, es más, mucho antes que los europeos pudieran emprender expediciones al Continente americano, aún antes de la era cristiana, ya existía Quetzalcóatl. La interpretación del dios blanco y barbado de la leyenda, como un obispo irlandés o el apóstol Santo Tomás, no es sino uno de tantos errores que, a fuerza de repetirse, llegan quizá a adquirir la dignidad de las verdades. Quetzalcóatl, el dios barbado, es un dios viejísimo en Mesoamérica; aun antes de la era cristiana ya su culto existía en esta región del mundo. No es por cierto un dios extranjero en la región Mexicana; es, por el contrario, uno de los dioses más importantes y característicos de ella.

APPENDIX III: HERNÁN CORTÉS, CARTA DE RELACIÓN [1405]

Y los bergantines entraron de golpe por aquel lago y rompieron por medio de la flota de canoas, y la gente de guerra que en ellas estaba ya no osaban pelear. Y plugo a Dios que un capitán de un bergantín, que se dice Garci Holguín, llegó en pos de una canoa en la cual le pareció que iba gente de manera; y como llevaba dos o tres ballesteros en la proa del bergantín e iban encarando en los de la canoa, hiciéronle señal que estaba allí el señor, que no tirasen, y saltaron de presto, y prendiéronle a él y a aquel Guatimucín, y a aquel señor de Tacuba, y a otros principales que con el estaban; y luego el dicho capitán Garci Holguín me trajo allí a la azotea donde estaba, que era junto al lago, al señor de la ciudad y a los otros principales presos; el cual, como le hice sentar, no mostrándole riguridad ninguna, llegóse a mí y díjome en su lengua que ya él había hecho todo lo que de su parte era obligado para defenderse a sí y a los suyos hasta venir en aquel estado, que ahora hiciese de él lo que yo quisiese; y puso la mano en un puñal que yo tenía, diciéndome que le diese de puñaladas y le matase. Y yo le animé y le dije que no tuviese temor ninguno; y así, preso este señor, luego en ese punto cesó la guerra, a la cual plugo a Dios Nuestro Señor dar conclusión martes, día de San Hipólito, que fueron 13 de agosto de 1521 años. De manera que desde el día que se puso cerco a la ciudad, que fué a 30 de mayo del dicho año, hasta que se ganó, pasaron setenta y cinco días, en los cuales vuestra majestad verá los trabajos, peligros y desventuras que estos sus vasallos padecieron, en los cuales mostraron tanto sus personas, que las obras dan buen testimonio de ello. Y en todos aquellos setenta y cinco días del cerco ninguno se pasó que no se tuviese combate con los de la ciudad, poco o mucho. Aquel día de la prisión de Guatimucín y toma de la ciudad, después de haber recogido el despojo que se pudo haber, nos fuimos al real dando gracias a nuestro Señor por tan señalada merced y tan deseada victoria como nos había dado.
Allí en el real estuve tres o cuatro días, dando orden en muchas cosas que convenían y después nos venimos a la ciudad de Cuyoacán donde hasta ahora he estado entendiendo en la buena orden gobernación y pacificación de estas partes. Recogido el oro y otras cosas, con parecer de los oficiales de vuestra majestad se hizo fundición de ello, y montó lo que se fundió más de ciento y treinta mil castellanos de que se dió el quinto al tesorero de vuestra majestad, sin el quinto de otros derechos que a vuestra majestad pertenecieron de esclavos y otras cosas, según más largo se verá por la relación de todo lo que a vuestra majestad perteneció, que irá firmado de nuestros nombres. Y el oro que restó se repartió en mí y en los españoles, según la manera y servicio y calidad de cada uno; demás del dicho oro se hubieron ciertas piezas y joyas de oro y de las mejores de ellas se dió el quinto al dicho tesorero de vuestra majestad.

[1405] *Hernán Cortés: Cartas de Relación*, Editores Mexicanos Unidos, Mexico 1990, pp. 200-201.

APPENDIX IV: EXPOSICIÓN DE PINTURAS AL TEMPLE EN MÉXICO, 1560 [1406]

Estas sesenta y cuatro pinturas fueron todas originales, es decir, no copias de otras o de grabados, como fue el uso común de la pintura colonial posterior. Fue la primera vez que se ensayó el retrato en México al reproducir a Carlos V, a Hernán Cortés, a Fernando el Católico, Moctezuma II, Cuauhtémoc y Atahualpa. Para el único que pudo haber modelo a copiar fue para Carlos V, si es que ya estaba en el Real Palacio el cuadro de Tiziano. A Cortés y a los reyes o tecuhtlis Aztecas, todos los pintores los habían conocido. Recordemos las pinturas. En los zócalos estuvieron:

1. La diosa Prudencia quitando una guirnalda de la cabeza de Ulises y poniéndola a Carlos V.
2. Muchos indios enlutados, con candelas encendidas en las manos.
3. Un robusto villano procurando acorvar una palma, que simbolizaba la constancia.
4. La Muerte teniendo a Carlos V de la mano.
5. Un castillo con un león a la puerta y en lo alto un gallo; "daba a entender esta figura el esfuerzo y cuidado con que el César ganó y conservó muchos reinos y señoríos".
6. El laberinto de Dédalo, "con un clavo en la puerta y un ovillo colgado del clavo", recordando que Carlos V había salido airoso de muchas difíciles empresas.
7. Hernán Cortés ante el emperador, armado y con la espada desnuda en la mano "y a par de él muchos indios recordando La Conquista".
8. "La Muerte levantando un brazo hacia el cielo y el Emperador dándole la mano, contando sus triunfos, rindiéndose con ellos a la Muerte."
9. "El Buen Celo, vestido de blanco, con dos rostros, uno mirando al cielo y con un brazo alzado; el otro mirando al suelo y bajado el brazo." Significaba "haber guiado las cosas temporales para el cielo"
10. Carlos V sentado y "los nueve de la Fama en pie"; la Fama "volando sobre la cabeza del emperador, descogiendo con las manos un envoltorio de papel lleno de trofeos, dando a entender que sólo el César la había ocupado tanto en publicar sus hazañas".
11. La Muerte con una culebra enroscada en el brazo derecho y en la mano una saeta, "avisando la necesidad del morir y la prudencia con que se había de esperar".
12. Carlos V, abiertos los brazos, espera a la muerte.
13. Había dos rostros, "el uno vivo y el otro muerto", significando la buena muerte del emperador.
14. "La ciudad de México sobre una laguna, con muchos ídolos quemados y quebrados, arrojados del templo y al otro lado muchos indios hincados de rodillas, adorando una cruz rodeada de rayos de sol [...]"
15. "El Emperador sentado, armado de todas armas, en silla imperial, y aquellos afamados capitanes, Alejandro, Aníbal, Pirro, Escipión Africano, las cabezas descubiertas, armados, cogiendo yerba del campo en señal de vencidos."
16. "Carlos V sentado, con el cetro tendido, y Moctezuma y Atahualpa, emperadores en este Nuevo Mundo, hincados de rodillas, tendidas las manos, con rostros alegres, manifestaban que habían sido vencidos para vencer al demonio que los tenía vencidos."
17. "La Justicia, con un peso en la mano y una espada desnuda en la otra y el emperador frontero, en pie, con corona y cetro."
18. "El dios Júpiter, vestido a la antigua, metido en la mar, las espaldas vueltas a España y el rostro a Occidente, con las dos columnas de Plus Ultra debajo de los brazos, denotando que para la gran ventura del César, no había término. Aludía a lo de Virgilio en el primero de La Eneida, por lo cual decía la letra Imperium sine fine dedi."
19. El Papa Alejandro VI entregando el Nuevo Mundo a Fernando V de Castilla.
20. La Justicia, con una guirnalda en una mano y una espada en la otra, mirando una balanza cuyos platillos se equilibraban. "Denotaba esta figura la gran rectitud del César y la acrisolada justicia que a los suyos guardó."
21. "Las tres furias infernales, con su título que decía: Euménides. Abajo estaba aquella señalada batalla naval que los españoles tuvieron con los indios, cuando prendiendo a Cuauhtemotzin, acabaron de tomar la ciudad de México."

[1406] In de la Maza, Francisco, *La mitología clásica en el arte colonial de México*, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Estudios y fuentes del arte en México, XXIV, UNAM, Mexico 1968, pp. 24-30.

22. Una doncella sedente, con un unicornio en su regazo. “Significaba esta figura la clemencia y benignidad con que el César atrajo a su servicio a muchos.”
23. Hernán Cortés a caballo y al fondo “los navíos en que pasó, quemados y echados al través”.
24. Faetón cayendo del cielo con el carro abrasado en llamas y Carlos V guiando un carro “derecho”.
25. El sultán y los reyes de Francia e Inglaterra sentados y Harpócrates de pie “con el dedo en la boca, haciéndoles que callen, mostrándoles con la otra mano un águila real que iba volando”.
26. La Envidia, “muy flaca y triste, envueltas víboras en la cabeza, mirando ciertos trofeos que pendían de un árbol”.
27. “Hernán Cortés, armado, en lo alto del templo del demonio mayor, que llamaban Uchilobos, derrocándole de su lugar y haciéndole pedazos.”
28. “Un león abrazado con una sierpe. Denotaba que ningún otro príncipe como el César prudencia y fortaleza habían sido tan grandes.”
Como faltan dos hojas al original, ignoramos los temas de las cuatro pinturas del ultimo pedestal.
En los frontones y medios frontones eran:
29. La Fama con alas en brazos y pies.
30. Carlos V incensando a la Fe.
31. Un niño en la cuna con corona imperial.
32. La Gloria en figura de doncella, coronada de laurel.
33. Un león rodeado de abejas, como símbolo de “que en el fuerte debe haber discreción y sabor”.
34. Una pirámide de la que pendían dos cadenas. La Muerte y la Fama en contienda.
35. La Temeridad, una doncella, ante un león.
36. “Una columna, llena de letras, metida en el río Leteo.” Deberían ser doce, pero se le olvidan un frontón y dos medios y pasa a describirnos las que estaban “en el espacio de la aguja que está encima de la capilla, entrando al túmulo”. No es nada claro todo esto. Las agujas son los remates cónicos “encima de la capilla”, pero ¿cómo es eso de “entrando” al túmulo? Sin embargo, más adelante, dice que “agraciaban al túmulo los obeliscos y agujas piramidales y porque los espacios bajo de ellos, cubiertos en los lados que podían ser vistos [...]”. Y no hay posibilidad de reconstruir las colocaciones de las pinturas por el grabado del túmulo, pues no fueron señaladas.
Los lienzos que iban en esos extraños espacios eran los siguientes:
37. Carlos V toma una guirnalda.
38. Una culebra saliendo de unas piedras.
39. Un blandón encendido.
40. Un círculo rodeando al cetro imperial.
41. Apolo sobre la ciudad de México.
42. Carlos V quitándose los atuendos imperiales.
43. Un lebrel sobre un puente levadizo.
44. Un ave Fénix en la hoguera.
45. Una colmena con su enjambre de abejas.
En el segundo cuerpo, en los cuatro lados, iban poderosos escudos imperiales, esculpidos, y en “cuatro espacios” no bien explicados, se pusieron las figuras siguientes:
46. Unas grullas durmiendo y una velando.
47. Arquímedes sobre los muros de Siracusa.
48. El pintor Timantes arrojando el pincel.
Y vuelve a olvidarse el cuarto tema, pues pasa a la cubierta, y luego nos habla “del espacio que por lo alto hacía el arco de enmedio que abrazaba la capilla mayor del túmulo”, es decir, ya en el interior y bajo el techo, subiendo las escaleras. Estamos pues, junto al féretro. Allí estaban:
49. La Memoria en figura de mujer, coronada de laurel.
50. La Antigüedad en figura de vieja arrugada.
51. La Iglesia Militante en figura de doncella.
52. Hércules peleando con la serpiente Hidra.
53. Un mundo oscurecido por la muerte de Carlos V.
54. “Luego adelante iba por el mar un navío y el pescado Echeneida o Rémora que le detenía.”
Los temas o personajes clásicos serían: Ulises, que siempre ha sido símbolo de la prudencia (número 1).
El Laberinto de Creta. Explica Cervantes de Salazar que “correspondía esta figura a la fábula de Teseo”, pero no nos dice si, junto a la puerta del laberinto, estaba el propio Teseo (número 6).

Alejandro, Aníbal, Pirro y Escipión el Africano. Es raro que no estuviese Julio César (número 15) .
Júpiter dando el Imperio a Carlos V, con el verso de La Eneida: "dí un Imperio sin límite". Es curioso que sea el propio Zeus quien da el Imperio de Europa y luego, en la siguiente pintura, sea el Papa el que entrega el de Las Indias ¿I Fernando el Católico (número 18).
Las Furias, con su letrero: Euménides, es decir, las "bondadosas", según les decían los griegos, en curiosa contradicción, para tenerlas gratas y conjurarlas. Por eso también se les llamó las potnias o semnias y ababias, o sea, las "venerandas" o "inocentes". Presidían estas Furias la prisión de Cuauhtémoc significando "cómo los demonios figurados por las Furias, incitaban a los indios a que no quisiesen paz con los nuestros". En el siglo XVI, a pesar del humanismo, los dioses helénicos eran diablos, inspiradores del mal y equiparables a los dioses indígenas, también demonios.
Apolo sobre la ciudad de México, "coronado de laurel, con un libro en la mano derecha, dando a entender que, para doctrina y lumbre de estos naturales, erigió el César la Universidad de México" (número 41).
El Ave Fénix es de origen oriental, pero de gran vigencia en Grecia. Representaba la inmortalidad, pues moría en el fuego pero renacía de sus cenizas (número 44).
Arquímedes, el famoso sabio griego, estaba pintado "sobre los muros de Siracusa, en hábito de filósofo, con un compás en la mano y una regla en la otra, significando cómo, unas veces con fuerza y otras con arte, el gran Cesar sujetó y ganó muchas provincias y señoríos". La comparación es forzada, pues poco tiene que ver Arquímedes con los triunfos guerreros de Carlos V (número 47).
El pintor Timantes que estaba "arrojando el pincel y tendiendo un velo, dando a entender que no se podían pintar ni escribir las hazañas del César". La nota de O'Gorman dice: "Pintor griego que floreció hacia 400 antes de C. Su obra maestra fue el Sacrificio de Ifigenia, en la que aparecía Agamenón cubriéndose la cara con un velo." También sabemos que, en un concurso celebrado en Samos para premiar la mejor escena de la lucha de Ulises y Ayax para apoderarse de las armas de Aquiles, salió triunfante (número 48).
Y, por último, el propio Hércules también hacía acto de presencia, más forzado que Arquímedes, pues su pleito con la serpiente significaba "haber sido Carlos V dañador y vencedor de la herejía luterana" (?) (número 52).
Por supuesto que las figuras de la Prudencia, la Justicia, la Envidia, la Fama, la doncella del unicornio (número 22), etcétera, que andaban en el túmulo, eran figuras romanas.
Y en 1559 y en el patio más grande y solemne de México, en un monumento público, pudo verse, durante muchos días, que los dioses y los héroes alternaban con Carlos V. Allí contemplaron los habitantes de la ciudad a cuatro dioses: Júpiter, Apolo, Hércules y Harpócrates; un semidiós: Faetón; dos héroes mitológicos: Teseo y Ulises; tres reyes históricos y un gran general: Alejandro, Aníbal, Pirro y Escipión el Africano; un sabio: Arquímedes, y un artista: Timantes.

APPENDIX V: EL ARTE DE MÉXICO: MATERIA Y SENTIDO

(Prólogo al catálogo de la Exposición de Arte Mexicano en Madrid, 1977)
DIOSA, DEMONIA, OBRA MAESTRA [1407]

El 13 de agosto de 1790, mientras ejecutaban unas obras municipales y removían el piso de la Plaza Mayor de la ciudad de México, los trabajadores descubrieron una estatua colosal. La desenterraron y resultó ser una escultura de la diosa Coatlicue, "la de la falda de serpientes". El virrey Revillagigedo dispuso inmediatamente que fuese llevada a la Real y Pontificia Universidad de México como "un monumento de la antigüedad americana". Años antes Carlos III había donado a la Universidad una colección de copias en yeso de obras grecorromanas y la Coatlicue fue colocada entre ellas. No por mucho tiempo: a los pocos meses, los doctores universitarios decidieron que se volviese a enterrar en el mismo sitio en que había sido encontrada. La imagen Azteca no sólo podía avivar entre los indios la memoria de sus antiguas creencias sino que su presencia en los claustros era una afrenta a la idea misma de la belleza. No obstante, el erudito Antonio de León y Gama tuvo tiempo de hacer una descripción de la estatua y de otra piedra que había sido encontrada cerca de ella: el Calendario Azteca.

Las notas de León y Gama no se publicaron sino hasta 1804 en Roma. El barón Alejandro de Humboldt, durante su estancia en México, el mismo año, muy probablemente las leyó en esa traducción Italiana. Pidió entonces, según refiere el historiador Ignacio Bernal, que se le dejase examinar la estatua. Las autoridades accedieron, la desenterraron y, una vez que el sabio alemán hubo satisfecho su curiosidad, volvieron a enterrarla. La presencia de la estatua terrible era insoportable.

La Coatlicue Mayor − así la llaman ahora los arqueólogos para distinguirla de otras esculturas de la misma deidad − no fue desenterrada definitivamente sino años después de la Independencia. Primero la arrinconaron en un patio de la Universidad; después estuvo en un pasillo, tras un biombo, como un objeto alternativamente de curiosidad y bochorno; más tarde la colocaron en un lugar visible, como una pieza de interés Científico e histórico; hoy ocupa un lugar central en la gran sala del Museo Nacional de Antropología consagrada a la cultura Azteca. La carrera de la Coatlicue − de diosa a demonio, de demonio a monstruo y de monstruo a obra maestra − ilustra los cambios de sensibilidad que hemos experimentado durante los últimos cuatrocientos años. Esos cambios reflejan la progresiva secularización que distingue a la modernidad. Entre el sacerdote Azteca que la veneraba como una diosa y el fraile español que la veía como una manifestación demoníaca, la oposición no es tan profunda como parece a primera vista; para ambos la Coatlicue era una presencia sobrenatural, un "misterio tremendo". La divergencia entre la actitud del siglo XVIII y la del siglo XX encubre asimismo una semejanza: la reprobación del primero y el entusiasmo del segundo son de orden predominantemente intelectual y estético. Desde fines del siglo XVIII la Coatlicue abandona el territorio magnético de lo sobrenatural y penetra en los corredores de la especulación estética y antropológica. Cesa de ser una cristalización de los poderes del otro mundo y se convierte en un episodio en la historia de las creencias de los hombres. Al dejar el templo por el museo, cambia de naturaleza ya que no de apariencia.

A pesar de todos estos cambios, la Coatlicue sigue siendo la misma. No ha dejado de ser el bloque de piedra de forma vagamente humana y cubierto de atributos aterradores que untaban con sangre y sahumaban con incienso de copal en el Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan. Pero no pienso únicamente en su aspecto material sino en su irradiación psíquica: como hace cuatrocientos años, la estatua es un objeto que, simultáneamente, nos atrae y nos repele, nos seduce y nos horroriza. Conserva intactos sus poderes, aunque hayan cambiado el lugar y el modo de su manifestación. En lo alto de la pirámide o enterrada entre los escombros de un Teocalli derruido, escondida entre los trebejos de un gabinete de antigüedades o en el centro de un museo, la Coatlicue provoca nuestro asombro. Imposible no detenerse ante ella, así sea por un minuto. Suspensión del ánimo: la masa de piedra, enigma labrado, paraliza nuestra mirada. No importa cuál sea la sensación que sucede a ese instante de inmovilidad: admiración, horror, entusiasmo, curiosidad − la realidad, una vez más, sin cesar de ser lo que vemos, se muestra como aquello que está más allá de lo que vemos. Lo que llamamos "obra de arte" − designación equívoca, sobre todo aplicada a las obras de las civilizaciones antiguas − no es tal vez sino una configuración de signos. Cada espectador combina esos signos de una manera distinta y cada

[1407] Paz, Octavio, "El arte de México: materia y sentido", *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*, III: Los privilegios de la vista, Arte de México, 1. Arte antiguo y moderno, Edición de Octavio Paz, Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica Mexico 1989, pp. 39-42.

combinación emite un significado diferente. Sin embargo, la pluralidad de significados se resuelve en un sentido único, siempre el mismo. Un sentido que es inseparable de lo sentido.
El desenterramiento de la Coatlicue repite, en el modo menor, lo que debió haber experimentado la conciencia europea ante el descubrimiento de América. Las nuevas tierras aparecieron como una dimensión desconocida de la realidad. El Viejo Mundo estaba regido por la tríada: tres tiempos, tres edades, tres humores, tres personas, tres continentes. América no cabía, literalmente, en la visión tradicional del mundo. Después del descubrimiento, la tríada perdió sus privilegios. No más tres dimensiones y una sola realidad verdadera: América añadía otra dimensión, la cuarta, la dimensión desconocida. A su vez, la nueva dimensión no estaba resida por el principio trinitario sino por la cifra cuatro. Para los indios americanos el espacio y el tiempo, mejor dicho: el espacio/tiempo, dimensión una y dual de la realidad, obedecía a la ordenación de los cuatro puntos cardinales: cuatro destinos, cuatro dioses, cuatro colores, cuatro eras, cuatro trasmundos. Cada dios tenía cuatro aspectos; cada espacio, cuatro direcciones; cada realidad, cuatro caras. El cuarto continente había surgido como una presencia plena, palpable, henchida de sí, con sus montañas y sus ríos, sus desiertos y sus selvas, sus dioses quiméricos y sus riquezas contantes y sonantes − lo real en sus expresiones más inmediatas y lo maravilloso en sus manifestaciones más delirantes. No otra realidad sino el otro aspecto, la otra dimensión de la realidad. América, como la Coatlicue, era la revelación visible, pétrea, de los poderes invisibles.

APPENDIX VI: PARA JUSTINO FERNÁNDEZ: DATOS SOBRE LA ESTATUA DE CUAUHTÉMOC DEL PASEO DE LA REFORMA, MÉXICO. [1408]

Te envío copia del decreto de 23 de agosto de 1877 por el cual se expidió una convocatoria para hacer un monumento a Cuauhtémoc. Creo que te interesará.
Acerca de este asunto he recogido estos datos que en seguida te proporciono, estimando que pueden ser útiles para tu trabajo.
a. El Presidente de la Rep. que expidió el decreto fue el General Porfirio Díaz.
b. El Srio. del Estado y del Despacho de Fomento, era el General Vicente Riva Palacio.
c. El Jurado Calificador, estuvo compuesto por los
Sres. Ingenieros J. S. Bagally, Manuel Gargollo y Parra, Ramón Rodríguez Arrangoyti, y Emilio Donde.
d. Fueron cinco los proyectos presentados.
e. Fue premiado el marcado Núm. 3 con la marca de una estrella y con el lema "Verdad, Belleza y Utilidad". Su autor fue el Ing. Francisco M. Jiménez, quien obtuvo el premio de $1,000.00 a que se refiere el inciso 10 del decreto de convocatoria.
f. El Ing. Jiménez celebró contrato con la Sría. de Fomento para la construcción del monumento; pero aun cuando se empezó la obra por dicho señor éste no la vio terminada por fallecimiento, acaecido el 17 de abril de 1884.
g. La primera piedra se colocó el 5 de mayo de 1878.
h. La obra la continuó el Ing. Arq. del Palacio Nacional, D. Ramón Agea. Para la estatua se celebró contrato por el ministro de Fomento, General Carlos Pacheco, con Miguel Noreña, profesor de escultura en la Escuela de Bellas Artes. El contrato incluía los bajo relieves, las lápidas, los trofeos, los ornatos y los leopardos. (Estos últimos fueron proyectados de chiluca primariamente.)
i. El costo total asignado en el contrato fue de ..... $ 40,863.00
j. El escultor Noreña es el autor de la estatua que se encontraba en el Seminario del cosmógrafo Enrico Martínez.

k. La estatua pesa (Cuauhtémoc).....2,301
Los dos bajorrelieves.....2,359
Los 8 leopardos.....2,761
Los trofeos.....1,496
Las dos lápidas.....1,611
El friso.....920
La decoración del pedestal.....460

1. El costo total de la obra fue de.....$ 97,914.21
Estos datos han sido tomados del libro intitulado Un año en México, don Gustavo Baz. E. Dublán y Cía. Editores. 1887. El autor cita como fuente un folleto escrito por D. Francisco Sosa. Con relación a monumentos a Cuauhtémoc, puede interesarte esta otra noticia sacada del libro citado.
Hubo un monumento a Cuauhtémoc anterior al del Paseo de la Reforma, es de fecha 1869 erigido, según parece, por el Ayuntamiento de México. Se inauguró en agosto de 1869 en presencia de las autoridades y existe o existió en el Paseo de la Viga. (Según Baz en la época de su libro, aún existía ese monumento. Yo no recuerdo haberlo visto.)

[1408] Fernández, Justino, *El Arte del Siglo XIX en México*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico 1983, p. 213.

APPENDIX VII: TRES LLAMAMIENTOS DE ORIENTACIÓN ACTUAL A LOS PINTORES Y ESCULTORES DE LA NUEVA GENERACIÓN AMERICANA [1409]

I. Influencias perjudiciales y nuevas tendencias

NUESTRA labor, en su mayor parte, es extemporánea y se desarrolla incoherentemente sin producir casi nada perdurable que responda al vigor de nuestras grandes facultades raciales. Apartados como estamos de las nuevas tendencias de sólida orientación, a las que prejuiciosamente recibimos con hostilidad, adoptamos de Europa únicamente las influencias fofas que envenenan nuestra juventud ocultándonos los valores primordiales: la anemia de Aubrey Beardsley, el preciosismo de Amán Jean, el arcaísmo funesto de Ignacio Zuloaga, los fuegos artificiales de Anglada Camarassa, los caramelos escultóricos de Bistolfi, Queralt, Benlliure, etc., todo ese art-nouveau comerciable, peligrosamente insinuante por su camouflage y que tan espléndido mercado tiene entre nosotros (muy especialmente el importado de España).

De principios del siglo XIX a nuestros días, las manifestaciones plásticas de España revelan una marcada decadencia; las últimas exposiciones colectivas de Madrid, a las que concurrieron las fuerzas representativas del arte español contemporáneo, llenan el corazón de desencanto; arte literario tradicional, arte teatral a manera de zarzuela folklorista que por afinidad de raza nos ha contagiado terriblemente. Sunyer, Picasso y Juan Gris, tres españoles de genio y de su época, hace muchos años que tendieron ávidamente los brazos a Cezanne y oyeron la voz cascada de Renoir.

Felizmente surge en España un grupo de pintores y escultores que sienten la inquietud del momento, inquieren, se libertan del peso enorme de su gran tradición y se universalizan; grupo formado en su mayor parte por catalanes.

Razonadamente acojamos todas las inquietudes espirituales de renovación nacidas de Pablo Cezanne a nuestros días: la vigorización sustancial del impresionismo, el cubismo depurador por deductivo en sus diferentes ramificaciones, el futurismo que aportaba nuevas fuerzas emotivas (no el que intenta aplastar ingenuamente el anterior proceso invulnerable), la novísima labor revaloradora de "voces clásicas"(Dada aún está en gestación); verdades afluentes al gran caudal, cuyos múltiples aspectos psíquicos encontraremos fácilmente dentro de nosotros mismos; teorías preparatorias más o menos abundantes en elementos fundamentales, que han devuelto a la pintura y a la escultura su natural finalidad plástica, enriqueciéndola con nuevos factores admirables.

Como principio ineludible en la cimentación de nuestro arte, ¡reintegremos a la pintura y a la escultura sus valores desaparecidos, aportándole a la vez nuevos valores! ¡Como los clásicos, realicemos nuestra obra dentro de las leyes inviolables del equilibrio estético!; como ellos, seamos hábiles obreros; volvamos a los antiguos en su base constructiva, en su gran sinceridad, pero no recurramos a "motivos"arcaicos que nos serán exóticos; ¡vivamos nuestra maravillosa época dinámica!, amemos la mecánica moderna que nos pone en contacto con emociones plásticas inesperadas; los aspectos actuales de nuestra vida diaria, la vida de nuestras ciudades en construcción; la ingeniería sobria y práctica de nuestros edificios modernos, desprovistos de complicaciones arquitectónicas (moles inmensas de hierro y cemento clavadas en la tierra); los muebles y utensilios confortables (materia plástica de primer orden). Cubramos lo humano-invulnerable con ropajes modernos: "sujetos nuevos", "aspectos nuevos". ¡Debemos, ante todo, tener el firme convencimiento de que el arte del futuro tiene que ser, a pesar de sus naturales decadencias transitorias, ascendentemente superior!

II. Preponderancia del Espíritu constructivo sobre el Espíritu decorativo o analítico

Dibujamos siluetas con bonitos colores; al modelar nos interesamos por arabescos epidérmicos y olvidamos de concebir las grandes masas primarias: cubos, conos, esferas, cilindros, pirámides, que deben ser el esqueleto de toda arquitectura plástica. Sobrepongamos, los pintores, el Espíritu constructivo al Espíritu únicamente decorativo; el color y la línea son elementos expresivos de segundo orden, lo fundamental, la base de la obra de arte, es la magnifica estructura geometral de la forma con la concepción, engranaje y

[1409] These *Llamamientos* were published in the only number that was published in May 1921, in Barcelona, Spain, of *Vida Americana*, "revista mensual para los intelectuales, para los comerciantes, para los industriales", of which Siqueiros was editor in chief and artistic director. With illustrations by the Mexicans Diego M. Rivera, Mario de Zayas and Siqueiros, and by the Uruguayans José Torres-García and Rafael P. Barradas. Reproduced in Tibol, Raquel, *Textos de David Alfaro Siqueiros*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, *Archivo del Fondo 22-23*, Mexico 1974, pp. 19-23.

materialización arquitectural de los volúmenes y la perspectiva de los mismos, que haciendo "términos" crean la profundidad del "ambiente"; "crear volúmenes en el espacio'. Según nuestra objetividad dinámica o estática, seamos ante todo constructores; amasemos y plantemos sólidamente nuestra propia conmoción ante la naturaleza con su apego minucioso a la verdad.
Especifiquemos particularizando sin ambigüedad la "calidad" orgánica de los "elementos plásticos" agrupados en nuestra obra: creando materia consistente o frágil, áspera o tersa, opaca o transparente, etc., y su peso determinado.
Sobre un armazón consistente, caricaturicemos, si es preciso, para humanizar. Las teorías cuya finalidad plástica es "pintar la luz" ("luminismo", "puntillismo", "divisionismo"), es decir, copiar simplemente o interpretar analíticamente el ambiente luminoso, carecen de fuerte idealidad creadora, única objetividad del arte; abandonadas teorías pueriles que de algunos años a esta parte hemos acogido frenéticamente en América, ramas enfermas del "impresionismo", árbol podado por Pablo Cezanne, el restaurador de lo esencial: "Hay que hacer del impresionismo algo definitivo como la pintura de los museos." La comprensión del admirable fondo humano del "arte negro" y del arte "primitivo" en general, dio clara y profunda orientación a las artes plásticas perdidas cuatro siglos atrás en una senda opaca de desacierto; acerquémonos por nuestra parte a las obras de los antiguos pobladores de nuestros valles, los pintores y escultores indios (mayas, Aztecas, incas, etc.); nuestra proximidad climatológica con ellos nos dará la asimilación del vigor constructivo de sus obras, en las que existe un claro conocimiento elemental de la naturaleza, que nos puede servir de punto de partida. Adoptemos su energía sintética, sin llegar, naturalmente, a las lamentables reconstrucciones arqueológicas ("Indianismo ", "primitivismo", "americanismo"), tan de moda entre nosotros y que nos están llevando a estilizaciones de vida efímera.
III. Abandonemos los motivos literarios, ¡hagamos plástica pura! Desechemos las teorías basadas en la relatividad del "arte nacional"; ¡universalicémonos!, que nuestra natural fisonomía racial y local aparecerá en nuestra obra, inevitablemente. Nuestras escuelas libres son Academias al aire libre (peligrosas como las Academias oficiales en las que al menos conocemos a los clásicos), colectividades en las que hay maestros que hacen negocio y se impone un criterio flaco, que mata las personalidades incipientes.
No escuchemos el dictado crítico de nuestros poetas; producen bellísimos artículos literarios distanciados por completo del valor real de nuestras obras.

APPENDIX VIII: DECLARACIÓN SOCIAL, POLÍTICA Y ESTÉTICA [1410]

El Sindicato de Trabajadores Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores a las razas nativas humilladas a través de los siglos; a los soldados convertidos en verdugos por sus jefes; a los trabajadores y campesinos azotados por los ricos; a los intelectuales que no adulan a la burguesía.

Estamos de parte de aquéllos que exigen la desaparición de un sistema antiguo y cruel, dentro del cual tú, trabajador del campo, produces alimentos para los gaznates de capataces y politicastros, mientras mueres de hambre; dentro del cual tú, trabajador de la ciudad, mueves las fábricas, tramas las telas y creas con tus manos las comodidades para rufianes y prostitutas, mientras tu cuerpo se arrastra y se congela, dentro del cual tú, soldado indio, abandonas heroicamente la tierra que trabajas y das tu vida interminablemente para destruir la miseria que se abate desde hace siglos sobre tu raza.

No sólo el trabajo noble, sino hasta la mínima expresión de la vida espiritual y física de nuestra raza, brota de lo nativo (y particularmente de lo indio). Su admirable y extraordinariamente peculiar talento para crear belleza: el arte del pueblo Mexicano es la más sana expresión espiritual que haya en el mundo y su tradición nuestra posesión más grande. Es grande porque siendo del pueblo es colectiva, y esto es el por qué nuestra meta estética fundamental es socializar la expresión artística que tiende a borrar totalmente el individualismo que es burgués.

Repudiamos la llamada pintura de caballete y todo el arte de los círculos ultraintelectuales, porque es aristocrático, y glorificamos la expresión del Arte Monumental, porque es propiedad pública.

Proclamamos que dado que el momento social es de transición entre un orden decrépito y uno nuevo, los creadores de belleza deben realizar sus mayores esfuerzos para hacer su producción de valor ideológico para el pueblo, y la meta ideal del arte, que actualmente es una expresión de masturbación individualista, sea el arte para todos, de educación y de batalla.

Hacemos un llamamiento general a los intelectuales revolucionarios de México para que, olvidando su sentimentalismo y zanganería proverbiales por más de un siglo, se unan a nosotros en la lucha social y estético-educativa que realizamos.

[1410] Edited by Siqueiros in 1922 and signed by all the members of the Union. This is habitually mentioned as the *Manifiesto de Pintores, Escultores y Grabadores Revolucionarios de México*. Reproduced in Tibol, Raquel, *Siqueiros, introductor de realidades*, UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1961, p. 230.

APPENDIX XIX: DATOS BIOGRÁFICOS DE DIEGO RIVERA [1411]

Datos biográficos

1886. Nació el 8 de diciembre en la ciudad de Guanajuato. Comenzó a dibujar a los tres años de edad.
1891. Se trasladó con sus padres a la Ciudad de México.
1897. Empezó a asistir a las clases nocturnas de dibujo en la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes que impartía Andrés Ríos.
1899-1901. Recibe lecciones de Santiago Rebull, José María Velasco y Félix Parra.
1902. Empezó a trabajar libremente en el campo disgustado con la orientación de un nuevo director, el pintor catalán Antonio Fabrés.
1907. Realizó su primera exposición. Consiguió una beca del gobernador del estado de Veracruz, Teodoro Dehesa, para estudiar en España. "El choque entre la tradición Mexicana, los ejemplos de pintura antigua y el ambiente y producción moderna española de entonces, obrando sobre su timidez educada en el respeto a Europa lo desorientaron, haciéndole producir cuadros detestables muy inferiores a los hechos por él en México antes de marchar a Europa. En ese año trabajó en el taller de don Eduardo Chicharro". [1412]
1908-1909. Viajó por Francia, Bélgica, Holanda e Inglaterra. Exhibe con Los Independientes en París.
1910. En octubre vuelve a México y permanece hasta junio de 1911. Realiza una exposición en la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes. "Asiste al principio de la Revolución Mexicana en los estados de Morelos y de México, y al movimiento zapatista; no pinta nada, pero en su espíritu se definen los valores que orientarán su vida de trabajo".
1911. En julio vuelve a París y "empieza ordenadamente su trabajo".
"Influencias neo-impresionistas (Seurat)". Exhibe en el Salón de Otoño de Paris. Relación con Angelina Beloff.
1912. "Influencias greco-cézanianas". Expone con Los Independientes.
1913. "Influencias picassianas; amistad con Picasso". Pasa una corta temporada en Toledo donde pinta una serie de paisajes que expone en el Salón de Otoño.
1914. "Aparecen dentro de sus cuadros cubistas (discípulo de Picasso) los indicios de su personalidad de Mexicano". Poco después de estallar la primera guerra mundial, hace un viaje a Mallorca y luego a Madrid, donde exhibe su obra junto con la de Marie Blanchard.
1915. En París; "sus compañeros cubistas condenan su exotismo".
1916. "Desarrollo de ese exotismo (coeficiente Mexicano)". Evangelina Beloff da a luz al pequeño Diego, que morirá 14 meses después.
1917. "Empieza a anunciarse en su pintura el resultado de su trabajo sobre la estructura de la obra de arte y apártanse sus cuadros del tipo cubista".
1918. "Nuevas influencias de Cézanne y Renoir. Amistad con Elie Faure".
1919. Conoce en París a David Alfaro Siqueiros.
1920-1921. Viaja por Italia. Realiza 350 dibujos al estudiar la obra de los bizantinos y los prerrenacentistas.
1921. En julio vuelve a México. Recorre Yucatán y Puebla. "Dibujos al choque con la belleza de México. Aparece al fin la personalidad del pintor". Entrevistado para el periódico El Universal (julio 21 de 1921) manifiesta su deseo de estudiar "el arte popular, las ruinas de nuestro asombroso pasado, con objeto de cristalizar algunas ideas de arte, ciertos proyectos que abrigo y que, si logro realizar, serán indudablemente los que darán un nuevo y amplio sentido a mi obra". Se propone estudiar el arte maya, Azteca y tolteca que, opina, no tienen que envidiar a ningún otro.
1922. "Decoración del Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria. No logra hacer una obra autónoma y las influencias de Italia son extremadamente visibles". Titulada La Creación, fue pintada a la encáustica en 109.64 m2. Se casa con Guadalupe Marín; de este matrimonio nacen Guadalupe y Ruth. Ingresa al Partido Comunista Mexicano.

[1411] The text with the biographical data and the respective notes it is transcribed directly from Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 423-460.
[1412] This and the following data up to 1922 correspond to the biographical record written by Rivera for the magazine *El Arquitecto*, nr. VIII. March-April 1926.

1923. El 22 de junio, junto con Orozco, Jean Charlot, Amado de la Cueva, Roberto Montenegro, Xavier Guerrero, Carlos Mérida, Fermín Revueltas, Alfaro Siqueiros, Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Abraham Angel, Emilio Amero y José García Uribe, firma un manifiesto que decía: "Se ha iniciado una campaña contra el movimiento de pintura actual de México. Sólo por la ignorancia y la envidia puede ser atacado. Y para que el golpe tenga carácter de infamia mal calculada, se pretende mezclar el movimiento actual de pintura con la política personalista. Se nos tira la piedra del dinero manchada por aquello de gran derroche, precios fabulosos, ganancias pingües, etc. Al pintor que más se le paga en la Secretaría de Educación Pública se le liquida lo mismo que a un obrero pintor que cobra el precio común y corriente pintando paredes lisas por metro cuadrado. El público puede convencerse revisando los contratos que tienen los pintores con la Secretaría de Educación Pública. De ninguna manera esta protesta significa disculpa. Estamos seguros que el movimiento actual de pintura en México es expresión de la afirmación de nuestra nacionalidad, sus enemigos no lo atacan a nombre del buen gusto, porque el gusto que lo norma, manteniéndose Mexicano, encuentra acuerdo con el de los hombres civilizados de aquí y del extranjero; como lo demuestran las opiniones estampadas por escrito sobre nuestra labor en México, E.U. y Europa; así es que nuestros enemigos mezquinos deben a nombre del desarrollo de nuestro país y del buen gusto universal ser tratados como retardatarios ignorantes y perjudiciales, al mismo título y del mismo modo que los que se niegan a vacunarse, bañarse y aprender el silabario.
"Protestamos con toda la fuerza de nuestra sinceridad contra el montón que intrigue o levante voces para estorbar la marcha del movimiento de pintura actual de México, aprovechándose de la incomprensión del vulgo burgués que intentó desgarrar los cuadros de Manet, que protestó contra las decoraciones de Puvis de Chavannes en el Panteón, que insultó a Delacroix y a Ingres, que apedreó el David de Miguel Angel, que silbo a Ricardo Wagner guiado y azuzado siempre por los oscuros fracasados envidiosos de los artistas que trabajan de acuerdo con el sentir del pueblo y el gusto de los escogidos, y sin cuidarse del burgués incomprensivo que quiere normar los derechos de la obra de arte por su propia bajeza". [1413] Adhirieron a este manifiesto, entre otros, Martín Luis Guzmán, Genaro Estrada, José Juan Tablada, Antonio Caso, Julio Torri, Carlos Gutiérrez Cruz, Carlos Pellicer, Ignacio Asúnsolo, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, José Clemente Orozco, Manuel Toussaint, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Luis Enrique Erro, Palma Guillén, Alfonso Cravioto, Salomón de la Selva, Miguel Covarrubias, losé Romano Muñoz, Germán Cueto, Carlos Obregón Santacilia, Adolfo Best Maugard, Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna y Eduardo Villaseñor.
(1923) Inicia los murales de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, que concluirá en 1928. 1,585 m2 pintados al fresco en los corredores de los tres pisos y en el cubo de la escalera lateral sur. En la Convención del Partido Comunista Mexicano es elegido, junto con Siqueiros y Xavier Guerrero, para integrar el Comité Ejecutivo. Con un grupo numeroso de colegas funda el Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos Pintores y Escultores.
1924. En la primera quincena de marzo, con Siqueiros y Xavier Guerrero, comienzan a editar el periódico El Machete. En el núm. 13 (11 al 18 de septiembre) aparece una protesta del Sindicato contra "Nuevas profanaciones de pinturas murales". De esta manera los reaccionarios, incrustados "dentro del cuerpo mismo de la administración pública semirrevolucionaria, han manifestado procazmente el despecho que sienten ante manifestaciones plásticas que exaltan las virtudes del pueblo que todo lo produce, que todo lo crea, y que exhiben contundentemente los vicios de la burguesía que nada produce y todo se lo traga, al dañar parcialmente la obra pictórica que Diego Rivera ejecuta dentro de la Secretaría de Educación Pública". Una nota al pie de la protesta decía: Diego Rivera renuncio al Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores en el mes de julio por no estar conforme con el acuerdo de la mayoría a propósito de la protesta lanzada con motivo de la destrucción de las pinturas murales de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria; sin embargo, nosotros, por solidaridad gremial, estamos en el deber ineludible de apoyar su obra estético-social que significa un valor importante dentro de nuestra labor colectiva, a la que pertenece y dentro de la que se formó".
1925. Inicia los frescos en la Escuela Nacional de Agricultura en Chapingo. El 26 de abril envía una carta al PCM en la que expresa su convicción de que para sus ideales comunistas "es más útil mi labor como pintor que la que podría ejecutar como miembro militante del Partido; pido al Comité Nacional de él se me considere, en lo adelante, como simpatizante y no como miembro activo del Partido. Para salir del Partido en condiciones regulares cubriré mi adeudo de cuotas regulares, cubriré mi adeudo de cuotas atrazadas en cuanto reciba de quien corresponda un dato exacto sobre el monto de ellas, advirtiendo que mis solas ganancias desde el mes de enero de este año son $9.50 diarios". En respuesta fechada el 7 de junio, el Comité Ejecutivo del PCM acepta la renuncia y seguirlo considerando como simpatizante, y agrega: "La Asamblea

[1413] Published in the newspaper *El Mundo*, April 26 1923.

acordó se le manifestara a Ud. que su renuncia obedece a la intención de evadir las responsabilidades que le resulten por no atender a las instrucciones directivas que en distintas ocasiones le fueron hechas por el Comité de la Local, según comprobantes existentes en nuestro Archivo, y que no entendemos cómo un hombre que se precia de revolucionario, y que está identificado firmemente con los principios comunistas, puede desertar de la Internacional por su amor a la pintura, ni como puede su trabajo como pintor excluir la obra más importante de la lucha revolucionaria. En consecuencia, le manifestamos que desde ahora cesa su autoridad y carece de facultades para ejecutar actos con el carácter de miembro militante de nuestro Partido, tales como hacer declaraciones a la prensa burguesa y libertaria, como comunista, etc., y nos reservamos el derecho de refutar y desconocer todos los actos que ejecute con ese carácter; sin embargo le seguiremos considerando como simpatizante entusiasta y le deseamos que su labor artística sea tan provechosa para la causa proletaria como usted lo desea. En cuanto alas cuotas que adeuda y desea cumplir para que sea regular su salida del Partido, me permito indicarle que balanceando sus cuotas del presente año solamente le resulta un adeudo de quince pesos, a razón de tres pesos mensuales que le corresponden, de acuerdo con el salario de $9.50 que está devengando, según nos manifiesta, y a los cinco meses corridos a la fecha". [1414]

1926. En declaraciones hechas al periódico norteamericano The Survey Graphic [1415] expresa: "Con la cooperación de José Vasconcelos, ministro de Educación Pública, comenzamos a trabajar bajo contrato, como una unión de trabajadores, en la decoración de los muros de la Escuela Preparatoria y del propio Ministerio de Instrucción Pública. Nosotros somos trabajadores, pero no mercenarios; trabajamos en algunas ocasiones más de dieciséis horas al día, con el privilegio de trabajar, si lo deseábamos, ¡hasta los domingos!, y esto por un salario que no asciende a cuatro pesos por metro cuadrado. Cuando nos ausentamos excepto en viajes de estudio, no recibimos nuestro salario. Si yo recibo un poco más que los otros es porque pinto más de prisa, y también porque pago a un ayudante que me mezcle las pinturas, etc. Bajo estas condiciones este sindicato de artistas ha pintado en esos muros la historia del pueblo Mexicano".

1927. El 12 de febrero, como secretario general de la Sección Mexicana de la Liga Antimperialista de las Américas envía al presidente Plutarco Elías Calles un telegrama [1416] que decía: "[...]reunida anoche gran Asamblea, acordó por unanimidad expresarle su más franco apoyo y completa solidaridad por su actitud frente a menazas imperialismo".

Invitado por la Sociedad para las Relaciones Culturales de la URSS, viaja a Moscú para asistir a las celebraciones del Décimo Aniversario de la Revolución de Octubre, en compañía de Luis G. Monzón, ex senador comunista y miembro del CC del PCM, y de José Guadalupe Rodríguez, dirigente de la Liga Nacional Campesina, y de cinco representantes obreros. Es elegido miembro del presidium del Congreso de Amigos de Rusia y forma parte de su Comité de Prensa. Ante el Congreso de los científicos sustento la conferencia "La Revolución y la ciencia". En la reunión de los escritores revolucionarios habló sobre la literatura y el arte en México, América Central y las Antillas. Henri Barbusse lo invita a colaborar en la revista Monde. Firma la "Declaración de la Delegación Latinoamericana", en la que se constataba que "la Revolución Rusa ha creado la base de la renovación social del mundo". [1417] Es nombrado maestro de pintura monumental de la Escuela de Bellas Artes de Moscú.

1928. En 14 junio regresa a México en compañía de Siqueiros y de Graciela Amador y se encuentra con el nombramiento que le ha hecho el Comité Continental Organizador de la Liga Antimperialista de las Américas como Director de El Libertador, órgano oficial del Comité ¡Manos fuera de Nicaragua! Declara a los periodistas que deberá regresar a la URSS en tres meses pues Lunacharsky, Comisario de Educación Pública, lo ha invitado a pintar en la Escuela de Cuadros, en el Club Obrero Dux y en la sala de fiestas del edificio del Ejército Rojo. [1418] Había dejado bocetos y pensaba que le bastarían dos años para hacer esas obras que apoyaron con entusiasmo los delegados de los Estados Unidos y de Alemania. El reportero Jacobo Dalevuelta le pregunta por Trotsky y Rivera responde: "Vive en el destierro. Está en un lugar del Turkestan que era el preferido del zar". El 23 de junio, en el local del PCM, Rivera rinde un informe público de su viaje.

En acto organizado el 12 de octubre por el Comité Manos fuera de Nicaragua, junto con Jacobo Hurwitz, Marco A. Montero, Úrsulo Galván, Rafael Ramos Pedrueza y Sócrates Sandino, reciben una bandera

[1414] These documents were published in the nr. 41 of *El Machete*, August 13 1925.
[1415] Reproduced in the newspaper *El Demócrata*, March 7 1926.
[1416] Published in nr. 60 of *El Machete*, second fortnight of February 1927.
[1417] Published in *El Machete* nr. 96, January 7 1928.
[1418] Dalevuelta, Jacobo, "Diego Rivera vino; pero se irá otra vez", *El Universal*, June 15 1928.

arrebatada a la 47 Compañia, 11 Regimiento del cuerpo de marinos de los Estados Unidos, en el combate de El Zapote, el 23 de mayo de 1928. La enviaba Augusto César Sandino por intermedio de Gustavo Machado.
El 24 de octubre encabeza la lista de firmantes que protestan por el ataque de alumnos de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes con profesores y trabajadores de las Escuelas Libres de Pintura. Con Alfredo Ramos Martínez, Guillermo Ruiz, Siqueiros, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, Francisco Díaz de León, Fermín Revueltas, Francisco Dosamantes, Rosendo Soto, Ezequiel Negrete, Mardoño Magaña y otros, inquirían: " ¿Que es en México un artista revolucionario? Aquel que tomando parte activa en el empuje del pueblo hacia sus reivindicaciones, hace de su obra un esfuerzo por ser útil a ese movimiento? ¿Qué género de producción artística puede ser calificado como tomando parte en la lucha de las masas por sus reivindicaciones? Aquel que estéticamente contribuye a libertar el gusto público de la educación colonial tendiente a avasallar la ideología popular y más aún el que juntamente con esta función desempeña el de hablar directamente a las masas animándolas a la lucha con su ética y sirviendo a su organización con la representación dialéctica del orden social nuevo a que aspira el pueblo." Consideraban la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes como un foco de infección contrarrevolucionaria y proponían la creación de la Escuela Central de Artes y Ciencias de las Artes.
El 7 de noviembre participa en el mitin por el XI Aniversario de la Revolución Rusa, donde también hablaron Julio Antonio Mella, Siqueiros y Rafael Carrillo. El 27 de noviembre, como secretario general de la Liga Antimperialista de las Américas, envía al diputado por Orizaba, Hernán Laborde un telegrama para solidarizarse con la denuncia del viaje de Hoover, presidente electo de los Estados Unidos, a México, "como maniobra imperialista encaminada debilitar lucha nuestros pueblos y restar apoyo heroico ejército general Sandino. Contra el imperialismo, por la unión de los pueblos de América". [1419] El 2 de diciembre preside el acto de apoyo a Laborde, quien fuera insultado soezmente en la Cámara por diputados proyanquis como Gonzálo N. Santos y Melchor Ortega, quienes recibieron consigna del ingeniero Marte R. Gómez, presidente de la Cámara. Rivera los calificó de "porras Porfirianas" y señaló el papel prominente del proletariado en la lucha antimperialista, al subrayar que en Nicaragua era un grupo de trabajadores capitaneados por un trabajador el que se enfrentaba al imperialismo yanqui. Participa en la organización y realización del mitin de protesta contra la guerra entre Paraguay y Bolivia, celebrado el 21 de diciembre. En su discurso dijo que los trabajadores tenían que esperarlo todo de su lucha y no de los gobiernos burgueses, gendarmes del imperialismo. Entre otros ejemplos del movimiento reaccionario, se refirió a las amenazas lanzadas por el Rector de la Universidad contra los pintores del Grupo 30-30 con motivo de la defensa que habían hecho de profesores y trabajadores de la Escuela Libre de Pintura. Al término de su discurso hizo seis proposiciones que fueron aprobadas por aclamación: solidaridad con la huelga de Colombia; contra la guerra entre Bolivia y Paraguay; contra el reconocimiento del gobierno traidor de Moncada por el do Mexico; contra el viaje de Mr. Hoover; por la intensificación de la ayuda a Sandino, y contra la Confederación Obrera Panamericana, instrumento del imperialismo yanqui." [1420]
1929. Inicia la decoración de la escalera principal de Palacio Nacional.
(1929) Decora el Salón de Actas y el Laboratorio Central de la Secretaria de Salubridad y diseña cuatro emplomados para las fachadas. El 24 de enero es elegido por la asamblea organizadora reunida desde el 21, presidente del comité ejecutivo del Bloque Obrero y Campesino; los secretarios eran Úrsulo Galván, Hernán Laborde, Luis G. Monzón, Julio Calderas, Rafael Carrillo y otros. En el Manifiesto dado a conocer días después, [1421] expresaban que "la Revolución burguesa ha sido un fracaso; ni ha destruido el latifundio, ni ha resuelto la situación del obrero, ni ha logrado la redención del indio. Sólo ha creado la casta de los latifundistas 'revolucionarios' y consolidado el poder de los explotadores industriales. Millares de campesinos sufren la esclavitud; millares de obreros son reajustados. La jornada de ocho horas y las demás promesas contenidas en nuestra Constitución burguesa no son cumplidas; se ataca, en cambio, a las organizaciones obreras y campesinas. La situación económica de las masas es cada día más angustiosa. [...] Bancarrota económica y bancarrota política, he aquí lo que nos ha dado la burguesía imperante. No satisfechas aún las facciones burguesas, se preparan a una nueva lucha; ambiciosas de mando y de poder, no vacilan en lanzarse unas contra otras. Pero ya no tendrán carne de cañón ni de sufragio. Los obreros y las campesinos no deben seguir siendo instrumentos de sus verdugos; no deben dar más su sangre y su esfuerzo

[1419] Published in the nr. 141 of *El Machete*, December 1th 1928.
[1420] Resumen Published in *El Machete* nr. 145, December 29 1928.
[1421] Published in the nr. 152 of *El Machete*, February 16 1929.

a la burguesía que los engaña y los explota". Como corolario defienden la candidatura de Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana para la Presidencia de la República, en oposición a la de Pascual Ortiz Rubio.
El 4 de marzo envía un telegrama a El Machete en el que considera "los levantamientos militares de Sonora y Veracruz como el principio de un movimiento francamente reaccionario", y a nombre del BOyC se dispone a combatirlo en todos los terrenos. Cuando los militantes del Bloque son reprimidos en todo el país firma con Hernán Laborde telegrama de protesta (9 de marzo) para el presidente interino Emilio Portes Gil, así como circulares y declaraciones para denunciar la maniobra para desaforar al diputado comunista Hernán Laborde y la expulsión de sus puestos de funcionarios públicos en diversas partes del país. El lo. de mayo firma con Laborde y Carrillo un manifiesto en el cual expresaban: "La lucha de los trabajadores contra la burguesía y contra el imperialismo es una lucha política. En México la burguesía nacional, apoyada por el imperialismo yanqui, oprime y explota hoy más que nunca a las masas trabajadoras. La sangre de los obreros y campesinos de México se cuaja en oro y ese oro llena las cajas de los explotadores nacionales y extranjeros. La burguesía nacional, servidora y aliada del imperialismo, tiene en sus manos un arma que esgrime y; usa para mantener a los trabajadores en la esclavitud; esa arma es el poder. Por lo tanto, si los obreros y campesinos quieren libertarse para siempre de la explotación capitalista, deben enfrentarse a la burguesía y arrebatarle el poder. La lucha de los trabajadores por su emancipación es pues una lucha por el poder, es decir, una lucha política. El obrero o campesino que no lo comprende así es un lastre, un estorbo que dificulta y retarda la Revolución social. Ahora bien: para enfrentarse a la burguesía y arrebatarle el poder, los obreros y campesinos necesitan una organización política fuerte y grande que agrupe en sus filas a todos los trabajadores revolucionarios. Hasta hoy, los obreros y campesinos de México han marchado a la cola de los burgueses y pequeño-burgueses directores de la Revolución Mexicana, sirviéndoles de instrumento, de carne de cañón para sus fines políticos, que son los fines de la burguesía y del imperialismo, no los de la clase trabajadora". [1422]
La manifestación del lo. de mayo es reprimida brutalmente, y al acudir a la Inspección de Policía para demandar la libertad de los detenidos, Rivera y su acompañantes señalan al embajador Dwight Morrow de los Estados Unidos corno instigador de la violencia.
El 15 de mayo es fusilado en Durango José Guadalupe Rodríguez, secretario del Partido Durangueño del Trabajo, miembro de la Confederación de Sindicatos Obreros y Campesinos de Durango, secretario tesorero de la Liga Nacional Campesina; dio la orden el jefe de las operaciones militares, de acuerdo con el gobierno del estado y con autorización del Secretado de la Guerra. Rivera, con Laborde, Carrillo, Monzón y Díaz, denuncia el crimen porque descabeza al movimiento obrero y campesino, "desmoralizando y aterrorizando a los trabajadores con el fusilamiento del más activo y capaz de sus dirigentes". En El Machete núm. 165 (mayo 18, 1929) la protesta aparecía bajo un titular acusatorio: "El camarada José Guadalupe Rodríguez asesinado en Durango por orden del general P. Elías Calles. Otra vez el gobierno 'revolucionario' se mancha las manos con sangre proletaria.
La administración de Correos secuestra los números 169,170 y 171 de El Machete y los atentados culminan el 7 de junio con el asalto a las oficinas del Partido Comunista y de El Machete. En el número 172 de este periódico, editado el 6 de julio en medio de múltiples dificultades, Rivera y sus compañeros del BOyC protesta y señala a El Machete como "el único periódico que explica a los trabajadores la necesidad de rechazar definitivamente todo control o influencia de los políticos burgueses y pequeño burgueses; la necesidad de que la clase obrera y campesina se organice independientemente para una lucha propia con su programa y candidato propios, contra la burguesía, contra el imperialismo y contra todos los explotadores del trabajo y sus aliados; el único que explica a los trabajadores la necesidad de destruir el régimen capitalista y establecer un gobierno revolucionario, un gobierno obrero y campesino que dé toda la tierra a los campesinos y las fábricas a los obreros". Denuncian que mientras el gobierno obstaculiza e intenta suprimir la campana del candidato de los trabajadores, los candidatos de la burguesía reaccionaria, Vasconcelos y Ortiz Rubio, gozan de libertad y garantías.
En el pleno de julio Rivera, junto con Luis C. Monzón y Reyes Pérez son expulsados del PCM. El dirigente Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo, en análisis histórico, [1423] recordó que fenómenos semejantes se produjeron en otros partidos comunistas de América y Europa. "Era un resultado de la orientación aprobada por el sexto congreso de la Internacional Comunista, que terminó sus labores en Moscú el primero de septiembre de 1928, y cuyas conclusiones se trasladaron a America Latina en la primera conferencia de los partidos comunistas de esta región a principios de junio de 1929, en Buenos Aires, y a México en el Pleno de julio de

[1422] Published in the nr. 160 of *El Machete*, April 13 1929.
[1423] "Diego Rivera y el PCM", newspaper *El Universal*, January 5 1978.

1929. Para el PCM, la línea del Sexto Congreso del Komintern representó, en el aspecto político y organizativo, el viraje sectario más pronunciado de su historia. El Pleno de julio consideró a los demócratas revolucionarios, es decir, a los exponentes políticos de la pequeña burguesía como 'los más peligrosos enemigos del PC en el movimiento obrero y campesino'. Con ello se aisló de sus más probables aliados y derivó hacia una campaña sistemática contra los militantes ligados de una u otra forma con ellos, acusándolos de representar una desviación derechista en las filas del Partido" .
El 22 de agosto se casa con Frida Kahlo.
(1929) Por invitación del embajador estadounidense Dwight Morrow, quien lo subvenciona, pinta el mural del Palacio de Cortés en Cuernavaca.
Es nombrado director de la Escuela Central de Artes Plásticas de la Universidad Nacional.
1930. El 30 de marzo, al inaugurarse la Exposición Anual de Pintores y Escultores, Rivera discute con el arquitecto Carlos lazo, profesor de Historia del Arte en la Facultad de Arquitectura que funcionaba en el mismo edificio. Caldeados los ánimos, Rivera dijo que los arquitectos, cuando pasaban por los corredores de la escuela dejaban una estela de perfume; el alumno Lorenzo Fabela le respondió que los pintores, por el contrario, dejaban olor a marihuana, alcohol y cola; mientras que el arquitecto Lazo manifestaba que el profesorado de la escuela comenzaba a fatigarse de la política de embaucamiento de Rivera. [1424] La asamblea de alumnos de Arquitectura, reunida el lo. de abril, decide protestar ante el rector Ignacio García Téllez, y logra autorización para invitar a Rivera a una polémica pública sobre el valor social y profesional del arquitecto. La rectoría decide citar a la Comisión Permanente del Consejo Universitario para que investigue responsabilidades y aconseje las medidas disciplinarias que convendría aplicar. En declaraciones entregadas a la prensa el 2 de abril, la Rectoría puntualizaba: "Diego de Rivera, actual director de la Escuela Central de Artes Plásticas, se ha identificado en el seno del Consejo con el ideal democrático revolucionario que sirve de norma a la Universidad, para impartir una educación superior y contribuir al progreso de México en la conservación y desarrollo de la cultura Mexicana, participando en el estudio de los problemas que afectan a nuestro país, así como el de acercarse al pueblo por el cumplimiento eficaz de sus funciones educativas mediante la obra de Extensión Universitaria, y que el nuevo Plan de Estudios de la actual Escuela Central de Artes Plásticas fue orientada por el señor Rivera hacia aquellos postulados dejando que su aplicación demuestre las correcciones necesarias". [1425] William Spratling terció en la polémica al ser interrogado por un reportero: "Las ideas del pintor Rivera respecto al plan de estudios para pintores y escultores me parecen de lo más sólidas. Verdad es que los arquitectos, por desgracia, están en una situación anómala porque han hecho una cosa netamente personal de un asunto tan trascendente como es el plan de estudios. Para nadie es un enigma que un pintor pueda opinar y debe opinar, sobre todo saber a fondo las ideas generales de arquitectura". [1426] La Sociedad de Alumnos que presidía Manuel del Castillo Negrete pidió a la Universidad que urgentemente se cesara a Rivera por convenir al orden de la escuela y a la enseñanza artística. En medio de las tensiones, el 25 de abril el estudiante Ignacio Márquez que apoyaba a Rivera, se lió a golpes con Lorenzo Fabela y después llamó a la policía, mientras que los opositores llamaban al rector García Téllez y se hacía presente el oficial mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación; también llegó Diego Rivera y en una asamblea celebrada de inmediato los opositores pedían su renuncia aduciendo que el pintor predicaba continuamente el comunismo y el revolucionarismo en las clases y ante los grupos de alumnos, cosa con la que no estaban de acuerdo, pues por ningún motivo querían que se inmiscuyera a la política en los estudios universitarios. Rivera, por su parte, insistía en la Revolución en el arte y en la política. La Federación Estudiantil Universitaria se declaró en contra de Rivera. La Comisión Permanente del Consejo Universitario, en sesión secreta del 29 de abril, nombró una comisión integrada por el doctor José Enrique Zapata, el abogado Luis Chico Goerne, y los estudiantes Alejandro Gómez Arias y Horacio Núñez para que estudiara él caso y dictaminara. La Alianza de Uniones y Sindicatos de Artes Gráficas decidió, después de una asamblea celebrada el 28 de abril, dar su voto de adhesión al movimiento en pro del plan de estudios, pues consideraba que favorecía a la clase trabajadora al capacitar técnicamente a los obreros del ramo de construcción, pintura, decoración, etc., para enfrentarse con los problemas inherentes a su oficio y sacudirse la tutela de los concesionarios y explotadores. [1427] El 14 de mayo se reunía el Consejo para conocer el dictamen de la Comisión y Rivera advirtió: "Voy al Consejo exclusivamente a hacer oír la voz de la joven pintura Mexicana

[1424] "Un zafarrancho de estudiantes", chronicle in *La Prensa*, April 1th 1930.
[1425] Published in the newspaper *Excélsior*, April 3 1930.
[1426] Published in the newspaper *Excélsior*, April 9 1330.
[1427] Published in *El Nacional Revolucionario*, April 30 1930.

revolucionaria, que es revolucionaria en el terreno estético y en el terreno social, y porque esta arte plástica, con la escultura y el grabado de tendencias afines a ella, está identificada con las aspiraciones de los trabajadores revolucionarios de México. Haré uso del derecho de consejero para hacer oír mi voz. Para que ésta sea intérprete de la necesidad del pueblo productor de México en este caso, que consiste en que la Universidad adquiera una nueva orientación más de acuerdo con las necesidades urgentes ideológicas y sociales de ese mismo pueblo productor". [1428] La Comisión dictaminó que el Consejo nombraría una persona que se encargaría de la Escuela y que Rivera no perdería la condición de director, pero que no ejercería el cargo. Antonio, Caso, director de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, presentó la renuncia pues consideraba que no era pertinente sentar un precedente en el que el director de una Facultad pudiese ser fiscalizado en sus actos por otra persona. Rivera se adhirió a la posición de Caso y presentó renuncia. Vicente Lombardo Toledano, quien acuso a Rivera de aprovecharse del efecto sentimental de las palabras de Caso, fue nombrado director interino. Raúl Cordero Amador hizo burla de que Rivera, apenas una colina, pretendía compararse con la cumbre de Caso. Con el giro de los acontecimientos, éste retiró su renuncia.
Rivera se traslada a los Estados Unidos y expone su obra en el California Palace of The Legion of Honour, de San Francisco, California. Antes de su salida había animado a personalidades progresistas para que invitaran a México, a filmar una película sobre la historia Mexicana, a Serguéi Eisenstein y sus camarógrafos Eduard Tissé y Grigori Alexandrov.
1931. Pinta Alegoría sobre California en el Luncheon Club del San Francisco Stock Exchange, Construcción de un fresco en la California School of Fine Arts, de San Francisco.
(1931) Hace una decoración en la residencia de Seigmund Stern.
(1931) Expone en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York, donde presenta cuatro (7?) tableros pintados al fresco.
1932. En la columna "Entre la Hoz y el Martillo" de El Machete (enero 30/febrero 10) se publica la siguiente nota: "El renegado Diego Rivera pronunció hace poco una conferencia en el John Reed Club de Nueva York (organización de intelectuales y artistas revolucionarios. Continuando su farsa de "izquierdista", el panzón Rivera afirmó la vieja verdad de que el arte no puede ser neutro; siempre está al servicio de una clase. Y ya se disponía a retirarse satisfecho, cuando el escritor Bill Dunne lo desnudó políticamente, presentándolo en su verdadero carácter de traidor al Partido Comunista de México, de propagandista del gobierno asesino y de pintor de cámara (o de recámara) de la señora Morrow. Después de una torpe 'explicación' del renegado, el dibujante Hubo Cellert señaló la degeneración del arte de Rivera, que para simbolizar a California pintó en los muros de la Bolsa de San Francisco a la tenista Helen Wills, en vez de pintar a Tom Mooney y a Billings, los dos trabajadores condenados a prisión perpetua por organizar una huelga. Ya para darle 'la puntilla', el compañero Harrison George intimó a Rivera a decir, conforme con la no neutralidad del arte, al servicio de quien están los frescos de la Bolsa de San Francisco y el retrato de la vieja de Morrow. Y contestó sin que el pintor osara desmentirle: '¡Al servicio del imperialismo yanqui!' Por ultimo le fueron públicamente devueltos a Rivera los cien dólares que había obsequiado al Club John Reed y los veinticinco que había entregado al Centro Obrero. ¡No querían ni un centavo de traidores!"
Diseña la escenografía y los trajes del ballet H.P. (Horse Power), con música de Carlos Chávez, que se presenta en la Academia de la Música de Filadelfia, por la Compañia de Opera de esa ciudad. Dirigió la orquesta Leopoldo Stokowski.
(1932) En el Detroit Institute of Arts pinta Detroit: el hombre y la máquina, 26 tableros al fresco en el patio central, llamado después "Rivera Hall". Trabaja las litografías Zapata, El sueño, Muchacho con perro, Maestra rural y El fruto del trabajo.
1933. Pinta un mural en el Rockefeller Center de Nueva York, que es destruido por contener un retrato de Lenin.
(1933) El dinero recibido lo aplica a pintar Retrato de Norteamérica, 21 tableros pintados al fresco para la New Worker's School de Nueva York. Ya de regreso en México recibe de Albert Einstein, que vivía en Princeton, New Jersey, una breve carta que decía: "La New Worker's School de Nueva York me ha enviado las fotografías de las pinturas con que usted decoró dicha escuela. Con gusto aprovecho esta oportunidad para expresarle mi profunda admiración. No podría citar ni un solo artista de nuestra época cuyo trabajo me

[1428] Published in the newspaper *Excélsior*, May 14 1930.

haya impresionado tanto. Quisiera que todo el mundo reconociera más y más lo que usted tiene que darle”. [1429]

1934. En el Palacio de Bellas Artes de la Ciudad de México pinta el tablero El hombre en la máquina del tiempo, desarrollando de manera más amplia y con mayor precisión histórica el asunto del Rockefeller Center.
1935. Concluye las pinturas de la escalera de Palacio Nacional con el fresco del muro sur: El México de hoy y del mañana.
Se produce una controversia pública con Siqueiros en varias sesiones. En la segunda de ellas, ocurrida en el Palacio de Bellas Artes el 29 de agosto, Siqueiros dijo: En Europa, Diego, durante la Revolución, estaba encerrado en su gabinete haciendo obra de snob. Al venir a México, como era snob, se apoderó, en snob, de la Revolución. Ha pintado indios gordos, rechonchos, bien nutridos, rozagantes, en una palabra, felices, y esto porque es un burgués. Fue el pintor oficial de los burgueses, el pintor de Morrow, su amigo intimo, que le pagó doce mil dólares por pintar a Cortés y execrar la obra de la Colonia. Pintó al Cortés de hace cuatrocientos años y no al Cortés de la época, que era el amo de México”.
La crónica de Excélsior (agosto 30,1935) agregaba: “Diego tiene la palabra. Aparece, efectivamente, como un modesto tipo burgués. No tiene estridencias ni en su lenguaje ni en su ademán. Habla con reposo, sin el menor asomo de pasión. Diríase que es un hombre superior, que está por encima de los personalismos. Siqueiros es apasionado, habla en tono de convicción que pone un fuerte acento de sinceridad en sus palabras. Ha dicho, Siqueiros, que en esta controversia no tiene interés personal de envidia, como algunos espíritus burgueses y pequeño-burgueses han dicho. El no envidia a Rivera ni quiere suplantarlo, porque no quiere ni ser burgués ni estar a sueldo del gobierno ‘El origen de la pintura mural − dice Diego − es comunista y no utópico, a menos que comunista quiera decir utópico. En cuanto a la ubicación, tengo que decir que los lugares no fueron escogidos por nosotros. Lenin ha dicho que el revolucionario verdadero debe trabajar en todas partes, hasta en las compañías de seguros. Y era hacer obra revolucionaria aceptando los muros que nos daba el gobierno. Siempre que haya ocasión de pintar, nosotros pintaremos, y por eso pintarnos en los muros de los burgueses. Es cierto, como dice Siqueiros, que la pintura revolucionaria empezó siendo en algunos casos religiosa. Siqueiros pintó un ángel que bajaba del cielo y un San Cristóbal, santo que simboliza el que trae a Cristo y que puede aplicarse al conquistador, quien nos traía a Cristo. Yo hice en la Preparatoria el símbolo de las filosofías y esto es también religioso. Revueltas, en la Secretaría de Educación, pintó una bella Virgen de Guadalupe de cuatro metros: Alva, en la misma Secretaría, la llegada de la Cruz a tierra Mexicana. ¿Por qué hacíamos esto? Porque la tradición Mexicana, queramos o sin quererlo, es perfectamente religiosa. Y nosotros los comunistas no olvidarnos la dialéctica ni los antecedentes históricos. Hablo de los Mexicanos que somos comunistas y no de esa plaga de indolatinos que se nos aparecen como comunistas. Este defecto − y convengo en ello con Siqueiros − es, al mismo tiempo, su cualidad, porque esta pintura de inspiración religiosa, pero con aspiraciones revolucionarias, es el espejo fiel del medio. Vasconcelos, en esta época, se dedicaba a la magia blanca y a la negra y se declaraba indostánico. En 1932, en la revista Transition, órgano de los intelectuales más avanzados de los Estados Unidos, Siqueiros dice que es militante comunista y partidario del individualismo. En la sociedad comunista, afirma Siqueiros en el mismo lugar, habrá un arte puro, abstracto, metafísico. Y esto no es otra cosa que sustentar una teoría burguesa. El mismo Siqueiros, que tanto me ataca diciendo que soy burgués, es más burgués que yo. La Revolución, la Revolución Mexicana es pequeño burguesa y no tiene nada de comunista, ni antes ni ahora, por más que haya exaltados y tontos que así lo digan. La Revolución Mexicana se hizo con el grito de tierra y libertad. Y no puede haber en estas condiciones pintura comunista. En Rusia, teniendo en cuenta las realidades Mexicanas, siempre se ha dicho que mi pintura tiene tendencias comunistas, y aquí exhibo varias revistas rusas en que esto se afirma. El valor revolucionario de mi pintura es reconocido en Rusia, que es un juez que debemos aceptar. En Rusia, mientras estuve allá, los mismos obreros pedían la pinturas de caballete, la pintura para el hogar. En los clubes y en las fábricas es útil el fresco, pero después del trabajo y de las actividades sindicales el obrero quiere contemplar algo para él, algo que lo haga descansar, que le haga sentir lo que los burgueses llaman el goce estético. En cuanto a Morrow, debo decir quo no fui su amigo, que por un intermediario me encomendó la pintura de Cuernavaca, y que no recibí doce mil dólares, sino doce mil pesos. De ese dinero, dos mil fueron para el intermediario, cinco mil para arreglar los muros, y el resto para los que me ayudaron en mi trabajo, que duró seis meses”.

[1429] Published in *El Universal*, February 27 1934. In the CENIDIAP there is an article, published in *Excélsior* of August 30 1935, where Siqueiros says similar things.

La discusión entre Rivera y Siqueiros se inició durante el Congreso Pedagógico organizado por la Asociación de la Educación Progresiva de los Estados Unidos, bajo el patrocinio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública. Como esa asociación no tenía interés en las diferencias personales de los oradores incluidos en el programa, se decidió que el debate no fuera parte de la Conferencia. La polémica Siqueiros-Rivera continuó en otros locales. A Siqueiros lo apoyaba la Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios, mientras que Rivera acudía al debate acompañado de miembros de la Casa del Pueblo, obreros textiles y ferrocarrileros que representaban a sus respectivos sindicatos.
1936. Sobre el tema de fiestas populares ejecuta para el Hotel Reforma cuatro tableros movibles, que no fueron inaugurados ni colocados a consecuencia de que en uno de ellos, el titulado La dictadura, aparecían satirizados algunos personajes políticos que impidieron que la obra se exhibiera.
1937. El 11 de enero acude a la estación de Lechería, en la ciudad de México, a recibir a León Trotsky, para quien había gestionado con el presidente Cárdenas el asilo político y a quien alojó en la casa de Frida Kahlo (Londres 127, Coyoacán).
1938. En octubre aparece el primer número de Clave − Tribuna Marxista, revista mensual cuyo cuerpo de redacción quedó integrado por Adolfo Zamora, José Ferrel y Diego Rivera.
1939. El 7 de enero renuncia a la redacción de Clave. El 17 de enero Ferrel y Zamora le responden: "Los redactores de Clave ignoramos y, por tanto, no podemos analizar las circunstancias que han provocado la renuncia de usted; pero basándonos en nuestra completa solidaridad teórica y política, estamos seguros de que tales circunstancias han de ser de carácter secundario y transitorio. La renuncia, sin embargo, por si misma puede provocar una impresión perjudicial para la causa común y por ello no debemos aceptarla. En consecuencia, le proponemos, si esto es absolutamente necesario, quo tome usted una licencia de uno o dos meses, en la inteligencia que continuara su colaboración activa con nosotros, que tanto apreciamos, al igual que todos los lectores serios de la revista". El 23 de febrero Rivera insiste: "Habiéndose agudizado las causas que me obligaron a renunciar a formar parte de la redacción de Clave (a la que se tuvo la gentileza de responder acordándome una licencia de dos meses) me veo obligado a presentar de nuevo la renuncia con carácter de irrevocabilidad". [1430] Con fecha 31 de marzo Carlos Cortés envía a Clave una carta en la que puntualizaba: "Cuando se escribió la carta rechazando la renuncia de Diego Rivera, era la opinión de los redactores de Clave, como sé yo, que las dificultades eran personales y que cualquier diferencia era de segundo plano. Sin embargo, al ocurrir acontecimientos posteriores, ellos nos enseñan que lo que pareció como diferencias personales y transitorias, eran en realidad las primeras fases de una divergencia básica en la teoría y la política. Como la gran mayoría de las diferencias políticas en el movimiento revolucionario, diferencias vagas y presentidas, toman la forma, antes de aparecer en forma definida y franca, como diferencias personales, choques de temperamento, etc. El caso de Diego Rivera está conforme con esta regla. Con el más reciente paso de Diego Rivera en la ayuda a la formación de, y tomar el puesto más responsable en el Partido Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino con un programa y un nombre muy lejos del Marxismo, estas diferencias se han precisado y desarrollado. Así como nosotros valoramos el arte de Diego Rivera, su espíritu revolucionario, creo que debemos hablar así. Conozco a Diego Rivera desde hace cinco años, y en los momentos difíciles de los primeros días de la Cuarta Internacional en México, cuando su ayuda era muy importante. Por esto tengo un interés no solamente general, sino también personal. Creo que Diego Rivera se está engolfando en la ola del pesimismo y en la fuga del Marxismo, que están siendo las características de muchos intelectuales de la izquierda. La conducta de los intelectuales en cada etapa difícil del movimiento obrero sigue cierta norma y en mi opinión Diego Rivera se ajusta a esta conducta. [...] En mi opinión la profundidad de la reacción puede ser medida cuando comienza a arrastrar figuras como Rivera. Como la mayoría de estos buscadores de nuevas teorías, Diego Rivera realiza una mezcla de anarquismo, liberalismo y social democracia. En esta primera carta quiero hablar de la fase anarquista de la desviación de Diego Rivera. En la segunda trataré lo que podemos llamar la fase oportunista demócrata de este proceso. (En realidad las fases demócratas y anarquista sólo son etapas del mismo desarrollo oportunista). Para el Congreso de la Confederación General de Trabajadores, a mediados de diciembre, el camarada Rivera preparó un informe sobre 'Las tendencias internacionales del fascismo y del comunismo-Stalinista'. En este documento hizo serias concesiones a la ideología anarquista. El camarada Rivera declaró: 'En España, Stalin necesita realizar dos tareas; primero, impedir y estrangular la Revolución española que los anarquistas y los verdaderos Marxistas habían emprendido sin el'. El papel de Stalin está definido, por supuesto, correctamente, pero en lo que se refiere al papel de los anarquistas es contrario a la verdad. Nadie puede

[1430] These letters were published in *Clave* nr. 6, March 1th, 1939, the following one in the nr. 7, April 1939.

negar que hubo muchos anarquistas, podemos atrevemos a decir que el ciento por ciento de los anarquistas de base, igual que los obreros Stalinistas y socialistas quisieron una Revolución social, pero confundir a estos obreros con los jefes anarquistas, los traidores que aceptaron puestos en los gabinetes burgueses, los cuales ametrallaron a los obreros y campesinos revolucionarios en mayo de 1937 y poner en el mismo plano a los anarquistas en general con los verdaderos Marxistas puede únicamente apoyar a los traidores líderes anarquistas e impedir la evolución de las masas anarquistas hacía el Marxismo revolucionario a través de su propia experiencia. ¿Era la declaración de Rivera accidental? De ninguna manera. Dicha inclinación hacía el anarquismo representaba la orientación de Rivera en esta época. Sobre el origen de las causas de la degeneración de la Unión Soviética abandonó el campo de la ciencia Marxista para aceptar la explicación idealista anarquista. [...] La aventura anarquista de Rivera fue muy desafortunada. Se acercó a la CGT, como organización anarquista, preparó un informe importante para su Congreso, abogó por un pacto de solidaridad entre la CCT y la Casa del Pueblo − a la que pertenece Diego Rivera -, no sobre una base sindical admisible y aun necesaria a veces, sino dando a tal pacto un ficticio carácter teórico y programático que sirvió únicamente para encubrir la oposición irreconciliable entre el 'anarquismo' y el Marxismo, precisamente en los momentos en que los líderes de la CCT se preparaban a echar su anarquismo en la cesta de papeles inútiles y su acercamiento a la reacción y a los agentes del imperialismo en México: Iturbe, Sierra, Coss, etc. En realidad, Rivera proporcionó una máscara de izquierda a la traición de Ramírez. Al leer el informe preparado por Rivera para el Congreso de la CGT hay otro hecho resaltante. Aun siendo un informe bastante largo está dedicado casi en su totalidad a atacar al stalinismo − ¿hay necesidad de decir que nosotros estamos en favor de un ataque rudo al stalinismo? − pero no dijo absolutamente nada sobre la claudicación del anarquismo y sólo unas cuantas palabras sobre el peligro del fascismo. Esto facilitó -y hay que decir que Rivera estaba contra esto?- la aparición de Sierra, Bolívar y Coss en el escenario de la CGT".

En el siguiente número de Clave (mayo de 1939) Carlos Cortez sostiene: "Rivera se vuelve ahora hacia el oportunismo. [...] Abrogándose en una forma exenta de principios el apoyo para un candidato burgués, y la formación de un Partido reformista opuesto a la Sección Mexicana de la Cuarta Internacional a la cual perteneció Rivera [...] En el caso concreto de México el camarada Rivera propone quo los revolucionarios apoyen a Múgica, precandidato a la presidencia de la república. ¿En contra de quién? ¿En contra de Avila Camacho y Sánchez Tapia? ¿Pero sobre qué base? Sobre la base de que Múgica es más progresista. Sin embargo los tres pertenecen al mismo partido; los tres se declaran ardientes cardenistas y los tres juraron sostener el mismo programa del Partido. [...] La cuestión de si la Cuarta Internacional erró o no erró al no tomar la posición de Diego Rivera es una cuestión de poca importancia en comparación con la cuestión de porqué el camarada Rivera rompió con la Cuarta Internacional para ayudar al establecimiento del Partido Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino. La Cuarta Internacional y su Sección Mexicana pueden cometer errores, pero abandonar la organización y formar un Partido reformista es un error mucho más serio que todos los que la Cuarta Internacional pueda cometer. [...] En mis dos cartas he tratado de demostrar que la renuncia del camarada Rivera no fue debido a choques do temperamento, sino a diferencias políticas fundamentales. El rompimiento es penoso para nosotros; Esperamos que sea temporal, pero como la declaración del Buró Panamericano dice: 'Cuando se trata de principios no podemos hacer concesiones, aun hacia una figura tan importante como Diego Rivera. No podemos adivinar si la inevitable catástrofe enseñará al camarada Rivera el camino de regreso a la Cuarta Internacional o si será absorbido definitivamente por la corriente de intelectuales que están rompiendo con el Marxismo en favor de una mezcla de anarquismo, liberalismo, individualismo, etc. No hay necesidad de decir que esperamos que se realice la primera alternativa'."

El 7 de agosto la Sección Mexicana de la Cuarta Internacional da a conocer la siguiente declaración: "En días pasados, Diego Rivera ha hecho publicar en la prensa diaria unas declaraciones que lo colocan prácticamente al lado de la candidatura del general Almazán. Como Rivera, tanto nacional como internacionalmente ha sido considerado hasta hace pocos meses como trotskista, la Sección Mexicana do la Cuarta Internacional declara que: Rivera no tiene ,desde hace meses, ninguna relación con la Cuarta Internacional, ni nacional ni internacionalmente. El mencionado excamarada dejó de ser miembro de la organización como consecuencia directa de una serie de desviaciones oportunistas que lo llevaron a romper con la Cuarta Internacional. Al renegar del Marxismo revolucionario y abandonar la Cuarta Internacional, para convertirse en líder del Partido Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino, organizado con la finalidad de participar en las elecciones apoyando a Múgica, Diego Rivera abandonó las filas del socialismo y se pasó al campo de la pequeña burguesía radical y la burguesía de izquierda. En vista de ese paso de Rivera, la organización Mexicana lo declara fuera de la Cuarta Internacional y esa declaración fue refrendada por el

Buró Panamericano Oriental de la Cuarta Internacional. Hoy, Rivera realiza otra pirueta política que lo lleva a ofrecer su apoyo a la candidatura del general Almazán. Con ello da un paso más a la derecha y se interna en el camino de la degeneración política. [...] La calidad de militante de la Cuarta Internacional es incompatible con el apoyo al general Almazán, uno de los principales peligros de dictadura militar abierta. Al brindar su apoyo condicional al general Almazán, Rivera se pone en plano de traición al Marxismo revolucionario y a las masas explotadas de México". [1431]
1940. En el mes de enero se divorcia de Frida Kahlo.
El 24 de mayo se produjo el asalto a la casa de Trotsky en el que participó Siqueiros.
(1940) Por encargo del San Francisco Junior College, para ser exhibido en la Golden Gate International Exposition de San Francisco, California, pinta al fresco diez tableros sobre la unidad de la cultura del continente americano.
El 8 de diciembre se casa otra vez con Frida Kahlo.
(1940) Al regresar a México decora con mosaico de piedras naturales los techos de la casa de Frida en Coyoacán, en una nueva sección cuya construcción él dirige. La copiosidad de su producción sigue causando asombro y alguien lo califica como "una especie de humano Orinoco" [1432]
1943. El 8 de abril se funda El Colegio Nacional. Quedó instalado el 15 de mayo con los quince miembros que nombró la Presidencia de la República. Rivera junto con José Clemente Orozco representaban a la pintura en el cuerpo colegiado. Otros miembros fundadores fueron Antonio Caso, José Vasconcelos, Mariano Azuela, Alfonso Reyes, Enrique González Martínez, Carlos Chávez, Alfonso Caso, Manuel Sandoval Vallarta, reunidos todos bajo el lema "Libertad por el saber". El 7 de julio inició su primer cursillo sobre "Necesidad del arte e importancia del mismo para la unión de América". En la conferencia inicial sostuvo que gracias al sacrificio del pueblo soviético no estaban en México los totalitarios imponiendo sus ideas.
(1943) Pinta al fresco en el Instituto Nacional de Cardiología los murales Historia de la cardiología antigua e Historia de la cardiología contemporánea
1944. Inicia la decoración del Anahuacalli con mosaicos de piedras de colores naturales. Continúa los frescos en Palacio Nacional con una serie de tableros sobre el México prehispánico.
1945. El 25 de enero, al despegar el avión que lo conducía a Costa Rica, muere el embajador de la URSS en México, Konstatin Umansky. Profundamente conmovido Rivera escribe sobre la "enorme pérdida para el mundo y para México". "Todo aquel que posea alguna capacidad de observación --decía-, habrá notado que las actividades de Umansky en las altas esferas diplomáticas internacionales coinciden exactamente con los grandes éxitos de la Unión Soviética en ese terreno; este hecho no es ni puede ser accidental. La gran victoria social de Umansky en favor del futuro humano, obtenida en el terreno de la diplomacia a la luz del día, fue su trabajo en los Estados Unidos y el resultado de éste". [1433]



1947. Inicia *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central*, fresco en el Hotel del Prado. Con Siqueiros y Orozco integra la primera Comisión de Pintura Mural dependiente del INBA.
El 29 de noviembre se gira orden de aprehensión en contra de Rivera como presunto responsable de disparo de arma de fuego en contra del chofer de un camión. Para aclarar algunas inexactitudes en las informaciones periodísticas, le escribe una carta a Fernando Benítez, director de El Nacional, donde afirmaba: "[...] estoy

[1431] Published in *Clave*, nr. 1, Segunda época, September 1th 1939.
[1432] Revista *Romance*, nr. 19, December 18 1940.
[1433] Newspaper *Excélsior*, January 26 1945.

enjuiciado por haber perturbado hacia las 21 horas el tranquilo sueño de los pacíficos vecinos de la histórica Villa de Coyoacán, por haber hecho ruido para preservarme contra un atropellamiento, lo cual es bien distinto de ser un presunto asesino [...] Si adquirí la mala costumbre de hacer ruido, aunque sea en legítima defensa de mi existencia, es porque en México, durante luengos años hemos hecho ruido. ¿Quién no 'echaba bala' para festejar el año nuevo? Recuerdo, y muchos deben recordarla todavía, cómo nuestro presidente y jefe, el general Obregón, en ocasión del Centenario de la Independencia en la fecha de consumación, me invitó en compañía de don Ramón María del Valle Inclán, marqués de Bradomín, ilustre literato y huésped de la República, a hacer de 'don Tancredo', permaneciendo de pie junto a él, mientras hacia sonar la campana de la Independencia y en la lámina, realmente gruesa esa sí y no como la del camión de la línea México-Coyoacán, y en el bronce de la campana misma rebotaban copiosas balas que el entusiasmo popular dirigía hacia el balcón presidencial del Palacio Nacional. ¿Quién no disparó durante treinta años o más de 'puro gusto' y hasta sin fuero constitucional? ¿Quién no disparó hasta para llamar a los meseros? Confieso que hemos adelantado en costumbres de paz, pero todo el mundo admitirá que mi disparo de salva de Coyoacán tiene la excusa de muy ilustres predecesores. Lo peregrino del asunto es que el 'impacto' solo fue 'des cubierto', según afirman los testigos de cargo y consta en autos, después de que el camión había sido llevado al garage y no en el lugar del incidente. ¿Por qué no había de haber sido llevado al garage para hacerle el disparo que yo no había hecho con bala y tener así una prueba en contra mía? ¿Quién podría probar con real prueba científica y no por mera presunción judicial que esto no haya sido así? En cambio, tengo testigos de que yo disparé con el arma cargada con cartuchos de salva y gases lacrimógenos y no con ninguna otra, pues la que usé es la que habitualmente porto conmigo. Se argumenta en contra mía que no es aconsejable portar para los usos de defensa legitima una pistola cargada con cartuchos alternados de salva y lacrimógenos. Puedo decir que yo prefiero este método al de matar o herir a mis adversarios eventuales; lo he usado largo tiempo y hasta ahora con buenos resultados. Aunque parezca increíble hay quienes se asustan con el puro ruido, y es perfectamente demostrable que durante dos horas aquel que haya sufrido el disparo de un cartucho de lacrimógenos, como los que yo uso, no puede, no sólo hacer una buena puntería, sino ni siquiera ver claro, lo cual es suficiente para preservarse de su agresión, bien sea a mano armada, a mano libre o tratando de dirigir el volante de un camión". [1434]

1948. En el fresco del Hotel del Prado, junto a Benito Juárez aparecen Ignacio Altamirano, Leandro Valle e Ignacio Ramírez, quien por primera vez en un acto público académico sustentó en México la tesis: "Dios no existe", lo que marca históricamente el auge del liberalismo Mexicano − según opinaba Rivera − y la primera piedra para la definición nacional, puesta por Juárez y sus colaboradores. La aparición de esa frase en la pintura despertó la ira de los sectores reaccionarios y el 4 de junio un centenar de estudiantes de la Facultad de Ingeniería irrumpió a las ocho de la noche en el comedor del hotel, donde se encontraban entonces la pintura (en 1961 fue trasladada en un alarde de técnica al vestíbulo principal), y con cuchillo del mismo servicio, y en medio de gran escándalo, con agresión a meseros y vigilantes, borraron las palabras "no existe". Entrevistado Rivera por los periodistas opinó "que si en 1838 el Nigromante pudo, en la Academia de Letrán, apoyado por Quintana Roo y Zamacona, pronunciar esas palabras sin ser raspado ni arañado como el mural que ahora las reproduce, quiere decir que desde 1838 a hoy, 1948 ciento diez años—, el sector de nuestra sociedad que se llama a sí misma 'gente decente, religiosa y culta', no ha hecho progresos, ni en cultura ni en el respeto al 'derecho ajeno' que según dijo Juárez 'es la paz', lo cual quiere decir que los liberales Mexicanos tienen que emprender la defensa activa de su libertad de nuevo, ahora como en 1857, hasta la victoria de Querétaro". [1435]

(1948) En la Escuela Nacional de Agricultura, en Chapingo, pinta dos tableros al fresco con los retratos del general Manuel Avila Camacho y del ingeniero Marte R. Gómez.

1949 De agosto a diciembre se pudo ver en el Palacio de Bellas Artes de la Ciudad de México la magna exposición "Diego Rivera, cincuenta años de su labor artística".

En comunicado del 25 de octubre al Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público, Ramón Beteta, presenta el presupuesto para proseguir los treinta y tres tableros que decorarían los corredores del primer piso en el patio central del Palacio Nacional. Lo comenzado era el muro norte, con el México prehispánico; seguiría en el muro oriente el México colonial; en el muro sur se desarrollaría el México del siglo XIX, para culminar en el muro poniente con el México del siglo XX. Lo quo faltaba pintar era una superficie de 285.38 metros cuadrados y Rivera se comprometía a realizar la tarea en 571 días hábiles, a razón de quinientos pesos el

[1434] Published in *El Nacional*, December 8 1947.
[1435] In *Novedades*, June 5 1948.

metro cuadrado, más el pago a un ayudante, a dos subayudantes, un albañil y un peón. El tema convenido para los diversos periodos históricos era: historia económica de México, desarrollo de los métodos de cultivo, explotación de los productos del suelo y del subsuelo, producción industrial y artística y modos de intercambio. La obra quedó inconclusa. El último tablero, pintado en 1951, corresponde a El desembarco en Veracruz.
1950. El 12 de mayo se estrena en el Teatro Arbeu El cuadrante de la Soledad, de José Revueltas, con escenografía de Rivera y dirección de Ignacio Retes.
Participa con Siqueiros, Orozco y Tamayo en la Bienal de Venecia. Recibe el Premio Nacional de Artes Plásticas. Es designado como miembro activo de la Academia Alemana de las Artes con sede en Berlín democrático.
Le declara a Alfredo Cardona Peña que el conocido fotógrafo Alfred Stieglitz fue el primero que vendió y coleccionó cuadros suyos en los Estados Unidos, y agregaba: "Alfred no atacó ni a Orozco ni a mi, sino a los pintores de los Estados Unidos que habían sido influenciados por el muralismo Mexicano, y que en pocos meses formaron masa y empezaron a pintar murales mediante una subvención del Estado, que como vía de ensayo dio para ello nada menos que ocho millones de dólares, es decir, lo que hubiéramos ganado nosotros en México en un periodo activo de trabajo de unos quinientos años; considerando el precio que ahora nos paga el supremo Gobierno Federal y los precios de la época en que comenzamos, recién realizado el golpe de Agua Prieta hubiéramos necesitado trabajar todos juntos y dándole duro no menos de tres mil años, pues quien más ganaba al principio, que era yo, gozaba del espléndido sueldo en moneda nacional de lo que equivaldría hoy a dos dólares cincuenta centavos por metro cuadrado, lo cual quiere significar que para devengar los ocho millones de dólares hubiéramos tenido que pintar los Mexicanos mucho más de 3.500,000 metros cuadrados. Alfred Stieglitz llamó a ese movimiento provocado por nosotros, the Mexican disease, recordando la gripa española que tanta muerte causó en la época del 14 y en la Revolución de aquí. [...] Pero el Estado, que emprendió el asunto en grande para hacer big and better murals, no obtuvo ni un solo mural a su favor, pues no surgió en todo el territorio norteamericano ni un solo artista prevaricador y venal". [1436]
1951. En la caseta a la que llegan las aguas del Rio Lerma pinta El agua en la evolución de la especie, con el sintético BKS-92, emulsión de poliestireno que se suponía resistente al agua, que terminó por destruir toda la parte sumergida del vaso de distribución. En el exterior realiza una fuente de un Tláloc polifacético y danzante, altorrelieve recubierto con pedacería de piedra, mosaicos y otros materiales.
1952. Rivera recibe el encargo de realizar un cuadro de dimensiones murales para la exposición Veinte Siglos de Arte Mexicano que se exhibiría en París, Estocolmo, Londres y otras capitales europeas. En Pesadilla de guerra y sueño de paz representa a Stalin y a Mao Tse-Tung ofreciendo la paloma de la paz a las figuras simbólicas de los Estados Unidos, Francia y Gran Bretaña. Carlos Chávez, director del INBA, le comunica el 26 de febrero y lo reitera el 14 de marzo de que "dicho mural no podrá exponerse en la Exposición de Arte Mexicano Antiguo y Moderno que los gobiernos Mexicano y francés presentarán en París próximamente, no puede por ello decirse que el gobierno inhiba ni contraríe la libertad de expresión de los artistas Mexicanos. Pero existen toda clase de razones de cortesía internacional, y de tradicional respeto a los países y gobiernos extranjeros, para que el de México no pueda convertirse en el vehículo ni en el instrumento, ni en el responsable de una producción pictórica cuyo mérito, por encima de su valor artístico, es su propósito extra artístico de propaganda política. [...] Es criterio de nuestro gobierno que, cuando se extravasa la libertad individual de expresión artística en el tratamiento, muy personal, de los asuntos internacionales, es natural que deseosos de disfrutar en todo de nuestra autonomía, debamos respetar ampliamente la ajena; y que lo mismo que encontrarnos improcedente el envío oficial de una exposición Mexicana en el extranjero de un mural que exalta la figura de algunos estadistas soviéticos, y deprime en sus símbolos, a los pueblos de Inglaterra, Estados Unidos y la Francia de la que será huésped la exposición, vetaríamos la exportación oficial, para su exhibición en el extranjero, de un mural que contuviera la exaltación de algún otro jefe de Estado y situara a la Rusia Soviética en posición deprimente. No puede escapar al sentido común de usted, ni de nadie, lo ofensiva que resultaría, sin duda, para Francia, la representación de su pueblo en las condiciones en que usted la coloca. Para apreciar el sentimiento que semejante representación puede despertar, basta imaginar que México invitara al gobierno de Francia a celebrar aquí una exposición de arte, y que un equivalente de Diego Rivera pintara un mural en el que el pueblo Mexicano apareciera representado por una figura depresiva. Es de pensar que ni el gobierno de Francia aprobaría su envió, ni el de México ni su pueblo lo recibieran con agrado. [...] La de Paris es una

[1436] In Fotocharlas, *El Nacional*, March 26 1950.

exposición organizada por dos gobiernos amigos, el de Francia, del cual partió la invitación, y el de México, y bajo su responsabilidad más completa. El tratamiento que usted ha escogido dar a la pintura, objeto de esta correspondencia, ha llevado al Secretario de Educación − quien la conoce tanto por fotografías como por las publicaciones de ellas que usted ha hecho en la prensa − a la consideración de que, siendo el Palacio de Bellas Artes un edificio público, la exhibición en él de su mural resultaría ofensiva para las naciones amigas a las cuales usted en ella agravia, en la medida en que su exhibición en los muros públicos de un edificio del gobierno parecería solidarizar a éste con los puntos de vista políticos internacionales muy privados de usted. [...] Al describir su mural me dice usted que el 'Tio Samuel sostiene en su mano derecha un típico revólver para defender sus propósitos y lleva una amplia bolsa llena de dólares dispuestos para la ayuda generosa que precisamente usted no puede ignorar'. Si insinúa usted que yo he recibido o recibo la 'ayuda generosa' del Tío Samuel por el hecho de que suela dirigir conciertos en los Estados Unidos y ganar por ello dólares con mi legítima actividad profesional, debo hacerle ver, con toda claridad, que como a usted le consta por los seguramente muchos más dólares que ha ganado con vender su pintura a clientes norteamericanos − museos y particulares − , ni en un caso, ni en otro, puede sugerirse que semejantes legítimos honorarios constituyan una ayuda del Tío Sam con cargo a sus presupuestos de guerra o a sus 'generosas' intenciones; son lisa y llanamente el precio que voluntariamente paga el público norteamericano por oír los conciertos que yo dirijo, o por colgar en sus casas y museos los cuadros que usted pinta". [1437]

En obediencia a las órdenes cursadas por el Secretario de Educación, Manuel Cual Vidal, el mural fue retirado subrepticiamente del bastidor. De inmediato Rivera ofreció el 17 de marzo una conferencia de prensa en la que dio a conocer un documento sobre "el grave asunto del secuestro del mural titulado Pesadilla de guerra y sueño de paz que pinté para que fuera llevado a la exposición Mexicana que se celebrará en Paris y posteriormente ocupara el lugar que le corresponde en el museo del Palacio de las Bellas Artes y para el cual fue contratado. En el principio de este asunto tuve yo la impresión de que se trataba de una cuestión interna entre los organizadores de la exposición y de los intereses de todo orden que ellos tienen. Ahora estoy convencido de que se trata del temor que en el gobierno ha despertado el contenido de ese mural: la lucha por la paz. De otro modo no se explicaría el secuestro de que ha sido objeto, evitando su exhibición, no ya en Paris sino aquí mismo. Cuando esbocé mi tema, el director del INBA se mostró complacido y entusiasmado con el proyecto y dijo que no tendría inconveniente alguno en enviar mi pintura a la exposición de París y que nadie tenía derecho a pensar lo contrario. Añadió que lo único que importaba era la calidad del trabajo. Explicó que el gobierno de México no tenía prejuicios en contra de una u otra tendencia estética e ideológica y que sólo le interesaba presentar al mundo todo aquello que produce México, probando así su liberalismo al admitir la exhibición libre de cualquier tendencia, incluso las más opuestas entre sí. Días después el director del INBA manifestó haber reflexionado y haber llegado a la conclusión de que realmente era difícil la presencia del mural en la exposición de París, pero que la pintura permanecería en el sitio para el cual había sido pintada y que si se intentaba impedirlo, renunciaría inmediatamente . Más tarde me ratificó por escrito esta misma posición, pero sin hacer mención de su renuncia. (. ..) El desarrollo de los acontecimientos me ha demostrado que las objeciones en el sentido de que se hacen graves cargos a países y gobiernos amigos de México no corresponden el verdadero pensamiento de los funcionarios del INBA, sino a la tendencia general del gobierno de México que, englobado en el llamado bloque occidental de las Naciones Unidas, no pudo permitir que el mensaje de la voluntad de paz del pueblo Mexicano, fielmente reflejada en mi mural, fuera conocido mundialmente, lastimando los intereses guerreristas del imperialismo anglosajón. Para mayor seguridad de que las objeciones del INBA, ya adoptadas también por la Secretaría de Educación Pública, carecían de sentido, quise mostrar mi obra ante centenares de amigos y amigos de mis amigos, a fin de hacer las necesarias correcciones si su parecer coincidía con el de las instituciones oficiales. Debo decir que el único objetivo de mi pintura es llegar al pueblo, saber interpretarlo, y que es el pueblo el único critico que reconozco. Precisamente por eso, el asunto esencial y exclusivo de mi mural fue, y no podía ser otro, aquel que más importancia tiene en el presente momento histórico para el pueblo de México y para todos los pueblos de la tierra: la paz. La paz, de la que soy ferviente y honesto partidario; y el artista, a menos de ser un prevaricador inmundo, no puede hacer otra cosa que explicar clara y concisamente la verdad de sus opiniones y de su sentir más íntimo . El público acudió no en varios cientos, como yo esperaba, sino en más de dos millares y en el espacio de tres horas. Aprobó mi labor con entusiasmo, tanto la forma como el contenido; aun se redactó un documento pidiendo al Presidente de la República que mirase mi mural para que viera que no existían en él causas para la objeción citada. Sin

[1437] Copy in the papers deposited by Lupe Rivera in the INBA.

embargo, a las diez y media de la noche del viernes, y por orden del director del establecimiento, fueron expulsados del local mis ayudantes, trabajadores empleados personalmente por mi y que yo había dejado de guardia. Y, en el peso de la noche, la tela de mi mural fue brutalmente cortada con cuchillo o navaja al borde del bastidor, con el procedimiento técnico típico usado por los ladrones de museos y raptada y secuestrada mi pintura. Al día siguiente, la primera versión oficial fue de que un grupo de individuos extraños al establecimiento habían venido y se habían llevado la pintura. Como esta versión era insostenible y estúpida se abandonó el recurso de robo por manos desconocidas y la señorita jefe del Departamento de Administración del INBA declaró ante notario público, ante mi abogado el señor licenciado Alejandro Gómez Arias, uno de los ayudantes que había sido expulsado − el señor Arturo Aramburu − y ante mi, que la pintura había sido desmontada y guardada fuera del museo 'por orden superior'. ¿De quién emana una orden superior al director del INBA? No puede ser sino del C. Secretario de Educación Publica, quien había prohibido por oficio publicado en la prensa y cuya copia se me remitió, su exhibición en Paris y en México. Todos sabemos que en nuestro país no hay ministros responsables. Los Secretarios de Estado son de hecho y de derecho secretarios personales dependientes del C. Presidente de la República, lo cual hace que yo no pueda tener ya más que una sola posición, y es decir que la responsabilidad única y última de la acción contra mi pintura es del gobierno de mi país. ¿Qué razón puede haber? El gobierno no puede tomar esta actitud más que por una razón política: es inútil repetir aquí lo que en todos los tonos se ha dicho respecto a la creciente presión o influencia del imperialismo anglosajón sobre nuestro gobierno y quizá gestiones de la embajada norteamericana en México no sean ajenas a este brutal atentado contra la libertad de expresión, el arte y la cultura. El asunto y el objetivo único de mi mural, la razón de ser de todo mi esfuerzo, el mayor que me fue posible realizar para su ejecución y perfección técnica, es aquello que constituye el principal resorte motor de mi vida en el presente momento: la lucha en favor de la paz. Por lo cual, en vista de los hechos verdaderos enumerados, declaro que la acción llevada a cabo por el gobierno de México contra la libre expresión de mi pensamiento por medio de mi expresión profesional, la pintura, no es ni puede ser otra cosa, y totalmente por encima de mi personalidad individual, que una grave acción contra la lucha en favor de la paz mundial, cuyo esfuerzo en nuestro país es beneficioso más que ninguna otra cosa para el pueblo de México.

Finalmente, es el pueblo de México al que corresponde reclamar no sólo la devolución del mural, su exhibición en París y su sitio en el Palacio de Bellas Artes, sino también el mas absoluto respeto a la libre expresión del pensamiento que consagra la Constitución Mexicana, mutilada escandalosamente con el secuestro incalificable de mi mural. De otra manera, este caso puede ser el principio de violaciones gravísimas a la libertad de expresión artística obtenida por la Revolución Mexicana. Si estos objetivos no son obtenidos seguiré reclamando que me sea entregado este mural, por el cual siento legítimo orgullo como artista, corno partidario de la paz y como Mexicano".

Por propuesta de Rivera se rescinde el contrato con el INBA y el pintor envía Pesadilla de guerra y sueño de paz a la República Popular China, cuando al año siguiente le es devuelto por las autoridades.

(1952) Logra terminar sólo la parte frontal de la decoración exterior en altorrelieve del Estadio Olímpico de la Ciudad Universitaria, pues no recibe presupuesto para su continuación.

1953. En el exterior del Teatro de los Insurgentes y en mosaico de vidrio realiza El teatro en México.

(1953) Para la casa del señor Santiago Reachi en Cuernavaca, Morelos, pinta dos tableros: La piñata y Los niños pidiendo Posada, que posteriormente son adquiridos por la Fundación McAshan Educational and Charitable Trust of Houston, de Texas, para obsequiados al Hospital Infantil de la Ciudad de México.

(1953) En el Hospital de Zona No. 1 del Seguro Social pinta El pueblo en demanda de salud. El acto inaugural, con discurso de Andrés Iduarte, director del INBA, se celebra el 10 de febrero de 1954.

En el mes de mayo, junto con José Mancisidor, representa a México en el Congreso Continental de la Cultura, celebrado en Santiago de Chile, Visita Bolivia y recibe diploma de Miembro de Honor de la Sociedad Boliviana de Sociología.

1954. El 12 de febrero Marte R. Gómez le envía una carta en la que le recuerda: "[...] tiene todavía un compromiso pendiente con México y con usted mismo: la terminación de los murales que hace en el Palacio Nacional. No quiero restarle méritos ni a la Caja de Agua, ni al Hospital de la Raza, ni a ninguna otra de las obras que ha ido decorando usted, pero quiero recordarle que el Palacio Nacional debe merecer prioridad y suplicarle, como Mexicano, que ya no se distraiga en otras actividades y que se dedique, de una buena vez, a terminar esta obra que principió en 1929, o sea, hace veinticinco años. Acabar los murales será la mejor manera de celebrar dignamente las bodas de plata de la obra".

El 13 de julio muere Frida Kahlo; sus restos son velados en el Palacio de Bellas Artes y se produce gran escándalo cuando el féretro es cubierto con la bandera del Partido Comunista Mexicano. Por ese motivo Andrés Iduarte, director del INBA, es despedido de su cargo.
(1954) Cae el gobierno de Jacobo Arbenz y pinta el cuadro de grandes dimensiones Gloriosa victoria para denunciar la intervención imperialista.
En carta enviada el 5 de septiembre al secretario general del Consejo Mundial de la Paz, Jean Laffite, expresa: "El mural Pesadilla de guerra y sueño de paz fue embarcado con completa documentación hecha ante el Instituto de Arqueología, Etnografía e Historia de México, que autorizó la exportación, así como la Secretaria de Hacienda y con documentación aduanal legal y regular. Por otra parte, existen relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales entre Mexico y la República Popular de Checoslovaquia, de modo que no hay razón para irregularidad en este asunto, a menos de acción ilegal y clandestina, por lo que interesa sobremanera conocer las particularidades del caso, pues por muy tardados que fueran los trámites de transporte y recepción no es posible que no se hubiesen verificado en más de un año transcurrido ya desde que se envió. Este asunto, tanto por razones de orden superior política cuanto por razones económicas que son muy perentorias para nuestros amigos de acá, resulta de urgente solución para nosotros. El mural fue adquirido por nuestros amigos de China en cinco mil dólares [...]" [1438]
El 8 septiembre la Comisión de Control del PCM (integrada por Juan Pablo Sáinz, Rafael Méndez y Xavier Guerrero) emite el dictamen [1439] sobre la solicitud de reingreso de Rivera al Partido. Decía: "Después de su expulsión, Diego Rivera se condujo por el camino de los enemigos del Partido y de la causa que éste defiende, al afiliarse en 1935 al trotskismo, en cuya banda jugó un papel destacado hasta 1938, fecha en que fue expulsado de la misma. Al adoptar esta posición Diego Rivera actuaba traicionando los intereses mas legítimos de nuestro pueblo, convirtiéndose en su enemigo y sirviendo a los más negros designios del imperialismo en su lucha a muerte contra el país del socialismo y el movimiento obrero internacional. [...] Desde la posición trotskista, Diego Rivera puso su arte al servicio de los capitalistas y de su lucha por desvirtuar al Marxismo, dándole la abyecta interpretación del jefe de la Cuarta Internacional, en un intento más por confundir a los trabajadores para desviarlos del camino correcto del socialismo. [...] Como era natural, en esta lucha contra la expresión más acabada de las aspiraciones de la clase obrera y de los pueblos, en su lucha anticomunista y antisoviética, como el mismo Diego Rivera lo reconoce, no podía menos que descender en la calidad de su producción artística, ya que el arte desligado y contrapuesto a los problemas, a la vida y a las aspiraciones de las masas populares, sólo tiene como perspectiva el fracaso y la degeneración. [...] En Diego Rivera se ha venido operando un importante cambio en sentido positivo, particularmente a raíz del artero ataque nazi a la Unión Soviética en 1941, que lo ha llevado a romper todo vinculo con el trotskismo y a entablar una lucha política en su contra, desenmascarando sus propósitos y señalando sus peligros; que sus obras adquieren cada vez más un claro sentido de lucha en favor de la paz y por la independencia y soberanía nacionales, ayudando a la clase obrera y a nuestro pueblo en el combate contra el imperialismo y por la justa y pacífica solución a sus problemas; y que realiza un serio esfuerzo en el camino de coincidir en las luchas del Partido Comunista en defensa de los intereses de pueblo por la paz, la democracia, la liberación nacional y el socialismo. Con anterioridad a la presente, Diego Rivera había presentado ante el Partido su solicitud de reingreso en dos ocasiones distintas, mismas que éste rechazó, considerando que se trataba de un caso especial que debía ser juzgado teniendo muy en cuenta la gravedad de los errores políticos cometidos por el solicitante, y la calidad de los méritos por él aportados. Sin embargo, Diego Rivera no ha hecho todavía el esfuerzo suficiente para superar muchas debilidades y corregir plenamente viejos defectos producto de sus antiguos errores y de perjudiciales concepciones. En efecto, Diego Rivera tiene un agudo sentido individualista y una tendencia muy marcada a substituir la realidad por la fantasía, desviaciones que es preciso superar con una vida militante de trabajo colectivo, apoyado en los grandes problemas del país y de las masas, y con una firme concepción de poner por delante de sus intereses personales los de la clase obrera y nuestro pueblo, en el marco de una lucha intransigente y realista dentro del arte mismo, por la paz, la democracia y el socialismo para México. [...] Por el estudio realizado se demuestra que en este sentido se han producido cambios positivos en la vida política de Diego Rivera, al romper con el trotskismo y buscar el acercamiento y la dirección política del Partido Comunista; que es dentro del Partido donde la reeducación y la superación de los defectos pueden alcanzarse y, por último, que los hechos acusan una seria disposición de Diego Rivera a guiarse por la teoría y la línea política

[1438] Ibid.
[1439] Ibid.

de nuestro Partido, la Comisión de Control del Partido Comunista propone la adopción del siguiente dictamen:
1. Aceptar el reingreso en las filas del Partido Comunista Mexicano de Diego Rivera.
Turnar el presente dictamen al XII Congreso Nacional del PCM para su estudio y resolución".
La gran comisión designada por el XII Congreso Nacional Ordinario del PCM para el estudio del informe presentado por la comisión de control, ratificó el 25 de septiembre el reingreso al PCM de Diego.
1955. Se casa con Emma Hurtado. El 16 de agosto dona al pueblo de México, mediante un fideicomiso con el Banco de México, la casa de Coyoacán en donde Frida Kahlo nació, vivió y murió, para que fuera convertida en el Museo Frida Kahlo, el cual se inauguró en 1958; así como su estudio y museo proyectado y constituido por él desde 1948 − el Anahuacalli, con su valiosísima y numerosa (más de cincuenta mil piezas) colección de escultura prehispánica. Este museo fue inaugurado en 1964. Viaja a la Unión Soviética para someterse a un tratamiento médico.
1956. En enero, a solicitud de intelectuales moscovitas, escribe un recuerdo sobre Mayakovsky: "Por el tiempo en que Mayakovsky llegó a México había allí, entre el grupo de intelectuales y obreros comunistas y mis amigos una idea sobre él vaga y fantástica, pero luminosa. Casi nadie había leído traducciones de su poesía, pero todos habían oído de su fama. En la imaginación de estos Mexicanos, Vladímir aparecía como un héroe rojo gigantesco, diciendo versos que inflamaban a los combatientes con una voz portentosa que dominaba el ruido de la fusilería y elevaba el valor de los hombres hasta hacer que aplastasen al enemigo. En realidad, como idea genuinamente popular transvasada del cerebro de los obreros al de los intelectuales, era ésta una imagen que sintetizaba la realidad objetiva, en su calidad subjetiva. Estoy seguro de que, con el tiempo, finalmente, en la masa innumerable de los trabajadores revolucionarios del mundo así será la imagen del Poeta de la Revolución, Vladimir Mayakovsky. Cuando llegó a México en persona y presencia, cautivó a todos el entusiasmo, la cordialidad efusiva y la bondad llena de fuerza que irradiaba del poeta gigante. Y su voz llenó el ámbito; aun sin entender sus palabras, todos querían oírlas. Recuerdo un lance curioso e incomprensible para alguien que no esté familiarizado con el México de entonces, inmediatamente después de la guerra civil, o más bien, en los últimos sobresaltos de ésta que, por cierto, hacia 1923 fueron de los más sangrientos. En casa de unos amigos soviéticos, personas de lo más respetables, estábamos reunidos un grupo de Mexicanos en que había políticos, diputados y senadores, literatos, poetas, excombatientes, pintores, ingenieros, médicos, economistas, algunas damas. Todos ellos hubieran estado dispuestos a matar a quien dijera que no eran revolucionarios; empezaron los brindis, siguieron los discursos, se alzaron discusiones; de repente se armó un combate en que era imposible saber quién peleaba contra quién, ni por qué; los soviéticos indignados por aquella forma de terminar banquetes, exhortaban a la calma, convidaban, conminaban a los peleadores a proseguir el combate en la calle. Hasta ese momento sólo habíanse esgrimido, además de los puños, vasos, botellas y una que otra silla, pero de repente salieron a relucir algunas pistolas; Vladimir, que hasta entonces sólo hacía, sonriente, ademanes de calma, miró rápidamente las pistolas de los Mexicanos que en tales ocasiones primero las usan para golpear con el cañón, y sólo al final inevitablemente disparan. Como si Vladímir lo previera, ¡Oíd! gritó en ruso con una voz que dominó el tumulto. Todos los ademanes se detuvieron y todos los ojos los miraron; empezó a recitar Izquierda, fue subiendo el tono, los Mexicanos quedaron quietos. Y al concluir el poeta, una ovación estruendosa se produjo, todos cayeron sobre él para abrazarlo, y se abrazaron entre sí [...]"[1440]
(1956) A su regreso de la URSS, donde fue operado, y mientras convalecía decora muros, techos y barda en la residencia de Dolores Olmedo en Acapulco. Desde esta ciudad le escribe el 8 de julio al dirigente comunista Encarnación Pérez con la esperanza de que "se empiece a hacer sentir el efecto de la magnífica situación creada por el XX Congreso del gran Partido Soviético, que no podrá dejar de repercutir en nuestro querido Partido Comunista Mexicano en favor de la ampliación de nuestras bases, unidad de los Marxistas-Leninistas dentro de la abolición del culto a la personalidad y las corruptelas, sectarismos y divisiones originados por él, y el crecimiento rápido en calidad, extensión y profundidad de nuestro querido Partido por la lucha, que necesitamos sea victoriosa, por la paz general y permanente, la independencia nacional, económica, política y cultural de todos los países oprimidos por el imperialismo, como el nuestro, y la acción intensa para realizar todas las tareas inmediatas de defensa de los derechos democráticos y reivindicaciones económicas de nuestro pueblo trabajador de la ciudad y del campo". [1441]

[1440] Published in el Boletín de Información del la Embajada de la U.R.S.S. October 15 1969.
[1441] Copy in the papers deposited by Lupe Rivera in the INBA.

El 12 de septiembre le escribe al gobernador de Jalisco Agustín Yáñez: "[...]Luis Barragán me comunicó la intención de usted respecto a murales para realizar en el salón donde ocurrió el episodio de Juárez cuando la reacción pretendió asesinarlo por fusilamiento y fue salvado por la fuerza de la inteligencia y la elocuencia al servicio de la potencia histórica progresista. Según me dijo el arquitecto Barragán usted desearía que se pintara este hecho histórico y tenia intenciones de encomendarme ese trabajo. Es difícil sitio el de al lado de nuestro gran pintor muerto, su genial paisano Clemente Orozco (espero que ya Zapotean se llame de Orozco, ¿o todavía no? Si no, ¿qué pasopas con Jalisco, señor gobernador?) A pesar de tan difícil circunstancia, me atrevería yo a sentirme igualado y pintar cerca del genio muerto, sobre todo, le diré a usted francamente, además de para obsequiar sus deseos, para evitar que algún, digamos pintor, ya que el verdadero calificativo también empieza por P, cometiera un mural que sería falta de respeto para el muerto y lamentable prueba de mal gusto para los vivos [...]" [1442]

El 8 de diciembre, al cumplir setenta años de edad, sus amigos le ofrecen un homenaje entusiasta. Habla el doctor Atl y dice: 'Ningún pintor, en ninguna época, ni en la nuestra, ha realizado una labor tan fecunda. Ni tan variada. La historia los hechos cotidianos, los nuevos ideales sociales, la alegría de vivir, la vida en sus múltiples manifestaciones aparecen en la obra del pintor interpretadas con un sentimiento de la realidad tradicional vivificada por la experiencia y la sabiduría contemporáneas. ¿Qué valor tiene la obra pictórica de Diego Rivera en el panorama del arte universal? Un valor de primer orden. Puesta al lado de la gran pintura renacentista italiana -que es la expresión más potente del arte pictórico, en todos los tiempos- resplandece con fuerza, propiamente, poderosamente, como la corriente de un gran río en plena llanura, después de recibir las aguas de los afluentes que llegaron de todos los rumbos. Ahora ese río se llama, en el campo del arte, Diego Rivera, y es tan importante en la historia como el Yang Tse Kiang lo es en la geografía". [1443]

Para que el mural del Hotel del Prado se pusiera a la vista del público borra la frase "Dios no existe" y la sustituye por "Concilio de Letrán".

1957. El 26 de marzo le escribe a Raúl Noriega, oficial mayor de la Secretaría de Hacienda para pedirle que "se hiciera lo necesario para ponerme al corriente de mi impuesto sobre la renta que según convenio anterior con esa Secretaría, puede ser pagado con obras mías. Me interesaría mucho que algunas de las hechas durante mi reciente viaje a Europa pudieran ser escogidas, o escogida, con este fin, para que más tarde formara parte de las colecciones nacionales. Durante el año de mi enfermedad − nueve meses de hospitalización y cinco de viaje − naturalmente no tuve entrada alguna. [1444]

El 27 de marzo le escribe al cubano Juan Marillello: "Con la mayor vehemencia expreso mi protesta contra la tiranía de Batista que pisotea las libertades democráticas, el orden constitucional y todos los derechos del hombre y la dignidad humana por la represión asesina y sádica, vil y asquerosa, de tipo nazi-ku-klux-klanesco, contra el pueblo cubano que, como siempre, se muestra celoso de sus libertades y derechos, por los que lo he visto combatir durante años, desde mi niñez, cuando pude ver con mis ojos a su líder preclaro, el verdadero Maestro de América, héroe del continente, José Martí. Le ruego que por todos los medios posibles haga presente a su pueblo, al que amo como al mío propio, puesto que aparte del afecto personal, como aseguró Martí, 'del Bravo a la Patagonia todos somos un mismo pueblo', encaramos los mismos problemas, tenemos las mismas aspiraciones y luchamos contra las mismas fuerzas contrarias del interior y del exterior, ese exterior que empieza inmediatamente después de la margen del río Bravo que no pertenece a México, debido no al pueblo de los Estados Unidos, que sufre también explotación y dictadura de clase constituida por la burguesía imperialista, la más feroz, belicista y nefasta para la civilización, la cultura y la paz del mundo que hemos conocido en la historia. Y hágalo por medio del Partido Socialista Popular de Cuba. [...] Con esta protesta va mi homenaje de respeto y de amor y de entusiasmo hacia los muertos y los combatientes por la libertad de Cuba y de América, en el momento en que clarea el albor del movimiento del pueblo entero de la isla en favor de esas libertades, con el anuncio de un fulgor que hace que el patrón mismo de Fulgencio y de Trujillo empiece a esconder la faz, visto que sus peleles opresores de esos pueblos, de tan bañados en sangre que están, se han vuelto casi ciegos y torpes". [1445]

La periodista María Ramos del periódico O Globo, de Río de Janeiro, le pregunta cuales son de sus obras las que le han proporcionado mayor satisfacción, y el 5 de julio, por escrito, Rivera respondo: "Aquellas de mis obras que han tenido mayor repercusión en las masas en una dirección progresista [...] Podría citar mi serie

[1442] Ibid.
[1443] Ibid.
[1444] Reproduced in *Testimonios sobre Diego Rivera*, Universidad Nación Autónoma de México, 1960.
[1445] Copy in the papers deposited by Lupe Rivera in the INBA.

de murales de la Secretaría de Educación de México que hicieron del hombre de base del campo y de la ciudad, y su lucha revolucionaria, el héroe de la pintura monumental en lugar de los dioses, santos, reyes, presidentes, generales, etc. Movimiento del que participó toda la pintura Mexicana. La serié de murales de la ciudad de Detroit, que hizo de la máquina, que sustituye al esclavo hombre por el esclavo mecánico, para la liberación del trabajador, el héroe de la pintura monumental. En estos dos casos se verificó por primera vez en la historia del arte ese hecho respecto al contenido, así como por primera vez también, en esa historia, se intentó pintar en una sola unidad mural la gesta de todo un pueblo, desde su pasado mítico y remoto hasta su futuro previsible, en la escalera del Palacio Nacional de la Ciudad de México. El mural del Rockefeller Center, que construido el año de 1932 en Nueva York y destruido allí, fue reconstruido en 1934, previendo: el ataque nazi y su derrota, la victoria de las masas soviéticas contra el fascismo, el descabezamiento de éste, la aplicación de las fuerzas naturales como fisión molecular al servicio de la humanidad y su empleo para la destrucción de la misma por medio de la bomba termonuclear W, cuyo esquema esta pintado en el centro de la composición desde entonces, así como el control final de estas fuerzas por el poder del obrero calificado y la obra de reconciliación humana, bajo las enseñanzas Marx-Engels-Leninistas, cuyas circunstancias se han visto realizadas entre 1934 y 1957. Y finalmente mi mural transportable contra el colonialismo imperialista, la bomba atómica y en favor de la necesidad de un pacto internacional de paz; así como mi mural transportable sobre la intervención imperialista norteamericana contra la marcha democrática del pueblo de Guatemala, mediante los agentes locales de los monopolios extranjeros. Esta pintura ha tenido repercusión de masas, tanto en el mundo occidental como en el oriental: de América a Europa, desde las Democracias Populares hasta China". [1446]

El 17 de octubre El Colegio Nacional le ofrece una comida a Antonio Carrillo Flores, y en la carta de disculpa por no poder asistir Rivera le comunica: "La enfermedad me ha tenido por meses sin poder hacer nada, especialmente en las últimas semanas en que una flebo-trombosis me impuso reposo absoluto. Sin embargo, gracias a la ciencia y la bondad de mis amigos los doctores Montaño, Noriega, Cabrera y González Guzmán, ha sido posible hasta ahora contener el ataque de lo que parece ser la más grave de todas las enfermedades. Afortunadamente, se dispone ya aquí también de la bomba de cobalto. El actual periodo no es en realidad sino la consecuencia natural del desgaste causado por el tratamiento altamente intensivo que fue necesario para contener el ataque del mal. Y a la baja de mis defensas, han aparecido nuevos accidentes, como la flebo-trombosis venenosa y hasta una erisipela en el brazo derecho, además de una bronquitis sumamente perniciosa. Estas dos últimas cosas parecen ya dominadas. Me doy cuenta de que lo asalto a usted en medio de un banquete con una especie de reporte médico. Esta falta de cortesía se debe probablemente a la sobra de amistad, que lo hace pasar a uno por encima de los protocolos de la decencia. Esto le dará a usted idea, también, del desespero en que he estado por no poder trabajar". [1447]

El 24 de octubre, después de un parte médico similar al anterior, en carta dirigida a Raúl Noriega, oficial mayor de la Secretaría de Hacienda, agrega: "Perdone usted esta fastidiosa reseña patológica, es para explicarle por qué también la curva de mi economía personal se encuentra en el nivel más bajo de todos los últimos años. Y precisamente ahora mi hija Ruth necesita imprimir su tesis de recepción o invertir en la preparación de ella y de su examen profesional todo su tiempo y recursos. En consecuencia, creo poder pedirle a usted que, como un amigo, nos ayude para que la tesis de Ruth sea impresa en la imprenta de Hacienda y ella pague sólo el papel. Dispense, pues, esta petición tan exabrupta, pero creo que está justificada por las circunstancias. Debo decirle que, para colmo, aunque también era de esperarse, estoy atravesando por una crisis de depresión nerviosa tremenda Así es que también por esto dispénseme mis impertinencias". [1448]

El 7 de noviembre Emma Hurtado entrega a Vladimir Bazikin, Embajador de la URSS en México, un mensaje que decía: "Permítame brindar por las victorias enormes obtenidas por el pueblo admirable de su gran país, que acaba de abrir para la humanidad el camino del espacio sideral y el camino de la Paz permanente. La ciencia soviética, al construir los medios de realizar esta hazaña de posesión del espacio, da con estos medios los de asegurar la Paz contra cualquier agresión. ¡Salud a la Unión Soviética, en donde el socialismo, con el esfuerzo heroico del pueblo, ha construido el más alto y luminoso faro para asegurar la buena ruta a la Paz, el amor, la alegría y la nueva vida superior de los pueblos! Permítame usted, señor

[1446] Ibid
[1447] Ibid.
[1448] Ibid.

Embajador, este brindis a su pueblo inmenso, a nombre del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso, y de quien tiene como la honra más alta la de ser Presidente de su organización. ¡¡Salud!!" [1449]
El 24 de noviembre muere en el estudio de San Angel Inn. Había expresado por escrito el deseo de que su cuerpo fuera quemado y las cenizas fundidas con las de Frida Kahlo. Contrariando su voluntad, fue inhumado en la Rotonda de los Hombres Ilustres en el Panteón Civil de Dolores.

[1449] Ibid.

APPENDIX X: WHAT LOLÓ DE LA TORRIENTE WRITES ON THE RETURN OF RIVERA TO MEXICO, THE ENCOUNTER WITH PANI AND WITH VASCONCELOS, VASCONCELOS REGARDS TO LUNACHARSKY, ABOUT MARXISM, THE CAPITAL, ETC. [1450]

Pocos días después de su llegada a México, Alberto, Pani lo invitó a comer. Le mostró su colección de pinturas, colocada en galerías que había improvisado en la Manzarda, donde hacía casi la temperatura de un horno para cocer pan, que no era, por cierto, de lo mejor para conservar los cuadros y como era de esperarse hizo resquebrajar los tonos oscuros de *El Matemático* pintado por Diego, hacía menos de dos años, sobre tela preparada comercialmente que "no es de mucho fiaje".
Alberto le dijo que sería bueno ver, cuanto antes, a José Vasconcelos, recién nombrado Rector de la Universidad, por Obregón, y después del almuerzo lo mandó Pani, en su automóvil, a la oficina de la Universidad no sin advertirle al pintor − que "ya Obregón había tratado, con Vasconcelos, sobre el asunto".
Las oficinas de la Universidad estaban en la antigua Calle de Santa Teresa ** en el edificio que en épocas infantiles de Diego había sido construido para la Escuela Normal de Profesores.
El pintor dice: "Vasconcelos me recibió con una cordialidad demasiado entusiasta para ser enteramente sincera. Estaba rodeado de su corte de amor: jóvenes guapos, poetas y estudiantes, que hoy, muchos de ellos, han llegado a ser preeminentes. Estaban allí- Carlos Pellicer, hoy uno de los más grandes poetas de América; Francisco [Yuco] del Río, líder estudiantil de medicina, hoy embajador; Jaime Torres Bodet, entonces, solamente joven poeta, hoy ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, ex de Educación, Presidente, de la *Unesco* y "presidenciable" en México; los poetas villapando y de la Parra, muertos ya, de quienes, como del magnifico escritor, casi desconocido, Julio Torri, era ya muy amigo.
Vasconcelos le abrió los brazos apenas abrieron la puerta para que entrara Diego. Le dio un largó abrazo diciéndole al terminar- "Este es para Lunacharsky [...]" y, abriendo de nuevo los brazos le dio otro, menos enfático y algo más cordial, agregando: "Y, éste, para usted [...]" Inmediatamente empezó a hacer política diciendo a Diego, sonriente y entusiasta, delante del corro de sus amigos: "Quiero que le diga usted a Lunacharsky que yo lo admiro, a fondo [...] Que aquí somos sus discípulos, sus más entusiastas discípulos.. Nada de lo que él ha dicho ignoramos y estamos decididos a seguir sus pasos [...] Pero ya ve usted – continuó -, la dificultad proviene, aquí y allá, de que tras la Revolución se presenta, se cuela y acaba por enseñorearse del poder, el militarismo [...] Ya le han recortado los presupuestos a Lunacharsky con el pretexto de las necesidades impuestas por la política internacional, que ya se barrunta [...] ¡Y, eso es lo malo! Que se quite dinero a lo único que os constructivo: la educación, para dedicarlo a ejércitos y armamentos, que, al fin y al cabo, sólo son útiles para destruir.
El Rector de la Universidad hablaba con un tono de cabal compenetración. Después, cómo si hablara consigo mismo, dijo: "Y eso que allí tienen un caudillo civil, como Lenin [...] Pero, ya ve usted [...] La guerra civil y la guerra de protección contra los polacos manejados por los aliados se ve que han hecho surgir militares influyentes, generales, aspirantes, seguramente, a caudillos uniformados [...] Y ese es el mal para la Revolución, el tratar de defenderla con las armas cuando todos debían comprender lo que Lunacharsky y yo comprendemos y sabemos muy bien: que por fuerte que sea el ejército de la Revolución siempre puede haber otro más fuerte mientras queden en el mundo poderes reaccionarios [...] En cambio, invirtiendo la mayoría del poder económico de que se disponga en la educación se extenderían por el país, por el mundo entero, las ideas revolucionarias, y no hay nada capaz de matar las ideas.
Por esto − agregaba Vasconcelos con un tono misterioso y convencido − "por eso lo único verdaderamente bueno para los pueblos es encontrar ellos su caudillo civil [...] Y, dijo esto disminuyendo el tono de voz, entornando los ojos y como viendo hacia dentro de sí mismo. Su corte de amor comprendió e intervino: "Claro, licenciado, claro [...] ¡esa es la verdad!" Yuco del Río, más audaz que los demás, se adelantó hacia Diego y tornándolo fuertemente del brazo exclamó: "¿No, le parece a usted, Dieguito? Los verdaderos revolucionarios jóvenes debíamos trabajar recio, desde ahora [...] ¡aquí está nuestro caudillo civil, el licenciado Vasconcelos! ¿No cree usted que debemos entrarle desde luego, Dieguito?"
Los más jóvenes se entusiasmaron en apoyo de la proposición del Río Cañedo. Sólo Torres Bodet se limitó a sonreír sin decir nada, lanzándole al pintor una mirada de inteligencia y haciendo con el mentón un gesto, hacia los proponentes, que bien podía ser de conmiseración.

[1450] de la Torriente, Loló, *Memoria y Razón de Diego Rivera*, Editorial Renacimiento, Mexico 1959, Tomo II, pp. 133-137.

Vasconcelos debió pensar que había ido demasiado lejos y quizá reflexionara en Obregón y sus consecuencias porque, como glosa, lanzó una carcajada artificiosa, bastante mal actuada y que sonó siniestra, soltando una frase clásica que ya − dice Diego − "muchos años antes yo había oído usar a Don Justo Sierra para prevenir las consecuencias del exceso de celo de amigos imprudentes: "No hombre [...] ¡qué barbaridad! ¡Dios nos libre de que los filósofos gobernasen!" En seguida añadió: Por lo demás todos aquí estamos dispuestos a secundar, como compañeros, los planes de usted. Por mi parte, yo me considero como un adherente al plan *spartaquista* [...] Esto era dicho, por Vasconcelos, ante su Estado Mayor efébico como una precaución típica de político Mexicano "intelectual", cuidando de poner en la mente de los jóvenes suficiente confusión como para poder explicar, en cualquier momento dado, el "chequeo" y la traición del maestro a lo que él aceptaba o engañaba. Y, agregó Vasconcelos: "Ya me hablaron, Pani y Obregón, del plan que usted trae de propaganda cultural, como el que estableció Lunacharsky [...] Vamos a ver, en seguida, la manera de arreglar esto con los FF.NN., porque ya sabe usted que están con mucha dificultad, desórdenes y falta de material y temo que sea difícil coordinar el servicio que ellos nos den [...]

Entre tanto − continuó Vasconcelos − redacte usted su plan y unas gráficas para establecer el Instituto [...] Yo meteré en los nuevos presupuestos el proyecto, pues Obregón me va a dar dinero para establecer la nueva Secretaría de Educación, de la que quiere queme encargue, y allí tendrá usted lo necesario para el plan. Mientras tanto [...] − continuó diciendo − para que no perdamos tiempo quisiera que usted trabajara, ya que esto le servirá mucho, recogiendo material, ahora que va a empezar a pintar en la Exposición de Arte Popular que con Montenegro, Enciso y Adolfo Best estamos preparando.

Diego oía atentamente. Vasconcelos encadenaba una idea a otra. En, seguida dijo: "También quiero que se encargue usted, con Vicente Lombardo Toledano, de preparar una edición de *El Capital*, de Marx, pero condensado, extractado, que forme un volumen pequeño, impreso claramente, que cueste unos cuantos centavos y que a los sindicatos podamos dárselo regalado. Un libro que quepa en el bolsillo del saco de los obreros, los hombres del campo, los empleados públicos, los estudiantes [...] ¡de todos los que saben leer! Empiece usted, desde mañana mismo, a trabajar en una carátula y unas doscientas viñetas que condensen las ideas del libro hasta para los que no sepan leer, para lo cual usted se llevará de aquí, esta misma tarde, su nombramiento como consultor y dibujante del Departamento de Bibliotecas de esta rectoría [...]".

Hizo una pausa y dijo: "Ahora vamos a tomar un poco de mate [...]"y trajeron los bombillos de *cuaje* con arillo de plata y las pipetas para sorber. Era − subraya Diego – "el panamericanismo de Pepe para unir el Norte con el Sur [...] el Águila con el Cóndor [...]" Yo me quedé pensativo, y antes de calificar de estúpida insensatez el proyecto de "condensación y extracto de *El Capital* preferí atribuir tal propósito al hecho de que, probablemente, Vasconcelos, jamás había leído el libro desconociendo, por tanto, cuál era la naturaleza de la crítica de la economía política, pero pensé, por otra parte, que un folleto de difusión con las citas correctas del libro central del mundo moderno, podía realmente ser útil y esto, que me parecía bueno, hizo que empezara inmediatamente a trabajar en carátulas o ilustraciones para una edición que jamás se llegó a hacer".

Miles de pesos se gastaron en una colección de autores clásicos para un pueblo que en más del ochenta y cinco por ciento no sabía leer. Hoy, después de veinticinco años, todavía pueden conseguirse lotes de aquellas numerosísimas ediciones en los pequeños comerciantes que venden al peso el papel para hacer cartón.

* Trabajo cómodo, bien remunerado, o simplemente, una colocación.

** Hoy, Calle del Licenciado Verdad.

APPENDIX XI: LAS PINTURAS DECORATIVAS DEL ANFITEATRO DE LA PREPARATORIA [1451]

El tema escogido por el pintor para la decoración del Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria es LA CREACIÓN, haciendo dentro del tema abstracto alusión directa a nuestra raza por medio de los elementos representativos escogidos y su colocación y jerarquía dentro de la composición: desde el tipo autóctono puro, hasta el castellano, pasando por los mestizos representativos. Sobre el muro central [fondo del escenario], en la mitad arriba y bajo el lugar de la clave del arco que limita el muro en su parte superior, aparece un semicírculo de azul profundo contorneado por el arco iris; en su centro la LUZ UNA, de la que parten tres rayos; uno directamente hacia abajo, vertical, dos hacia los lados, rayos que fuera del arco iris se objetivan en tres manos que señalan hacia la tierra con el anular y el índice manteniendo plegados los otros dedos − gesto que significa padre-madre − entre los rayos quedan constelaciones, la una a la derecha, en disposición de pentagrama, la otra a la izquierda, en disposición de exagrama; sobre la línea de la tierra de la pintura del lado derecho, un desnudo sentado en el suelo de espaldas al espectador, EL HOMBRE, vuelto su rostro hacia un grupo de figuras femeninas, con quienes está en coloquio, personajes que son objetivación de las emergencias de su propio Espíritu, estas figuras son también sedentes sobre la tierra en disposición ascendente; abajo, a la izquierda y en actitud de explicar, EL CONOCIMIENTO, túnica ocre, manto azul con aplicaciones de oro, carnes de tinte verdoso; enfrente, con manto añil, cofia cobalto, diadema de oro, rostro sutil moreno macerado, poniendo su palabra necesaria en la explicación de la otra: LA FÁBULA. Arriba, figura de obrera india, enagua carmesí, rebozo rojo tierra, con las manos en reposo sobre los muslos: LA TRADICIÓN; a su izquierda, ojos verde acuoso, cutis blanco rojizo, cabellos de oro apenas sombreado, manto ocre oscuro, túnica verde gris sombría, las manos escondidas, está LA POESÍA ERÓTICA; en la cúspide del grupo, cubriéndose el rostro con máscara de dolor LA TRAGEDIA.

En orden inmediatamente superior y dispuestas en amplia curva que sigue la catenaria, cuyos apoyos invisibles están en la intersección de los muros laterales y el techo del salón, cuatro figuras de pie, yendo del lado al centro en este orden: LA PRUDENCIA, túnica y manto verde azul claro, dialoga con LA JUSTICIA, vestidura blanca, cutis sombrío, tipo indio puro; ojos claros, mirando a lo lejos, las manos una encima de otra, sobre el borde del escudo y teniendo ancho puñal de combate está LA FORTALEZA, su escudo es rojo carmín, bordeado de bermellón, en el centro un sol de oro; cierra el grupo LA CONTINENCIA, túnica gris verdoso, rostro velado, cabeza y manos bajo el manto violáceo suave.

Más alto todavía, tocando casi con la cabeza el arco, sentada sobre nubes y cerca del símbolo central, una figura de tipo ario, la cabeza y la mirada inclinadas hacia las figuras de abajo, la mano en gesto posesivo y persuasivo, túnica amarilla, manto verde amarillo, es LA CIENCIA, que liga al centro las jerarquías del panel derecho.

A la izquierda, y buscando la simetría y el equilibrio con elementos equivalentes en peso y contrarios por el color, sobre la línea de tierra, LA MUJER, desnuda sedente, con modelado recio de senos, brazos y piernas, pelo negro que cae rizado, rostro de perfil mirando hacia el centro luminoso superior; a su derecha y paralela al borde del panel, los brazos levantados, la túnica blanca con pliegues que sugieren una envolvente, lenta intención que acompaña el movimiento del cabello en oro, LA DANZA, frente chica, grandes ojos oscuros, boca carnosa, pómulos fuertes, piel blanca, criolla de Michoacán; junto al borde izquierdo, cabellos negros rizados como extremos de ramas de vid, carne ocre amarillo, tipo − faunesco, vestida de una piel, sopla LA MÚSICA en doble flauta y, sentada a su lado LA CANCIÓN, criolla jalisciense, alta de talle, trigueña, ojos claros de mirada perdida, con rebozo rojo ladrillo, enagua violáceo oscuro, sobre el regazo sus manos, entre las que están tres manzanas Hespérides; encima, de pie, coronando el grupo y cargada hacia la izquierda con enaguas azules, ceñidor carmesí, camisa blanca bordada de rojo, rebozo café rojizo, collar de guajes bermellón y aretes del mismo color, peinada de dos trenzas, manos menudas, sonríe LA COMEDIA, del más afinado tipo criollo del centro de la mesa central.

En la jerarquía inmediata superior y en disposición análoga a la del lado opuesto, las tres virtudes teologales, del borde al centro: LA CARIDAD, vestida sólo de sus cabellos rojizos, ceñida de silicio, la carnación verdosa, la palma de la mano derecha abierta y la izquierda sobre sus senos en gesto de amamantamiento;

[1451] Rivera, Diego, "Las Pinturas Decorativas del Anfiteatro de la Preparatoria". Published in *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, Departamento editorial, tomo I, nr. 3, México, January 18 1923. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 45-49. According to the information in the CENIDIAP the article is of January 1th, pp. 363-365.

junto a ella LA ESPERANZA, túnica verde esmeralda, manto en pliegues tubulares amarillo verde, juntas sobre el pecho las manos, y tiene el rostro levantado, de perfil mira directamente a LA UNIDAD, central, su cabello rubio en trenzas, tipo castellano, azulado; LA FE, india purísima de las serranías que cierran el Valle de México del lado del sur, sus manos enclavijadas sobre el pecho en actitud de orar, sus ojos cerrados, tiene la cabeza derecha y vertical, a lo largo de su cuerpo cae el rebozo.
En equivalente colocación a la ciencia, de este lado une el agrupamiento el foco central de la composición: LA SAPIENCIA, túnica azul de cobalto, manto amarillo claro, figura recia de india suriana, mira hacia abajo y muestra, hecho de sus manos el gesto que significa MICROCOSMOS Y MACROCOSMOS e INFINITO.
Dentro de la bovedilla que se escava en medio del muro, destinada a contener el órgano, bajo la mano que manda verticalmente, se levanta de la tierra, EL ÁRBOL del que emerge, viéndose hasta abajo de su pecho los brazos abiertos en cruz, en movimiento que corresponde a las principales directrices de la composición, una figura de tamaño mayor que todas las otras, siguiendo con su actitud la intención de la bóveda y realizando escorzos en relación con la agrupación general de los diferentes puntos de vista: es EL PANTÓGRATA.
Sobre los muros laterales se pintarán dos desnudos de mujer, del lado del hombre EL AGUA; del lado de la mujer, LA TIERRA; sobre la bóveda, encima del agua, lado del hombre, EL FUEGO; lado de la mujer, EL AIRE.
La pintura de la escena que comporta más de noventa metros de superficie trabajada y cuyos personajes miden cuatro metros de talla, es solamente el foco de donde partirán las composiciones parciales laterales que representarán las relaciones fundamentales entre los hombres y los elementos; el conjunto es una sola composición, y el ciclo de pinturas formando cuerpo con el edificio en sus tres dimensiones y durante todos los aspectos de sus diferentes partes, creará en el Espíritu del espectador una dimensión más; este conjunto constituirá obra tal como el autor la ha concebido, si se le permite realizarlo.
La pintura ha sido ejecutada a la encáustica, con los mismos elementos puros y el mismo proceso empleado en Grecia y en Italia en la antigüedad, este procedimiento que el autor restauró por su propio esfuerzo, gracias a búsquedas hechas durante unos diez años, es el más sólido de los procedimientos de pintura, salvo el esmalte a fuego.

APPENDIX XII: EL ANFITEATRO DE LA ESCUELA NACIONAL PREPARATORIA [1452]

Para tener la mayor libertad plástica posible y crear una decoración de acuerdo con el ambiente del lugar [el Anfiteatro está destinado principalmente para actos universitarios, conferencias científicas, conciertos de alta música, etc.] el autor escogió un tema abstracto *"*las relaciones del Hombre con los Elementos*"*, es decir, los orígenes de las Ciencias y Artes, en cierto modo, una especie de abreviatura de la historia esencial del Hombre.
Sólo se ejecutó la primera composición de esta obra, *"*La Creación*"*.
Adaptándose a la Arquitectura de la manera más íntima y orgánica posible, aprovechó el autor la bovedilla y muros del nicho que alberga el órgano para pintar en ella la Célula original, conteniendo vegetales y animales en torno al Árbol de la Vida entre cuyo follaje están EL TORO, EL QUERUB, EL LEÓN y EL ÁGUILA − signos del Verbo, principio de todo − y de cuya cúspide emerge EL HOMBRE, entidad anterior al masculino y al femenino.
En el sitio de la clave del arco que limita en lo alto el muro del fondo del escenario, se pintó un semicírculo azul ultramar limitado por arco iris y en cuyo centro se significó LA ENERGÍA PRIMERA por una luz que emerge en tres direcciones, rodeada de constelaciones, una de ellas en disposición de pentagrama y de exagrama la otra, acompañadas respectivamente de UNA estrella sola y DOS en PAR; fuera del arco iris las emergencias de la ENERGÍA se materializan en tres manos − índice y dedo del corazón extendidos − que, verticalmente, hacen surgir el HOMBRE del Árbol de la Vida, y lateralmente, de un lado el MACHO y del otro la MUJER, representados por desnudos sedentes a ras de tierra, y los cuales el pintor trabajó por hacer que se sintieran en contacto todavía con esa Tierra participando de su esencia y calidad por su forma y estructura.
Desde el Hombre y la Mujer empiezan a elevarse hacia la energía original de las actividades de ellos; del lado del Hombre, la SERPIENTE, el CONOCIMIENTO, la FÁBULA, la TRADICIÓN, la POESÍA ERÓTICA, y culminándolas, la TRAGEDIA, en rango inmediato superior, y de pie, la PRUDENCIA, la JUSTICIA, la FORTALEZA, y la CONTINENCIA, y más arriba, entre este grupo y EL CENTRO, LA CIENCIA.
Del lado de la Mujer, desde el suelo con los brazos en alto, elévase la DANZA, sentada están la MÚSICA y el CANTO; de pie, tras de ellas, la RISA − o la COMEDIA − , en rango superior la CARIDAD, la ESPERANZA, y más alto, entre estas virtudes y la ENERGÍA, la SAPIENTIA.
La abundancia de ornamentación en la arquitectura, que encuadra las superficies pintables, y el promedio de la disminución perspectiva, dadas las distancias entre el muro del fondo de la escena y las primeras y últimas filas de asientos para los espectadores − puntos de vista obligados y fijos − impuso la talla de los personajes y la simplicidad de su estilo.
Este trabajo fue el primero que el pintor tuvo ocasión de ejecutar en tan importante escala, y también fue la primera vez que a la pintura moderna actual − no se habla de la falsa pintura oficial y burguesa que llena los muros de palacios y alcaldías en todas partes del mundo − tuvo ocasión de emplearse en su verdadero oficio y papel, es decir, la gran decoración.
Esta obra, a pesar del esfuerzo del pintor por expresar en los personajes la belleza genuina Mexicana, se resiente aún en su ejecución y aun en su mismo sentido interno de influencias europeas, demasiado fuertes y que, paulatinamente, van desapareciendo en los subsecuentes trabajos que ha ejecutado.

[1452] Rivera, Diego, "El Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria", *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. 4, p. 4, September 1925. Reproduced in *Diego Rivera: Textos de Arte, Reunidos y presentados por Xavier Moyssén*, UNAM, Mexico 1986, pp. 82-84.

APPENDIX XIII: UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE CHAPINGO, MÉXICO [1453]

Fresco
Superficie total: 370.23 m2.

El tema subyacente de estos trabajos es el principio establecido por Zapata y que es el lema del plantel, pintado por Rivera en el muro que da a la escalera principal: "Aquí se enseña a explotar la tierra, no a los hombres". Los frescos están desarrollados en el edificio de la Rectoría y en lo que era la capilla de la antigua hacienda de Chapingo.

CAPILLA

Sotocoro
Mujer sentada con dos mazorcas de maíz
Niño que sueña con la abundancia del maíz, las manzanas y el trigo
Texto, de inauguración de los murales de la Capilla
El Propagandista o Nacimiento de la conciencia de clase
Campesinos y mineros produciendo la riqueza de México
Sangre de los mártires revolucionarios fertilizando la tierra
Los cuerpos sepultados de Emiliano Zapata y Otilio Montaño vigorizan el suelo Mexicano.
Símbolos del nuevo orden
Estrella roja de cinco puntas sobre fondo oscuro y dos pares de manos, las inferiores llevando hoz y martillo y las superiores mostrando las palmas.

PRIMERA CRUJÍA:
La Tierra Virgen
Una joven mujer desnuda duerme reclinada en el suelo con el rostro semicubierto por el cabello. En el cuenco de su mano lleva un brote, símbolo de la fertilidad.
Los explotadores o Formación de los dirigentes **revolucionario**s
Inspector de minas, guardia armado y patrones opresores de los mineros y campesinos
La Tierra esclavizada o Fuerzas reaccionarias
Caricaturas personificando al Capital, al Militarismo y a la Iglesia, quienes esclavizan la tierra que personifica la geografía de México.
Los elementos
El Sol y el Viento simbolizados por cabezas humanas; un arco iris y tres figuras femeninas se agrupan alrededor de una mujer desnuda que flota en el cielo apretando sus pechos en un gesto nutridor que abarca el mundo.
Fuerzas subterráneas
Vigorosos desnudos femeninos representan las fuerzas volcánicas del subsuelo buscando ascender por grietas ardientes. Su abundante cabello y el afloramiento de cristales multicolores simbolizan la riqueza de la Tierra en espera de su extracción.
El Fuego o El elemento masculino
Desnudo masculino emergiendo entre llamas.

SEGUNDA CRUJÍA
El agitador o Organización clandestina del movimiento agrario
Joven líder agrario exhortando a la rebelión
Inicio de la guerrilla
Mano izquierda crispada, emergiendo de la tierra
En busca del camino

[1453] Collected from *Diego Rivera: Catálogo General de Obra mural y Fotografía Personal*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, INBA, CENIDIAP, Mexico 1988, pp. 69-94.

Dos figuras flotando con ligeras vestimentas y vistas desde abajo, tantean en el aire
Profetas
Uno a cada lado. Figuras de piel oscura sentadas, de las cuales una lleva un martillo y la otra una hoz.
Cautivos
Germinación
Desnudos femeninos representan los procesos de gestación, desde la concepción hasta el nacimiento
Falo (en el hueco de la claraboya)

TERCERA CRUJÍA
Revolución-Germinación o Constante renovación de la lucha revolucionaria
Muerte y entierro del joven líder, cuyo sacrificio general el florecimiento del árbol superior
Resolución
Mano izquierda empuñada, surgiendo de la tierra.
Revelación del camino
Vistas desde arriba, dos figuras flotando descubren una radiante estrella roja
Guardianes de la verdad
Uno a cada lado. Dos figuras morenas sentadas, con mirada vigilante; una lleva un machete y otra una porra.
Llamas semejando magueyes
Fecundación o Maduración
Alrededor de un capullo, cuatro desnudos femeninos expresan la germinación de la naturaleza
Falo (en el hueco de la claraboya)

CUARTA CRUJÍA:
Revolución-fructificación o Triunfo de la Revolución Distribución de la tierra y sus frutos después de la Revolución, mostrando maquinaria moderna.
La legalidad del nuevo orden
Mano izquierda abierta con los dedos extendidos luna alusión al signo cristiano de la bendición)
Legal posesión de las bondades de la tierra
Dos figuras morenas flotando vistas desde abajo; entrelazan una hoz y un martillo contra el brillo de una estrella roja.
Dos figuras morenas sentadas con sendas gavillas de trigo; una lleva un cántaro y una hoz sostenida con el trigo, la otra abraza las espigas mientras un martillo descansa en tierra
Cuatro figuras masculinas de piel oscura llevando maíz, caña de azúcar, uvas y frutos.
La abundancia de la tierra o Frutas en a sazón
Tres mujeres desnudas y un pequeño simbolizan la pródiga exuberancia de la naturaleza y su promesa de bienes
Frutos (en el hueco de la claraboya)

MURO FRONTAL DE LA NAVE:
La Tierra Fecundada o La Tierra Liberada con las fuerzas naturales controladas por el hombre
Una mujer desnuda de proporciones colosales se recuesta en un monte con la serena mirada al frente. Su mano derecha sostiene un brote y la izquierda se levanta con la palma abierta. A su alrededor alegorías de los elementos: agua, viento, fuego y electricidad, con los cuales la naturaleza dota a la familia humana y sustenta su bienestar. Es el símbolo del hombre nuevo que construye su Edén utilizando el trabajo liberado de la explotación y por los dones de su conocimiento.

UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA **CHAPINGO**
1925 CAPILLA: UN **CANTO A LA TIERRA**

Sotocoro: Proemio del canto
Mujer con mazorcas. Lateral derecho
Niño que sueña con maíz, manzanas y trigo. Lateral izquierdo
Texto Ángulo superior, lateral izquierdo
El propagandista o Nacimiento de la conciencia de clase. Muro D
Sangre de los mártires revolucionarios fertilizando la tierra (Emiliano Zapata y Otilio Montaño) Muro E

Símbolos del nuevo orden o Alegoría del trabajo obrero y campesino. Plafón del sotocoro
Nave

Explotación del trabajo:

PRIMERA CRUJÍA
La Tierra Virgen. Desnudo de Tina Modotti. Muro G, que clausura el coro
Los explotadores o formación de los dirigentes revolucionarios. Muro H
La tierra esclavizada o Fuerzas reaccionarias. Extremo superior del muro H
Los elementos (Viento, lluvia, sol). Plafón
Fuerzas subterráneas. Muro L
El Fuego (El elemento masculino). Extremo superior del muro L.

SEGUNDA CRUJÍA
El agitador u Organización clandestina del movimiento agrario. Muro M, que se complementa con su luneto
En busca del camino. Bóveda y nervaduras que forman los nichos. Marcan la transición al muro opuesto.
Germinación. Desnudo de Tina Modotti. Muro Ñ

TERCERA CRUJÍA
Revolución-Germinación o Constante renovación de la lucha revolucionaria. Muro O que se complementa con su luneto
Revelación del camino. Bóveda y nervaduras que forman los nichos. Marcan la transición al muro opuesto
Fecundación o Maduración. Muro Q

CUARTA CRUJÍA
Revolución-fructificación o triunfo de la Revolución. Muro R que se complementa con su luneto
Legal posesión de las bondades de la tierra. Bóveda y nervaduras que forman los nichos. Marcan la transición al muro opuesto
La abundancia de la tierra o Frutas en sazón. Muro T

Pared Frontal de la Nave

Liberación del trabajo:
La Tierra Fecundada (Desnudo de Lupe Marín) O La Tierra Liberada con las fuerzas naturaleza controladas por el hombre. Muro frontal U. El hombre nuevo construye su Edén, utilizando el trabajo liberado de la explotación y por los dones de su conocimiento.

Chapingo, rectoría

Sol y tierra
Aire y Agua
El buen gobierno
El mal gobierno

Corredor y escaleras de las oficinas administrativas de la Rectoría de la Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, Estado de México, México
Observaciones: Pintado en varias etapas: 1925-1927 -1946 [1454]

Fresco
Superficie total: 297.22 m2

Cubo de las escaleras

[1454] According to Suárez, Orlando S., *Inventario del Muralismo Mexicano*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, Mexico 1972, these murals are Form 1925-1926 and 1948.

Reparto de tierras, 1924
El mal gobierno, 1924
Aquí se enseña a explotar la tierra, no a los hombres
El buen gobierno
El presidente Álvaro Obregón y el Dr. Ramón P. Denegri
El presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho y el Ing. Marte R. Gómez

Corredor

Texto de Acta de inauguración, 1924
Diseños en la trabe
Texto del Acta de Inauguración, 1925-1927
Aire y agua, 1925-1927
Sol y tierra, 1925-1927
Decoraciones geométricas simulando detalles arquitectónicos

APPENDIX XIV: SECRETARIA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA [1455]

Se encargó al autor la decoración de los muros de los corredores de la Secretaría de Educación Pública. El edificio presentaba en estas partes bien pocas probabilidades para el desarrollo de un decorado pictórico, dadas la distribución y proporciones de sus claros y macizos, pues siendo el ancho de los corredores insuficiente para ofrecer punto de vista para una pintura de escala medianamente monumental, había que trabajar teniendo en cuenta el punto de vista del conjunto [único que por lo demás es sostenible en la gran decoración], y en tales condiciones, las superficies pintables no tenían visibilidad desde los ejes del patio, así es que el pintor hubo de componer su decoración con las diagonales; además el estilo neoromano bastardo mezclado a una especie de renacimiento francés, por momentos, y otras veces tan solo a la total carencia de proporción y estilo, impidieron poder desarrollar en la pintura las búsquedas de expresión genuinas no sólo en los temas, sino en lo más intrínseco de la obra, como el autor hubiera querido poder hacer; sin embargo, dentro de los anteriores límites, se planearon las decoraciones del primer patio y la escalera, en forma de traducir por la plástica los motivos y el tema, algo que fuera del pueblo a quien la obra estaba destinada; en tales condiciones compuso el pintor la decoración de este edificio procurando ahondar en sí mismo eliminando día por día algo de aquello que no le era realmente propio, ya que si lograba una expresión más o menos completa, pero totalmente verdadera de él, esto llenaría el objeto a que aspiraba, puesto que él es una unidad idéntica a las miles que forman la masa trabajadora Mexicana; el artista no tuvo que ponerse en una postura espiritual o filosófica, menos aún colocarse en un plano político sino simplemente escuchar su más hondo sentir idéntico al de todos sus compañeros.

Si el autor habla de lo anterior, es porque considera, dentro de la entidad Mexicana, su trabajo como una obra revolucionaria, y le es preciso puntualizar en qué forma la considera así: los temas y el plan general de la decoración de la Secretaría de Educación y de la Escuela Nacional de Agricultura, corresponde naturalmente a una mentalidad revolucionaria, pero la labor plástica es revolucionaria no gracias a esos temas, sino que los temas sirven a su sentido profundo; hay que precisar algo más: si el pintor es revolucionario, es decir, identificado a la parte de humanidad que representa el polo positivo en ese gran fenómeno biológico que todos llamamos Revolución, o más bien dicho, SI ES UN TRABAJADOR en el más amplio sentido de clase y de acción, cualquier cosa que él haga como buen artesano, es decir, sinceramente, será forzosamente una expresión revolucionaria, no importa el tema; si un pintor, en las anteriores condiciones pinta un retrato o un ramo de flores, las dos pinturas serán pinturas revolucionarias; y si un pintor burgués pinta un cuadro o ejecuta una decoración que represente el apoteosis de la Revolución social, a pesar de todo habrá hecho una pintura burguesa, por eso la pintura de los *"*Retablos*"* es pintura revolucionaria, a pesar de comentar milagros.

Siendo la Secretaría de Educación Pública, más que ningún otro edificio público, el edificio del Pueblo, el tema de su decoración no podía ser otro más que la vida de ese mismo pueblo; trató el pintor de condensar ese tema y ordenarlo de acuerdo con la arquitectura que decora. Lo dividió así: patio del trabajo, Patio de las fiestas, y en la escalera expresó la evolución del paisaje desde el nivel del mar, − tropical − hasta la mesa central − nieves perpetuas − . El tema central de la decoración de la escalera, es el agua, el mar, la evaporación, las nubes que empuja contra las vertientes el viento cálido, la lluvia fecundante, la tempestad, la nieve, el deshielo y el agua que corre refrescando, las tierras calientes, hasta volver al mar, su origen; paralelamente al movimiento del paisaje, expresó el pintor la evolución del pueblo, comunicando así los tres planos en que el piso bajo, entresuelo y piso superior dividían la decoración de los patios. En el piso bajo del primero de ellos, están representadas, en los ángulos, las industrias básicas de la región Mexicana − lado del sur, cultivo de la caña y elaboración del azúcar, tintorería y tejidos, lado del centro minería de la plata y el oro, cultivo del trigo y el maíz, alfarería, lado del norte, minería y elaboración del hierro, y pastoreo − . En los ejes del patio, − puerta de acceso al escenario, puerta de acceso a la escalera y centro del lado correspondiente a la fachada − se colocaron tres alegorías: las mujeres y los frutos, el abrazo del campesino y del obrero y la liberación del peón y la reconstrucción − la maestra rural − . En el entresuelo, por su dimensión achaParrada y lo raquítico de las mochetas de sus innumerables puertas, no era posible el empleo del color, que hubiera debilitado la idea de resistencia y viabilidad del edificio, así es que se empleó la grisalla en falso bajo-relieve, acordándose al tono gris y la posición intermedia del entresuelo, se tomó como tema las actividades intelectuales; y en el piso superior se exaltó el color en las composiciones centrales −

[1455] Rivera, Diego, *El Arquitecto*, Serie II, nr. 1, pp. 19-20, México, September 1925.

lado del sur, imágenes de los representativos transfigurados por la muerte en la Revolución, lado del norte, la trinidad revolucionaria, el MANTENEDOR, el PROCLAMADOR, y el DISTRIBUIDOR, en el centro, la unión del campesino y el obrero bajo Apolo y los dones de la Agricultura y la Industria. En las composiciones coloridas trató el pintor de hacer algo que sugiriera como la luz o la llama de la actividad, el esfuerzo y la aspiración de los trabajadores. En los ángulos, para no debilitar la idea arquitectónica de resistencia, representó en grandes bajo-relieves las artes, actividades que unen en ellas el trabajo y la fiesta: El Patio de las fiestas habíase decidido en un principio que fuera pintado por los compañeros del que escribe esto; empezaron a emplearse en tal labor, Jean Charlot, Amado de la Cueva y Xavier Guerrero; desgraciadamente la unidad ya de suyo terriblemente difícil, de conseguir en una obra basta, no se vio ayudada por la multiplicidad de artistas que formados bajo directivas individualistas, a pesar de toda su buena voluntad, talento y esfuerzo, no lograban mantenerse dentro de la homogeneidad, y si tal vez sacrificaron buena parte del interés personal que individualmente hubiera podido tener su obra. Desde luego no llegaron en ocho meses de labor a ejecutar más de cinco tramos de muro y dos sobrepuertas, de los treinta y tres que contiene el patio, verdad es que en su labor fueron constantemente molestados e interrumpidos para pintar en el entresuelo de ese patio, la heráldica más o menos auténtica o fantasista de las entidades federativas del país por disposición del Lic. Vasconcelos. Actualmente se ha encargado al que esto escribe la decoración de este Patio de las fiestas y de él van ejecutadas: la fiesta titular, − la zandunga, danza galante tehuana − , la fiesta fúnebre − danza mortuoria yaqui − , la fiesta del maíz, celebración de la cosecha, y correspondiendo a los ejes del patio, las tres fiestas de la multitud, la feria y peregrinación, la dotación de tierras y la fiesta del trabajo; − primero de mayo − en curso de ejecución. En los tramos de muro intermedios, se pintarán La fiesta de la cruz, de los albañiles, la danza religiosa, las abluciones rituales, el descanso durante la peregrinación, la fiesta de las flores, la tirada de frutas en Tehuantepec y la quema de los judas.

APPENDIX XV: SECRETARÍA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA [1456]

Primer nivel

Patio del Trabajo [Aprox. marzo 1923 julio 1923]

Muro Oriente:
Poema náhuatl [sobrepuerta]
Entrada a la mina
Poema náhuatl [sobrepuerta]
Salida de la mina
Paisaje del noroeste [sobrepuerta]
El abrazo
Poblaciones mineras del noroeste [sobrepuerta]
Campesinos
Paisaje [sobrepuerta]
El capataz
Poema náhuatl [sobrepuerta]
Alfareros
Escena bíblica [detalle superior del panel]
Poema náhuatl [sobrepuerta]
Palmas [esquina]

Muro Sur:
Trabajar reclinado y sol radiante [sobrepuerta]
La fundición − Abriendo el horno
Símbolos [sobrepuerta]
La minería
La liberación del peón
Paisaje del norte iluminado por la Revolución [sobrepuerta]
La maestra rural
Paisaje del norte [sobrepuerta]
Pastor con honda
Símbolos de la lucha y el trabajo [sobrepuerta]
La fundición − Vaciando el cristal

Patio de las fiestas

Muro Sur [agosto 1923-1924]
Trigo [sobrepuerta]
La Danza del Venado
Frutas [sobrepuerta]
La cosecha del maíz
Homenaje al maíz y al nixtamal [sobrepuerta]
La Fiesta del Maíz
Melón, calabaza y flor [sobrepuerta]
Reparto de la tierra − tres paneles conectados [sobrepuerta]
Biznaga [sobrepuerta]
Día de Muertos − Ofrenda
Magueyes y paisaje [sobrepuerta]

[1456] Collected from *Diego Rivera: Catálogo General de Obra mural y Fotografía Personal*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, INBA, CENIDIAP, Mexico 1988, pp. 13-67.

Día de Muertos − La comida
Frutas [sobrepuerta]
Día de Muertos − Fiesta en la calle

Muro Poniente [ca. julio 1923 − inicios de 1924]
Paisaje lacustre y chinampas del lago de Texcoco [sobrepuerta]
La Quema de judas
Paisaje Montañoso [sobrepuerta]
Mítines del Primero de Mayo − cuatro paneles conectados [sobrepuerta]
Paisaje del Valle de México [sobrepuerta]
Viernes de Dolores en el Canal de Santa Anita
Paisaje [sobrepuerta]

Muro Norte [1923-1924]
Danza de los Listones
Lavanderas [pintado por Jean Charlot]
Naturaleza muerta − flores en botón, tortillas y girasoles − [sobrepuerta]
El Torito [pintado por Amado de la Cueva]
El tianguis − tres paneles conectados − [sobrepuerta]
Danza de los Santiagos [pintado por Amado de la Cueva]
Naturaleza Muerta − flores tropicales bajo cortina de bambú [sobrepuerta]
Los cargadores [pintado por Jean Charlot]
Atado de cañas [sobrepuerta]
La Zandunga [sobrepuerta]
Tejedores
Tintoreros
Tehuana reclinada [sobrepuerta]
Tehuanas
Pirámide con fogatas [sobrepuerta exterior de la entrada del elevador]

Elevador
El cenote
El baño en Tehuantepec
Tehuana con niño
Hoz y martillo
Mestiza maya con niño
Escena de mercado, figuras con balanza [sobrepuerta,
interior de la entrada del elevador]
Hoz y martillo
Motivo decorativo
Motivo decorativo
Tehuanas
Tehuana reclinada [sobrepuerta]
La zafra
Paisaje tropical [sobrepuerta]
El trapiche
Tehuana reclinada [sobrepuerta]
Palmas [esquina]

Segundo nivel

Patio de trabajo [ca. 1924, Grisalla al fresco] El trabajo intelectual

Muro Norte:
La Agrimensura

La Medicina
La Química
La Química
Máquina eléctrica
La Medicina
Arco Eléctrico

Muro Oriente:
Rayos X
La Geología
Producto del trabajo
El trabajo
El trabajo
Producto del trabajo
La operación
Símbolo del infinito

Muro Sur:
La investigación
Cactácea
La Guerra
La Ciencia
Investigadores

Patio de las fiestas [ca. 1924-1925, Fresco. Escudos de los Estados de la *República Mexicana*]

Muro Sur:
Sinaloa, Sonora, Nayarit
Chihuahua
Coahuila
Nuevo León
Tamaulipas
Zacatecas
Aguascalientes
Guanajuato
Durango
San Luis Potosí

Muro Poniente:
Morelos, Querétaro
Hidalgo
México
Jalisco
Colima
Guerrero, Michoacán

Muro Norte:
Tlaxcala
Puebla
Veracruz
Oaxaca
Chiapas
Tabasco
Campeche
Quintana Roo

Yucatán

Tercer nivel

Patio de las fiestas − Corrido de la Revolución

Muro Poniente [1926]:
Cantando el Corrido
A trabajar
Serpiente de la mitología náhuatl [sobrepuerta]
La unión
Serpiente emplumada [sobrepuerta]
Alfabetización. Aprendiendo a leer
La era. La cosecha [firmado]
La lluvia
Serpiente náhuatl, mazorcas, haces de trigo y hoz de los segadores [sobrepuerta]

Muro norte [1926]:
El tractor
La cena del capitalista
Los sabios
Banquete de Wall Street
El sueño − La noche de los pobres
Ramas de árboles cargados de frutos [Sobrepuerta]
Los frutos de la tierra
La orgía − La noche de los ricos
Queremos trabajar
Garantías − Desechos del capitalismo
El hogar tan querido − Fin del corrido
Dibujo [sobrepuerta] [firmado]

Muro Sur [terminado hacia noviembre 1928]:
Dibujo [sobrepuerta]
En el arsenal
En la trinchera [fechado 1928]
El herido
El que quiera comer que trabaje [firmado]
La cooperativa
La muerte del capitalista [firmado]
Un solo frente [firmado 7 noviembre 1928]
El pan nuestro − El reparto del pan [firmado]
La protesta
Emiliano Zapata [firmado]

Patio del Trabajo [1928, fresco]

Muro norte:
La Música [grisalla]
Frutas [sobrepuertas]
Cuauhtémoc mártir
Angel [sobrepuerta]
Felipe Carrillo Puerto, mártir
Estrella roja [sobrepuerta]
Emiliano Zapata, mártir
Angel [sobrepuerta]

Otilio Montaño, mártir
Haces de trigo [sobrepuerta]
La zandunga − La danza del sol y la luna [grisalla]
Tres serpientes [grisalla]

Muro Oriente:
Tamborilero [grisalla]
Motivo decorativo [sobrepuerta]
La Danza del Venado [grisalla]
Haces de trigo [sobrepuerta]
Mujeres con vasija y cuchara
Fraternidad
Ángel [Sobrepuerta]
Mujeres con flores y frutos
Haces de trigo [sobrepuerta]
La pintura [grisalla]
Motivo decorativo [sobrepuerta]
El escriba [grisalla]

Muro sur:
Serpientes [grisalla]
La escultura [grisalla]
Haces de trigo [sobrepuerta]
Las tres Gracias − El Mantenedor
Águila con serpiente [sobrepuerta]
Las Ciencias − El Proclamador
Estrella roja [sobrepuerta]
Las Artes − El Distribuidor
Cóndor [sobrepuerta]
Caracoles [grisalla]
Frutas [sobrepuerta]
La arquitectura [grisalla]

Escaleras:
Mujer con cántar − Nacimiento del mar − El mar
El litoral − Marina
El buzo y la nube
México tropical − Paisaje de Tehuantepec
Xochipilli y Adoradoras
La plantación, La hacienda
Campesino afilando El Machete
El entierro del peón − El Antiplano
La justicia proletaria y Mecanización del campo
Construcción de un Nuevo Mundo − La Maestra
El pintor, el escultor y el arquitecto [Autorretrato de Diego Rivera]

APPENDIX XVI: PALÁCIO DE CORTÉS, CUERNAVACA, MORELOS [1457]

Temas principales

Lucha entre Aztecas y españoles
Cruzando la barranca
La Toma de Cuernavaca
Cortés y los encomenderos
Construcción del Palacio de Cortés
Ingenio azucarero en Morelos
La nueva religión
Revuelta

Arco escarzano que divide el corredor

Morelos
Zapata
Figura reclinada con el lema Independencia
Figura reclinada con el lema Tierra y Libertad

Paneles en grisalla

Llegada de Cortés a México
Cortés ante las emisarios de Moctezuma
Cortés obtiene apoyo de los tlaxcaltecas
Sitio de Tenochtitlán
Tormento de Cuauhtémoc
Muerte de Cuauhtémoc
Destrucción de la cultura indígena
Indígenas esclavos en las minas de plata
Bartolomé de Las Casas protegiendo a los indígenas
Vasco de Quiroga enseñando a los indígenas nuevas artes y oficios
Asesinato del líder indígena Roquetilla

Glifos de lugar en las enjutas de la arcada frontal

Tepoztlan
Jiutepec
Tlayacapan
Yautepec
Yecapixtla
Oaxtepec

[1457] Ibid, pp. 103-114.

APPENDIX XVII: PALACIO NACIONAL, MÉXICO CITY [1458]

El mundo de hoy y de mañana
Historia de México
México prehispánico

Escaleras de Palacio Nacional
Plaza de la Constitución
México, D.F.
Fresco**,** 1929-1935
Superficie total: 275.17 m2

1. México prehispánico
Muro norte, escalera del Palacio Nacional
México, D.F.
Fresco, 1929
Superficie total: 67.50 m2

I. Muro Norte:
1. Quetzalcóatl, gobernante y deidad de los toltecas, lleva un tocado de plumas preciosas, túnica adornada de conchas y caracoles con el emblema del caracol segmentado, símbolo de la espiral infinita, y en su mano el cetro de las siete estrellas o constelaciones. Le rodean sus súbditos, seguidores y discípulos de sus enseñanzas.
2. Templo del Sol y el de la Luna, erigidos sobre sendas pirámides y rematados con círculos que simbolizan a estos astros y con caracoles semejantes a los que adornan el cuello de la túnica de Quetzalcóatl.
3. Volcán en actividad del cual surge la cabeza de La serpiente emplumada, representación divina de Quetzalcóatl.
4. El Sol de cabeza que representa tanto el diario ocaso como la caída de Tenochtitlán y del imperio Mexica, según la profecía en la que creían.
5. Representación de la partida de Quetzalcóatl, quien se aleja del mundo tolteca después de haber manchado su virtud embriagándose. Su posterior sacrificio en la hoguera le convirtió en el Lucero de la Mañana (Venus). También se narra su travesía y arribo a las tierras del Mayab. Al despedirse de su pueblo, Quetzalcóatl prometió volver, lo cual dio origen a la leyenda y a la profecía.
6. Se ha supuesto que estas figuras simbolizan los cuatro puntos cardinales, de primordial importancia en las religiones prehispánicas.
7. Grupo de músicos y danzantes en una ceremonia; tras ellos aparece una milpa madura, un maguey, una planta de tabaco y un pequeño cactus, probablemente peyotl, aludiendo a las bebidas rituales, a los estimulantes y alucinógenos que consumían en sus festividades religiosas.
8. Mujeres fabricando tela de algodón en telares de cintura y decorándola con plumas.
9. Campesinos que siembran maíz ayudados por la coa.
10. Artífice del arte plumario con el surtido de plumas multicolores que le permitían realizar obras "pictóricas" de increíble belleza y perfección que eran muy apreciadas.
11. Escultores que tallan grandes bloques de piedra para dar forma a deidades y monumentos calendáricos.
12. Ceramista decorando un cántaro.
13. "Tlacuilo", artífice pintor, quien elabora un códice sobre piel de venado, mediante la utilización de pigmentos naturales.
14. Joyero trabajando el oro.
15. Ceramista modelando una vasija de barro.
16. "Tamemes" llevando sobre sus espaldas y cabezas los tributos que pagaban al imperio Mexica, pueblo que los dominaba con su poderío militar.
17. Guerreros Mexicas armados y vistosamente ataviados reciben los tributos de los pueblos conquistados.

[1458] Ibid, pp. 115-143.

18. Prisionero de guerra cubierto con una manta decorada con canillas humanas, que espera ser sacrificado a los dioses por los sacerdotes Mexicas. Con el objeto de obtener prisioneros para el sacrificio, los pueblos prehispánicos instituyeron la Guerra Florida.
19. Un joven caudillo exhorta a su pueblo a luchar por emanciparse del pesado yugo Azteca que los explota.
20. Batalla entre poderosos guerreros Aztecas magníficamente ataviados y guerreros de los pueblos dominados, con la consiguiente destrucción y muerte. Se aprecian las armas prehispánicas: escudos de tiras de cuero trenzado y pieles de animales con vistosas decoraciones, "macuahuitles" (espadas de madera que en los filos llevaban incrustadas navajas de obsidiana), hachas de obsidiana, macanas, lanzas de madera endurecida al fuego, y otras. Esta situación de inconformidad contra el imperio Mexica favoreció a los españoles al llegar, ya que contaron con la colaboración de algunos pueblos tributarios que anhelaban destruir a los Aztecas para obtener su libertad.

2. Historia de México
(de La Conquista en 1521 hasta 1930)
Escalera de Palacio Nacional
Fresco, 1929-1935

II. Muro Poniente:
Panel A. Conquista y colonización española
1. El águila Mexicana sostiene en el pico el "Atlteachinolli", símbolo Azteca de la guerra, que conjuga el Agua y el Fuego. La representación se encuentra en la parte posterior del Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada.
2. Cuauhtémoc, último emperador Azteca y defensor heroico de Tenochtitlán, armado con una honda.
3. Cuitláhuac, hermano de Moctezuma II, quien venció a los españoles en la famosa batalla de la Noche Triste y murió de viruela.
4. Un sacerdote Azteca sacrifica a un cautivo español, con el corazón de su víctima en la mano.
5. Hernán Cortés dirige el asalto de los españoles.
6. La matanza de guerreros Aztecas por jinetes armados.
7. El guerrero tlaxcalteca aliado de los conquistadores blande una espada española.
8. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún escribe su obra monumental Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España.
9. Vasco de Quiroga, "Tata Vasco", el humanitario misionero que protegió a los indígenas, les enseñó nuevas artes y oficios y fue el primer Obispo de Michoacán.
10. Fray Pedro de Gante, el franciscano que se distinguió como educador de los indígenas en el Valle de México.
11. La evangelización y el adoctrinamiento de los indígenas por parte de los misioneros franciscanos, agustinos y dominicos. Monja de las órdenes femeninas que apoyaron la catequización de las niñas.
12. Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, misionero franciscano que se distinguió por su defensa de los indígenas a raíz de La Conquista. Escribió Brevísima
relación de la destrucción de las Indias y otras obras como Obispo de Chiapas.
13. Hernán Cortés y sus secuaces esclavizaron y asesinaron al indígena para despojarlo.
14. Invasores atacando con cañones y armas de fuego.
15. Indígenas obligados a destruir sus templos para aprovechar la piedra en las nuevas construcciones.
16. Pedro Moya de Contreras, primer Inquisidor, tercer Arzobispo y Virrey de México.
17. El Arzobispo e Inquisidor don Juan de Mendoza con autoridades civiles y religiosas durante un Auto de Fe bajo el sistema inquisitorial de la Colonia.
18. Españoles ayudados por sus aliados los tlaxcaltecas.
19. Destrucción de la cultura indígena simbolizada por las llamas. Se alude a la quema de códices llevada a cabo por Fray Juan de Zumárraga en Texcoco y a la que realizó Fray Diego de Landa de los manuscritos mayas en Maní.
20. Violación de mujeres indígenas por parte de los conquistadores.
21. Hernán Cortés con La Malinche, su mujer Mexicana, y Martin, el hijo de ambos, símbolo del mestizaje posterior a La Conquista.
22. Malintzin o La Malinche, noble indígena que fue regalada a Cortés a su arribo al sureste Mexicano, junto con otras 19 doncellas. Después fue llamada "Doña Marina". Colaboradora de Cortés y un factor determinante en La Conquista de México.

23. Esclavitud de los indígenas, marcados a fuego.
24. Pedro de Alvarado, lugarteniente de Cortés, famoso por la saña, crueldad y avaricia con que dirigió la matanza del Templo Mayor y conquistó Guatemala en 1523
25 Indígenas levantan nuevos edificios, entre ellos el Palacio Nacional, bajo la dirección de los españoles

Panel B. La invasión norteamericana
1. Nicolás Bravo (1786-1854) Notable insurgente que combatió bajo las órdenes de Morelos Durante La invasión norteamericana defendió el Castillo de Chapultepec. Fue Presidente interino de México
2 Cadetes del Colegio Militar, miembros del Batallón de San Blan y Chinacos que combatieron defendiendo el Castillo de Chapultepec el 13 de septiembre de 1847
3. Águila americana con un haz de flechas y una garra abierta, símbolo de La invasión norteamericana durante la guerra que Estados Unidos declaró a México (del 8 de marzo de 1846 al 30 de mayo de 1848). Se cierne sobre el Castillo de Chapultepec, último reducto de los defensores Mexicanos.

Panel C. La Reforma
1. Juan Alvarez (1790-1867). Valiente líder sureño que con el Plan de Ayutla puso fin a la dictadura de Antonio López de Santa Anna. Fue Presidente provisional de la República en 1855.
2. Santos Degollado (1811-1861). Se inició en la política bajo la dirección de Melchor Ocampo, gobernador de Michoacán, con quien colaboró. Excelente espadachín y jinete, libró batallas en apoyo el gobierno juarista. Fue miembro del gabinete del presidente Juárez y del Congreso Constitucionalista de 1857. Murió en combate tratando de vengar el asesinato de su amigo Melchor Ocampo.
3. General Luis Guilardi (?-1864). Nació en Italia y llegó muy joven a México. Se adherió al Plan de Ayutla y en 1855 obtuvo el grado de general de brigada. Regresó a Italia a combatir al lado de Garibaldi y en ocasión de la Intervención Francesa, volvió a México trayendo a Juárez una carta del héroe Italiano. Estuvo en el sitio de Puebla en 1863 y un año después los imperialistas lo capturaron y fusilaron.
4. Don Manuel de la Bárcena (1769-1830). Nacido en España, estudió en Morelia y en México. Fue rector del seminario de Valladolid (Morelia) y gobernador de la Mitra de Michoacán. Como miembro de la Suprema Junta Provisional Gubernativa firmó el Acta de Independencia en 1821 y en 1822 formó parte de la Regencia.
5. General Miguel Miramón (1832-1867). Con la banda tricolor presidencial por la primera magistratura que ocupó, empuñando una espada rota en señal de traición por haber apoyado al Imperio impuesto por los franceses en territorio nacional.
6. Don Lázaro de la Garza y Ballesteros (1785-1862). En 1815 se ordenó sacerdote y en 1837 fue designado obispo de Sonora. El 30 de septiembre de 1850 fue nombrado Arzobispo de México. A raíz de sus ataques a las Leyes de Reforma, el Presidente Juárez lo desterró en 1861 y en su viaje a Roma la muerte lo sorprendió en España.
7. Don Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Dávalos (1816-1891). Arzobispo de México de 1863 a 1891, que formó parte de la Regencia de Maximiliano y de la cual fue expulsado por sus diferencias con los franceses respecto a los derechos de la Iglesia. En 1871 regresó al país.
8. General Antonio López de Santa Anna (1794-1876). Fue Presidente de la República en once ocasiones. En el lapso de 1833 a 1855 en el cual actuó México sufrió La invasión norteamericana que costó al país la mitad de su territorio y la venta impuesta de la Mesilla. El Plan de Ayutla puso fin a su accidentado mandato, pero su insistencia en intervenir política y militarmente en gobiernos subsecuentes lo llevó al destierro.
9. Don Pedro Espinosa, Obispo de Guadalajara.
10. Arzobispo Labastida, defensor de las propiedades y privilegios de la iglesia.
11. Melchor Ocampo (1814?-1861). Formado como abogado se interesó en la botánica. Viajó a Europa por año y medio y a su regreso se inició en la política. Fue diputado por Michoacán. Por oponerse a Santa Anna fue desterrado y en Estados Unidos conoció a Juárez. Formó parte del Congreso Constituyente de 1857 y fue Ministro del Presidente Juárez, habiendo trabajado en las Leyes de Reforma y firmado el Tratado MacLane-Ocampo. En 1861 se retiró a su hacienda donde fue aprehendido por una gavilla clerical de Zuloaga que lo fusiló sin juicio el 3 de junio.
12. Ignacio Ramírez "El Nigromante" (1818-1879). Concluyó brillantemente la carrera de abogado pero su erudición rebasó la jurisprudencia. Para su ingreso a la Academia de San Juan de Letrán desarrolló la tesis "No hay Dios; los seres de la Naturaleza se sostienen a sí mismos". Adoptó el seudónimo de "El Nigromante" para exponer sus avanzadas ideas liberales que, años después, tomarían cuerpo en la

Constitución de 1857 y en las Leyes de Reforma. Su periodismo fue siempre de denuncia y cuestionamiento, lo que le valió algunas condenas y cárcel. Fue magistrado de la Suprema Corte de Justicia hasta su muerte. Su obra literaria, política y científica es considerable.
13. Don Benito Juárez (1806-1872). Presidente de la República. Lleva la Constitución de 1857 y las Leyes de Reforma que separaron a la Iglesia del Estado. En la parte superior aparecen hombres con pico y pala destruyendo las iglesias, símbolo de lo trascendental de su mandato, al igual que la puerta rota de la iglesia central, donde aparece el Ojo Omnisapiente que es una alusión al Grado 33 que Juárez poseía dentro de la masonería.
14. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834-1893). Soldado y pensador, defendió en ambos campos al país y los pensamientos liberales. Fue electo diputado al Congreso Constituyente donde se distinguió como orador. Restaurada la República se consagró a las letras, en las cuales alcanzó renombre. Ocupó puestos públicos pero vivía en absoluta pobreza, por lo que aceptó viajar a Europa en 1889 como Cónsul General en Barcelona y después en París. En un viaje a Italia enfermó y murió.
15. José María Iglesias (1823-1891). Abogado de gran preparación, ocupó cargos públicos en el gobierno de Comonfort. Durante el gobierno de
Benito Juárez ocupó cinco veces el cargo de Ministro (Justicia, Hacienda y Gobernación). Fue después Presidente de la Suprema Corte de Justicia y en 1876 él mismo ocupó la Presidencia de la República durante cuatro meses y medio, pues se separó ante la ofensiva del General Porfirio Díaz y salió del país. Es autor de obras históricas.
16. Ponciano Arriaga (1811-1863). Desterrado por Santa Anna debido a sus ideas liberales, en Estados Unidos tuvo contacto con otros exiliados como Benito Juárez, Melchor Ocampo y José Ma. Mata. Fue diputado al Congreso Constituyente y el redactor principal del proyecto de Constitución (1857). Fue gobernador de Aguascalientes y del Distrito Federal.
17. José María Mata (1810-1895). Combatió en Cerro Gordo a los invasores norteamericanos y fue enviado prisionero a Estados Unidos. Ya liberado y en México, se opuso al gobierno de Santa Anna. Se unió a Juárez y fue electo diputado d Congreso Constituyente. Gracias a su empeño la Constitución pudo promulgarse el 5 de febrero de 1857. Fue Ministro de Hacienda, con Juárez y de Relaciones con Porfirio Díaz años más tarde. Por sus desacuerdos con este gobernante su vida política se eclipsó.
18. Ignacio Comonfort (1812-1863). Soldado liberal que fue electo diputado al Congreso de la Unión varias veces. Ocupó la Presidencia de la República interinamente de 1855 a 1857, lapso en el cual se promulgó la nueva Constitución (1857). Fue electo nuevamente pero el General Zuloaga se levantó en armas por inconformidad lo que llevó a Comonfort a renunciar y a Benito Juárez, Presidente de la Suprema Corte de Justicia, a asumir la Presidencia. En 1863 Juárez lo nombró general en jefe de sus fuerzas para combatir a los franceses. Murió en combate cerca de Chamacuero el l3 de noviembre de 1863.
19. Valentín Gómez Farías (1781-1858). Médico en su juventud, se dedicó después a la vida política siendo diputado al primer Congreso Nacional, el cual nombró Emperador a Agustín de Iturbide (1821). Después se opuso al Imperio y apoyó a Guadalupe Victoria. Ocupó la primera magistratura en cinco ocasiones como Presidente interino durante el gobierno del General Antonio López de Santa Anna.

Panel D. La Independencia
1. La Vid y el Gusano de Seda. En su parroquia de Dolores, Miguel Hidalgo incrementó el cultivo de la vid, reducido por reiteradas prohibiciones virreinales tendientes a favorecer la importación de vinos españoles y estableció la explotación del gusano de seda sembrando ochenta árboles de morera.
2. Martín Cortés. (1523-.7). Hijo de Hernán Cortés y de La Malinche. Educado desde pequeño en España, regresó a México en 1563 y tomó parte en la conjura de 1565. Juzgado por la Inquisición, fue condenado al destierro perpetuo de las Indias.
3. General Ignacio Allende (1789-1811). Como oficial de los Dragones de la Reina. fue uno de los principales conspiradores de Valladolid en 1809 y 1810 junto con Juan Aldama, habiendo invitado al cura Hidalgo a participar y así obtener mayor apoyo popular. Al estallar la revuelta, Allende organizó las tropas insurgentes, llegando a ser capitán general. Tuvo serias diferencias con Hidalgo por su negativa de tomar la capital del país cuando estaba a su alcance. Fue hecho prisionero con los demás en Acatita de Baján y fusilado el 28 de junio de 1811 junto con Jiménez y Aldama. Su cabeza se expuso en la AIhóndiga de Granaditas, junto con las de Hidalgo, Aldama y Jiménez.
4. Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (1753-1811). Cura de la parroquia de Dolores que fue uno de los principales integrantes de la Conspiración de Valladolid que pretendía independizar el territorio Mexicano de

la España ocupada por los franceses, para preservar los derechos del monarca español. Encabezó la sublevación de septiembre de 1810 a mediados de 1811, cuando fue apresado. Juzgado y condenado por el Tribunal de la Inquisición, fue fusilado el 30 de julio de ese año. A su muerte, Morelos continuó la lucha manteniendo vivos los mismos ideales.
5. Don José María Morelos y Pavón (1765-1815). Sacerdote que continuó la Guerra de Independencia al ser fusilados Hidalgo y sus colaboradores. Su lucha inflamó el sur de México. El 13 de septiembre de 1813 convocó al *Congreso Nacional Constituyente* en Chilpancingo, proclamando el Acta de Independencia. Llevó a cabo cuatro importantes campañas militares. Fue aprehendido a fines de 1815; el *Tribunal de la Inquisición*lo degradó y fue fusilado el día 22 de noviembre de 1815.
6. Hermenegildo Galeana (1762-1814). Se incorporó a la tropa de Morelos aportando hombres y armas y distinguiéndose por su valor en varias batallas. Ganó para la causa a los miembros de la familia Bravo. Estuvo junto a Morelos en el sitio de Cuautla y en la toma de Acapulco. Murió en la batalla de Coyuca, Guerrero.
7. Mariano Matamoros (1770-1814). Se unió a Morelos en 1811, junto al cual libró importantes batallas, habiendo llegado a convertirse en el hombre de confianza del Siervo de la Nación. Izúcar, Tecualoya, Tenancingo, Cuautla, Oaxaca, San Agustín de El Palmar, Valladolid, son algunos sitios donde su valor se destacó. Fabricó cañones y pólvora y disciplinó sus tropas. Fue capturado cerca de Puruarán y fusilado en la plaza mayor de Valladolid el 3 de febrero de 1814.
8. General Francisco Javier Mina (1789-1817). Nacido en España, se sintió atraído por la Guerra de Independencia Mexicana a través de Fray Servando Teresa de Mier. Reclutó oficiales y soldados de Europa y Estados Unidos y desembarcó en Soto la Marina el 15 de abril de 1817. En rápidas acciones logró triunfos significativos sobre los realistas y en siete meses insufló nueva vida a la causa insurgente que declinaba. Fue capturado en el Rancho del Venadito y fusilado cerca de Pénjamo el 11 de noviembre de 1817.
9. Guadalupe Victoria (1786-1843). Soldado insurgente que no simpatizó con el Imperio de Iturbide al consumarse la Independencia. Fue el primer Presidente de la República (1824-1828) y durante su gobierno se fincaron importantes bases para conformar a México como nación. Después se retiró a la vida privada.
10. Nicolás Bravo (1786-1854). Uno de los más destacados jefes insurgentes que primero se unió a las fuerzas de Galeana y más tarde recibió importantes misiones de Morelos. Fue prisionero de los realistas tres años. Ayudó a derrocar a Iturbide del trono y ocupó en dos ocasiones y por poco tiempo la Presidencia de la República. Defendió el Castillo de Chapultepec en 1847. Murió envenenado.
11. José Mariano Jiménez (1781-1811). Se unió a Hidalgo con tres mil hombres y libró importantes batallas insurgentes. Fue capturado en Acatita de Baján y fusilado junto con Allende y Aldama. Su cabeza se colgó en un ángulo de la Alhóndiga de Granaditas.
12. Juan Aldama (1774-1811). Oficial realista que participó en la Conspiración de Valladolid y al ser descubierto el complot, él recibió el aviso de la Corregidora en San Miguel. Viajó dos días hasta Dolores para poner al cura Hidalgo y a Allende al tanto del peligro. Estuvo junto a Allende en diversas acciones militares hasta que fueron capturados en Acatita de Baján. Su cabeza estuvo expuesta en la Alhóndiga junto con las de Hidalgo, Allende y Jiménez.
13. Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez (1768-1829). Mujer de gran carácter, conspiró con su esposo, el Corregidor de Querétaro, a favor de la insurgencia del país. Descubiertos los planes libertarios, avisó al cura Hidalgo del peligro que corría la empresa, gracias a lo cual se anticipo el estallido de la Guerra de Independencia. Fue aprehendida y estuvo recluida en la capital un tiempo.
14. General Vicente Guerrero (1782-1831). Caudillo de la Independencia, mantuvo viva la llama insurgente al morir Morelos. Rehusó los privilegios que el virrey le ofrecía si se rendía, con su frase *"*la patria es primero*"*. Firmó el Plan de Iguala y unió sus tropas al *Ejército Trigarante*, pero más tarde ayudó a deponer a Iturbide del trono. Ocupó la Presidencia de la República del lo. de abril al 18 de diciembre de 1829. Fue traicionado por Picaluga y fusilado el 14 de febrero de 1831.
15. Mariano Abasolo (1784-1816). Tomó parte en la Conspiración de Valladolid junto a Allende y Aldama. Estuvo junto a Hidalgo y Allende desde la noche del 15 de septiembre de 1810 hasta su aprehensión en Acatita de Baján. Salvó la vida gracias a la fortuna y gestiones de su acaudalada esposa, pero fue condenado a prisión perpetua en España. Murió en 1816.
16. Bandera de las *Tres Garantías*, con la cual el *Ejército Trigarante* entró triunfante a la ciudad de México consumando así la Independencia de México, el 27 de septiembre de 1821.
17. Leona Vicario (1789-1842). Heroína insurgente que desafío a su rica familia de la cual huyó para ayudar a la causa liberal. Utilizó su fortuna personal para fabricar armar para los rebeldes y organizó y dirigió un

servicio de correos al servicio de la causa con el seudónimo de *"*Enriqueta*"*. De su bolsa sostenía también a los presos insurgentes. Sometida a proceso en 1813, fue rescatada de prisión por guerrilleros entre los cuales estaba el pintor y soldado Luis Rodríguez Alconedo. Al escapar de la capital llevó consigo letras y tinta de imprenta para difundir el movimiento, lo cual siguió haciendo junto con su esposo Andrés Quintana Roo, miembro del *Congreso de Chilpancingo*.
18. Andrés Quintana Roo (1787-1851). Como diputado por Puebla, el 14 de septiembre de 1813 firmó el Acta de Independencia en Chilpancingo y redactó el Manifiesto para explicar al pueblo los acontecimientos. Junto con Carlos Ma. de Bustamante redactó la Constitución de Apatzingán (1814). Consumada la Independencia ocupó importantes puestos. Como magistrado de la Suprema Corte de Justicia cumplió difíciles misiones oficiales, como el arreglo de los límites con Estados Unidos y el intento separatista de Yucatán.
19. Don Manuel Gómez Pedraza (1789-1851). Fue militar realista durante la Guerra de Independencia. En 1828 estuvo postulado para la Presidencia de la República en oposición a Vicente Guerrero; ganó pero se retiró ante el amago militar de los liberales. Estuvo exiliado hasta 1832 cuando volvió para ocupar la primera magistratura por breve tiempo. En 1850 fue postulado nuevamente pero perdió los comicios. Formó parte de la Casa Imperial de Iturbide.
20. Agustín de Iturbide (1783-1824). De acaudalada familia, hizo frente a los insurgentes como oficial realista rechazando el ofrecimiento de Hidalgo de sumarse a sus filas. En 1821 convino con Vicente Guerrero el Plan de Iguala y al frente del *Ejército Trigarante* entró triunfalmente a la capital el 27 de septiembre de 1821. Fue coronado Emperador pero su reinado duró 10 meses. Fue condenado al destierro como traidor pero volvió y fue fusilado en Padilla, Tamaulipas.
21. General José Antonio de Echavarri. Destacado oficial español que al triunfo de la Independencia se convirtió en miembro de la Casa Imperial de Iturbide. Como soldado del Imperio apoyó militarmente a Santa Anna en el intento de apoderarse del Castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, última posesión española en México. Inconforme más tarde con el gobierno de Iturbide, convino con Santa Anna el Acta de Casa Mata, que dio lugar a la revuelta que lo derrocó.
22. José de León Toral (1900-1929). Asesinó al General Álvaro Obregón, Presidente electo, en el restaurante La Bombilla.
23. Concepción Acevedo de la Llata. Mejor conocida como *"*la Madre Conchita*"*. Se le juzgó como instigadora del asesinato del General Álvaro Obregón llevado a cabo por José de León Toral. Cumplió sentencia en las Islas Marías durante varios años.
24. Luis N. Morones (1890-1964) Líder de la *CROM* que llegó a tener gran poder político y fue Secretario de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo en el gobierno del General Calles. El régimen de Cárdenas lo expulsó del país en 1935 por su filiación callista.
25. General Álvaro Obregón (1880-1928). Una de las principales cabezas de la lucha revolucionaria. Tuvo brillantes acciones militares y estratégicas. Fue pilar del gobierno de Venustiano Carranza, combatiendo a las fuerzas villistas y zapatistas, pero después fue su contrario.
Obregón fue electo Presidente para el período 1920-1924, ayudando a estabilizar al país; licenció una gran parte del ejército revolucionario, reanudó relaciones internacionales y reimpulsó la enferma economía nacional. Creó la Secretaría de Educación Pública (1921) e impulsó poderosamente la instrucción popular. Hizo frente a la revuelta delahuertista. En 1928 fue electo nuevamente para ocupar la Presidencia, pero el 17 de julio fue asesinado antes de entrar en funciones.
26. General Plutarco Elías Calles (1877-1945) Como general de las tropas gubernamentales sirvió al Presidente Carranza, pero más tarde se alzó en su contra. Fue Secretario de Gobernación durante el gobierno de Álvaro Obregón y posteriormente él mismo fue electo Presidente de México para el período 1924-1928. Durante su mandato se impulsó la reforma agraria, se niveló un poco más el erario público, modernizó el ejército, inició la construcción de una vasta red de vías terrestres y defendió la soberanía nacional. En 1926 expulsó a clérigos extranjeros y cerró los templos, además de reglamentar la vida de los religiosos. La Iglesia, vulnerada en sus intereses propició la *Rebelión Cristera*. Durante el gobierno del General Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) fue expulsado del país para evitar su injerencia en la política. Su período de poder fue conocido como *"*el Maximato*"*.
27. General Emiliano Zapata (Ver panel E, 20).
28. Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1872-1924). Gobernador de Yucatán que desempeñó su cargo con un progresismo inusitado. Fue llamado *El apóstol de la raza maya*. Fundador del *Partido Socialista del Sureste*. Fue fusilado durante la revuelta delahuertista.

29. José Guadalupe Rodríguez (?-1929). Nació y murió en Durango. Líder agrarista de tendencias comunistas que activó la dotación de ejidos y con quien Diego Rivera tuvo contacto. Fue asesinado durante la ola de represión que se desató en esa época.

Panel E, arco superior, escalera principal del *Palacio Nacional*, *La Revolución de* 1910
1. El Clero, que a pesar de haber sido separado del poder por el Estado, seguía teniendo injerencia en las decisiones nacionales.
2. Doña Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz, esposa de don Porfirio Díaz
3. General Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915). Destacado militar liberal que llegó a ser Presidente de México y se convirtió en dictador, al gobernar al país durante 30 años.
4. José Ives Limantour (1854-1936). Ministro de Hacienda del *Porfiriato*, puesto en el cual tuvo un notable desempeño, estabilizando la economía del país a costa de la miseria del pueblo.
5. General Victoriano Huerta (1845-1916). Usurpó la Presidencia de la República al asesinar a Francisco I. Madero. Gobernó al país del 21 de febrero de 1913 al 14 de julio de 1914.
6. General Manuel Mondragón (1858-1922). Antimaderista y colaborador de Victoriano Huerta en el cuartelazo que produjo la caída del gobierno constitucional. Fue Subsecretario de Guerra y Marina del usurpador.
7. Don Manuel Romero Rubio (1828-1895). De ideas liberales, sirvió al país como juez y diputado constituyente. Fue Secretario de Gobernación del Presidente Porfirio Díaz de 1884 a 1895. Su hija Carmen contrajo nupcias con el general Díaz en 1881.
8. Ignacio Mariscal (1829-1910). Notable abogado, ocupó importantes y variados cargos en los diferentes gobiernos de la República. Fue Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores del Presidente Díaz desde 1885 hasta su muerte en 1910. Director de la *Academia Mexicana de la Lengua*.
9. Carlos Pacheco (1839-1891). Fue gobernador de Morelos y del Distrito Federal y Ministro de Fomento del Presidente Díaz, de 1881 a 1891. Está sepultado en la Rotonda de los Hombres Ilustres.
10. General Manuel González Cosío (1836-1913). Durante el prolongado gobierno de Porfirio Díaz ocupó las secretarías de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (1891-1895), de Gobernación (1895-1903), de Fomento (1903-1905) y de Guerra y Marina (1905-1911).
11. General Sóstenes Rocha (1831-1897). Sus primeras acciones las libró contra los liberales del *Plan de Ayutla* (1854), pero después se afilió a la causa de Juárez. Luchó contra la Intervención Francesa. El Presidente Díaz lo nombró director del Colegio Militar (1880-1886) Escribió textos castrenses.
12. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada (1823-1889). A la muerte de don Benito Juárez, ocupó la Presidencia de la República de 1872 a 1876.
13. Justo Sierra (1848-1912). Ministro de Instrucción Pública de 1905 a 1911 y al triunfo del maderismo, Ministro plenipotenciario en España. Se le conoce como *"*Maestro de América*"*.
14. Gabino Barreda (1818-1881). Científico y educador. Colaboró con don Benito Juárez en la reorientación educativa del país. Redactó el plan de estudios para la *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*, de la que fue director por diez años.
15. Guillermo Prieto (1818-1897). Liberal que salvó la vida a Benito Juárez
interponiéndose entre él y la tropa federal insurrecta en Guadalajara.
16. General Esteban Baca Calderón (1876-1957). Fue uno de los dirigentes de la Huelga de Cananea y sufrió prisión en San Juan de Ulúa. Luchó después contra Victoriano Huerta.
17. Camilo Arriaga (?) (1862-1945). Defendió las Leyes de Reforma durante el *Porfiriato* y fue antirreeleccionista. Colaboró con los hermanos Flores Magón y se unió a la causa de Madero. Perteneció a organismos
antiimperialistas.
18. Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama (?) (1880-1938), abogado liberal, simpatizante de los zapatistas y defensor del *Plan de Ayala*. Fundó el Partido Nacional Agrarista. Catedrático de Derecho Agrario y de Historia de México en la *Universidad Nacional de México*.
19. General Felipe Angeles (?) (1869-1919). Militar de carrera de gran preparación, dirigió el Colegio Militar durante el gobierno del Presidente Madero. Fue enemigo de Venustiano Carranza y luchó al lado de Francisco Villa. Fue asesinado.
20. General Emiliano Zapata (1873-1919). Caudillo revolucionario del sur y principal defensor de los derechos agrarios de los campesinos.

21. General Prof. Otilio Montaño (1880-1917). Uno de los principales consejeros de Emiliano Zapata y a quien se atribuye la redacción del *Plan de Ayala*. Durante el gobierno de la Convención fue nombrado Ministro de Instrucción Pública en el gabinete de Lagos Cházaro. Fue fusilado por los zapatistas.
22. (?)
23. Juan Sarabia (1882-1920). Abogado, luchó contra la dictadura Porfirista. Colaboró en publicaciones antirreeleccionistas. Sufrió prisión en San Juan de Ulúa.
24. (?)
25. Carmen Serdán (1875-1948). De ideas liberales, abrazó la causa revolucionaria junto con su hermano Aquiles. Durante el tiroteo en su casa de Puebla, fue herida y hecha prisionera. Fue enfermera durante la Revolución.
26. Aquiles Serdán (1876-1910). Afiliado al *Partido Antirreeleccionista*, conoció a Francisco I. Madero y ofreció iniciar la lucha revolucionaria en Puebla. Avisadas, las autoridades Porfiristas allanaron su hogar tras horas de resistencia armada. Fue muerto el 18 de noviembre de 1910.
27. General Pascual Orozco (1882-1915). Antirreeleccionista y aliado de Madero en un principio, después actuó por su cuenta. Luchó en las filas de
Victoriano Huerta. Tomó y saqueó la ciudad de León, Guanajuato.
28. Tte. Crol. José Garibaldi (1879-1950). Nieto de Giussepe Garibaldi, el héroe Italiano, llegó a México en 1911, para combatir al lado de Madero; participo en el ataque a Casas Grandes, Chih.
29. General Francisco Villa (1878-1923). Seudónimo de Doroteo Arango. Caudillo revolucionario que llevó a cabo importantes acciones bélicas y fue conocido como El Centauro del Norte. Murió asesinado.
30. (?)
31. Juan Sánchez Azcona (1878-1938). Periodista antirreeleccionista y colaborador cercano de Madero. Después, ocupó varios cargos en los gobiernos de Carranza y de de la Huerta.
32. General Lucio Blanco (1879-1922). Revolucionario distinguido, militó bajo las órdenes de Carranza y Álvaro Obregón. En Tamaulipas llevó a cabo, sin autorización superior, los primeros repartos agrarios en el norte del país. Participo en la Convención de Aguascalientes. Fue secuestrado y asesinado.
33. José Ma. Pino Suárez (1869-1913) Vicepresidente de Francisco I. Madero y asesinado junto con él por órdenes de Victoriano Huerta.
34. Francisco I. Madero (1873-1913) Apóstol de la Revolución de 1910, y Presidente de México a la caída del dictador Porfirio Díaz. Fue asesinado junto con su Vicepresidente la noche del 22 de febrero de 1913, por órdenes de Victoriano Huerta.
35. Abraham González (1885-1913). Colaborador de Francisco I. Madero en la formación del *Partido Antirreeleccionista* y Secretario de Gobernación durante su mandato. Sobrevivió 15 días al magnicidio y fue a su vez asesinado.
36. General Manuel M. Diéguez (1874-1924). En 1905 trabajaba en la Cananea Consolidated Cooper Company. Junto con Haca Calderón y otros obreros organizó la Unión Liberal Humanidad y promovió la huelga del lo. de junio de 1906. Por esto fue condenado a 15 años de prisión en San Juan de Ulúa. Fue liberado por los revolucionarios en 1911. En 1915 se levantó en armas contra Victoriano Huerta. Gobernador de Jalisco que combinó la labor legislativa con la lucha militar. Al sumarse a la rebelión delahuertista fue aprehendido y fusilado en Chiapas.
37. José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913). Grabador que preservó en sus ilustraciones para publicaciones populares las imágenes históricas de la época que vivió. Dio auge a *"*las calaveras*"*.
38. José Vasconcelos (1882-1959). Secretario de Educación Pública de 1921 a 1924, fundó el nuevo sistema educativo del México posrevolucionario. Dejo amplia obra literaria y de análisis político.
39. Ricardo Flores Magón (1873-1922). Antirreeleccionista, fundó el periódico *Regeneración*. Después de la caída de Porfirio Díaz su celo lo llevó a criticar acerbamente cada gobierno en turno, derivando hacia profundas convicciones anarquistas. Pasó largos años en prisión, donde murió.
40. Venustiano Carranza (1859-1920). Presidente de la República y sucesor de Victoriano Huerta.
41. Luis G. Cabrera (1876-1954). Ministro de Hacienda en el régimen carrancista. Defensor de los derechos agrarios, influyó en la ideología del constitucionalismo de 1917, especialmente en el artículo 27.

Panel F. La Intervención Francesa
1. Fuertes de Loreto y Guadalupe, bastiones de la defensa do Puebla y escenario de la victoria de los Mexicanos sobre el ejercito de Napoleón III, d 5 de mayo de 1862.

2. Águila Imperial, símbolo de la *Intervención Francesa*, volando rumbo a Europa al ser fusilado Maximiliano de Habsburgo.
3. General Tomás Mejía (1820-1867). Militar que defendió al país durante b invasión norteamericana. Afiliado al partido conservador, se adherió a la *Intervención Francesa* y al Imperio. Fue fusilado junto a Maximiliano de Habsburgo y al General Miramón en el Cerro de las Campanas.
4. General Miguel Miramón (1832-1867). Destacado militar que ocupó la Presidencia de la República del 2 de febrero al 24 de diciembre de 1859 con apoyo de los conservadores, cuando por precepto constitucional ocupaba la primera magistratura el Lic. Benito Juárez. Fue fusilado junto a Maximiliano y al General Tomás Mejía. El Emperador le cedió el sitio de honor en reconocimiento a su gran valor.
5. Archiduque Maximiliano de Habsburgo (1832-1867). Noble austríaco a quien los conservadores Mexicanos pidieron que aceptara reinar sobre México, siendo Presidente Constitucional don Benito Juárez. Al retirarle Francia el apoyo militar fue capturado y fusilado en el Cerro de las Campanas junto a sus generales Miguel Miramón y Tomás Mejía el 19 de junio de 1867.
6. General Mariano Escobedo (1827-1902). Combatió a los franceses como jefe de las operaciones del ejército republicano, y en el sitio de Querétaro fue el militar a quien Maximiliano de Habsburgo rindió su espada.
7. Don Benito Juárez (1806-1872). Uno de los más destacados presidentes de México. Ocupó la primera magistratura durante 14 años (19 de enero de 1858 al 18 de julio de 1872), pero en este período hubo otros Presidentes nombrados por grupos de poder, como los de La guerra de tres años (1858-1860) y durante la Regencia y el Imperio (1863-1807). Expidió las Leyes de Reforma. En 1871 fue reelecto para otro período presidencial, que no llegó a concluir por haber fallecido el 18 de julio de 1872.
8. General Ignacio Zaragoza (1829-1862). En 1861 fue Ministro de Guerra y Marina de Juárez, combatiendo eficazmente a los realistas. Como comandante en jefe del Ejército de Oriente dirigió la defensa de Puebla y obtuvo la victoria del 5 de mayo de 1862. Murió cuatro meses después en la ciudad de México.
9. General Miguel Negrete (1825-1897). Tuvo a su cargo la defensa del Fuerte de Loreto durante la batalla del 5 de mayo contra las tropas francesas.

México de hoy y del futuro, mundo de hoy y de mañana
Muro sur, escalera del *Palacio Nacional*
México, D.F.
Fresco, 1934
Superficie total: 67.80 m2

Rivera, México de hoy y de mañana

III. Muro Sur
1. Las fuerzas policiales, mantenidas por el gobierno para proteger los intereses de los poderosos, agreden al pueblo que reclama sus derechos.
2. Generales represores de los campesinos: el del sureste con una pistola Frontier Colt 45; el del centro con un rifle 30-30 y el del norte da la mano a un hacendado que lleva la Cruz del Marqués, símbolo de los Caballeros de Colón, defensores de los privilegios de la iglesia católica.
3. Obrero y campesino asesinados por protestar de su explotación.
4. Campesinos que, no obstante hacer producir a la tierra, viven en la miseria explotados por los terratenientes.
5. Frida y Cristina Kahlo aparecen como maestras que con su trabajo cultivan las mentes infantiles para alejarlas del fanatismo religioso y de las injusticias sociales, haciéndoles conocer los derechos humanos.
6. Pueblo fanatizado que compra las indulgencias que la iglesia vende.
7. Las instituciones eclesiásticas que, a manera de empresas, aprovechan la fe y el fanatismo para obtener grandes ganancias monetarias.
8. Clero corrupto olvidado de su ministerio.
9 . Capitalistas que extraen fortunas de las miserias humanas y alimentan con moneda falsa los procesos sociales que deberían desarrollar los potenciales de la juventud. De izq. a der.: John D. Rockefeller Jr.; Harry Sinclair; William Durant, antiguo director de la General Motors; J.P. Morgan; Cornelius Vanderbilt, financiero de los ferrocarriles norteamericanos y filántropo; y Andrew Mellon, ex-tesorero de los Estados Unidos.

10. Fuerzas reaccionarias, explotadoras y enajenadoras del pueblo: militarismo, capitalismo (con los rasgos del General Calles) e iglesia.
11. Obreros y constructores levantan el edificio del México nuevo a costa de gran esfuerzo, como bestia de carga en muchas ocasiones.
12. Profesor de la Universidad Nacional mistifica el socialismo Mexicano con el fascismo (su mano indica la svástica), ante una audiencia de estudiantes de todas las nacionalidades. Esta crítica la hizo Rivera cuando el Dr. Fernando Ocaranza Carmona ocupaba la Rectoría.
13. Dos facetas de la educación: la del pueblo, representada por los estudiantes de la Universidad Obrera con El Capital de Marx bajo el brazo y la de las clases dominantes.
14. El pueblo (obreros, soldados y campesinos unidos), ha arrancado sus armas a los poderosos y se defiende enconadamente. La capital es campo de batalla donde se definirá el futuro del país.
15. La trilogía popular escucha las enseñanzas de Carlos Marx, quien con su doctrina social señala el camino de un mundo sin clases sociales de utópica belleza.
16. El idílico mundo del mañana.

México prehispánico y colonial

Corredor del primer piso de Palacio Nacional
Plaza de la Constitución
México, D.F.
Fresco, 1941-1952
Superficie total: 198.92 m2
11 paneles

Muro Norte
El mundo debe a México, 1942
La cultura del México antiguo, 1942
El tianguis de Tlatelolco, 1945
Cultura Purépecha, 1942
Cultura Mixteca-Zapoteca, 1942
Cultura Totonaca, 1950
El hule, 1950
Cultura Huasteca, 1950
El cacao, 1951
El Amate, 1951

Muro Sur
La colonización o llegada de Hernán Cortés a Veracruz, 1951

APPENDIX XVIII: RAÍCES POLÍTICAS Y MOTIVOS PERSONALES DE LA CONTROVERSIA SIQUEIROS-RIVERA. STALINISMO VS. BOLCHEVISMO LENINISTA (1) [1459]

Primera. Porque tienen que demostrar, o tratar de demostrar, que fuera del partido oficial Stalinista no pueden existir artistas revolucionarios, para obligar a todos aquellos artistas deseosos de hacer trabajo revolucionario, pero todavía sin una conciencia política clara, que se agreguen a las filas de los empleados y sirvientes intelectuales de Stalin, miembros sumisos del Partido oficial, que sólo sepan responder "Sí" a toda decisión de "arriba", negando así, no digamos ya el derecho, sino la obligación de todo verdadero revolucionario, que es el analizar y discutir para mejorar continuamente, por medio de la autocrítica, la acción y línea política de su propio partido, haciendo esto según las enseñanzas de los otros y su propia experiencia.

Segunda. Los Stalinistas están interesados en destruir el prestigio de Rivera como pintor revolucionario para evitar que éste, siendo conocido internacionalmente como tal, emplee la posición que le da su reputación artística para el servicio de la Liga Comunista Internacionalista que trabaja en todo el mundo, incluyendo en sus filas a los verdaderos bolchevique-Leninistas, preparando la indispensable nueva Internacional, que como una fuerza libre de las desviaciones burocráticas y la corrupción ideológica Stalinista, probadas hasta la saciedad por las derrotas en China, entronizando a Chang Kai-shek; en Alemania haciendo de Hitler el autócrata del pangermanismo restaurado, que gobierna por medio de la barbarie; y, finalmente, conduciendo por sus errores al aplastamiento sangriento del proletariado austriaco y del proletariado español, sin contar otras derrotas como en Cuba, Centroamérica, etc., etc.

Tercera. Los Stalinistas están interesados también en destruir, si pueden, o por to menos empañar, la reputación de Rivera en el terreno puramente estético, para hacer que venda cuantos menos cuadros sea posible y, en consecuencia, dé la menor cantidad posible de dinero como contribución al movimiento de oposición contra la degeneración burocrática Stalinista.

Cuarta. Los Stalinistas usan a Siqueiros especialmente porque éste tiene que poner en su acción contra Rivera todo el ardor y empeño de que es capaz para hacer méritos ante el Partido oficial y conseguir su reingreso a e1 [David Alfaro Siqueiros fue expulsado del Partido Comunista Mexicano en 1930] y también el tener a su disposición, para cantar su elogio, las revistas Stalinistas publicadas en los demás países con el dinero producido con el sudor de los trabajadores rusos, y eventualmente algún viaje a la URSS, de verdadero turismo "revolucionario", seguido de algunos encargos de pinturas para el gobierno soviético, después de la oratoria efectista que usará Siqueiros en el próximo congreso de pintores en Nueva York, [Se refiere al American Artist's Congress celebrado en Nueva York el 15 y 16 de febrero de 1936] preparado bajo acuerdo por el partido Stalinista, en donde Siqueiros, como delegado, se prepara a hacerse aparecer como el Mesías renovador de la pintura revolucionaria de México y Jefe Máximo Stalinista de la pintura revolucionaria mundial.

Siqueiros tiene que luchar duramente por su reingreso al Partido, del que fue expulsado a pesar de estar en la cárcel por comunista al tiempo de su expulsión, por razones juzgadas excesivamente graves por ese partido, y que no tenían nada que ver con ninguna posición de Siqueiros en favor de las alas de oposición, sean de izquierda o derecha, que hicieron expulsar del partido Stalinista a tantos miles de buenos revolucionarios, sino simplemente por indisciplina, por haber desoído las directivas del Comité Central del Partido en su acción sindical de Jalisco, acción que ahora tanto cacarea, y que lo hizo suspender por el Comité Central para juzgarlo y, en caso de que hubiera lugar, expulsarlo; en esa situación, Siqueiros tomó parte en una manifestación del Partido un primero de mayo, y fue aprehendido con otros muchos comunistas, los que una vez en la Penitenciaría organizaron una fracción para seguir trabajando desde el interior de la cárcel, y el Partido y esos compañeros acusaron a Siqueiros de no trabajar debidamente en la fracción. Este asunto fue publicado ampliamente en el periódico del Partido, El Machete. Freeman-Siqueiros, por medio de la revista New Masses y en conferencias y discursos de toda una campaña organizada dentro del aparato oficial Stalinista, y en sus-organizaciones de periferia, entre las calumnias, inexactitudes y mentiras que han usado contra Rivera, repiten siempre la acusación del oportunismo de éste, la que carece completamente de base.

[1459] Rivera, Diego, "Raíces políticas y motivos personales de la controversia Siqueiros-Rivera. Stalinismo vs. bolchevismo Leninista", Imprenta Mundial, Mexico 1935. Quoted in Tibol, Raquel, *Arte y Política: Diego Rivera*, Colección Enlace, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1978, pp. 112-113.

APPENDIX XIX: RAÍCES POLÍTICAS Y MOTIVOS PERSONALES DE LA CONTROVERSIA SIQUEIROS-RIVERA. STALINISMO VS. BOLCHEVISMO LENINISTA (2) [1460]

Siqueiros me acusa de ser valiente con los muertos y cobarde con los vivos, por no haber pintado, por ejemplo, a las víctimas de la lucha proletaria en México por miedo a los vivos en el poder, y no haber pintado a éstos en el papel político que desempeñan. Concretemos los hechos. Siqueiros en la pintura mural de México jamás ha pintado a nadie de los que él pide que se pinten, ni vivos ni muertos. Jamás ha hecho un retrato. Tuvo que ir hasta Los Angeles, California, para pintar a Calles. Rivera lo pintó en su propio Palacio Nacional de México, dos veces, entre los presidentes, en sucesión vertical de Iturbide y junto a Obregón, a quien sirve de fondo Toral, que se prepara a asesinarlo, y la madre Conchita, Morones, etc., y en la pared que representa a México actual y la perspectiva sobre el futuro, en su papel histórico de gobernante iniciador de la consolidación burguesa de México en conexión con la finanza internacional y naturalmente con la represión de las huelgas y la represión contra los campesinos revolucionarios. Esto lo hizo Rivera en el edificio histórico central del país, en la escalera monumental de él, adonde todo el mundo puede entrar tan fácilmente como transitar por la Calle y donde miles de campesinos y obreros pasan cada semana, donde el presidente tiene que pasar, y bajo el poder del Jefe Máximo de la Revolución, cuando todas las fuerzas oficiales daban al General Calles título sin esperar a que estuviera el General Calles en Honolulú, ni estar Rivera protegido por la frontera de los Estados Unidos, como cuando Siqueiros pintó a Calles en California. En el mismo Palacio Nacional, junto con Zapata asesinado por Carranza y Carrillo Puerto por de la Huerta, Rivera pintó a Guadalupe Rodríguez y Primo Tapia, fusilados bajo el imperio callista por ser comunistas y agraristas, revolucionarios de acción, y por apreciar exactamente la acción de los actuales gobiernos. Comunistas están pintados tras de un grupo formado por un general y dos camisas doradas que hablan con un caballero de Colón vestido de charro, un campesino y un obrero ahorcados con letreros colgados al cuello que dice: "Ahorcado por latro-faccioso comunista", y en otro: "Por rebelde agrarista". Ahí está la máquina de hacer dinero debajo del altar de la Virgen de Guadalupe, el fraile explotador, el campesino y los burgueses idiotizados en adoración y contribuyendo al enriquecimiento de la Iglesia. A los lados de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe, tal como se puede ver en la basílica, una bandera norteamericana y el pabellón tricolor a cuadros de las fuerzas de Cristo Rey. Apoyando los pies en el techo de la iglesia, la prostituta se reclina en el pecho de un cura mientras un general político le propone mayor precio por sus encantos. Junto a la célula de la educación pública, donde un exRector de la Universidad enseña a los pobres estudiantes las doctrinas del socialismo Mexicano, cuya significación está hecha con una svástica verde, blanca y colorada. Dice Siqueiros que Rivera siempre pintó a los obreros y campesinos Mexicanos como pasivas masas de siervos cristianos y a los agitadores como apóstoles predicando la doctrina de Cristo. Pueden los obreros y campesinos Mexicanos ver en el Palacio Nacional los retratos de algunos compañeros de ellos hablando a las masas, y ver a esta masa ametrallada por un automóvil blindado marcado con la svástica accionado eléctricamente por el Presidente de la República, y atacados por la policía con fusiles y gases asfixiantes y encima un agitador indicando a las masas el camino de la rebelión. Ya esta armándose y manejando ya ametralletas, fusiles y cañones contra el ejército del gobierno capitalista. Después Marx indicando el camino de la construcción de la sociedad futura. Probablemente como Marx tenía melenas y barbas, ahora Siqueiros lo ha confundido con el señor San Pedro o Santa Claus.

Rivera pintó la situación objetiva de los trabajadores de Detroit, por eso ellos defendieron sus frescos contra los católicos. Pintó a Lenin en el monumento mayor del capitalismo imperialista americano, por eso su obra fue destruida, y por eso muchas manifestaciones de frente único, de todos los obreros revolucionarios de los Estados Unidos, comprendiendo al mismo Partido Comunista oficial Stalinista, obligado a ello por sus propias masas, protestaron por el hecho. Rivera pintó en la New Workers School de Nueva York la historia del desarrollo revolucionario de los Estados Unidos desde la guerra de Independencia hasta la ola de huelgas bajo la NRA [National Recovery Administration] de Roosevelt y las repercusiones fascistas de Mussolini y Hitler y su barbarie.

Así, pues, en escala nacional e internacional, es mentira y calumnia lo que asevera Siqueiros, los hechos lo demuestran, y demuestran también que cualesquiera que sean los defectos que Rivera tenga como pintor, como hombre y como revolucionado, ni es oportunista, ni tiene miedo a los vivos en el poder, ni es sólo valiente con los muertos.

[1460] Ibid, pp. 123-125.

No es necesario que Rivera alargue aquí el análisis de todas sus propias pinturas, porque deja a los obreros y campesinos del mundo el juzgarlas, y como no tiene miedo a los hombres en el poder ni a los burgueses − Calles, Rockefeller, Roosevelt o quienes sean − ni a Stalin o Manuilsky que desde el poder soviético quisieran destruido como pintor revolucionario por medio de todos los Siqueiros que se presten a ese trabajo, Rivera tampoco tiene miedo a la crítica ni a la autocrítica, deber elemental de todo revolucionario, y está dispuesto a aprovechar ambas para mejorar su línea y su acción en la pintura que tiende a ser útil a los obreros y a los campesinos del mundo y está dispuesto a colaborar en tal trabajo con Siqueiros, aunque sea como hasta ahora, Siqueiros hablando y Rivera pintando.

APPENDIX XX: SUEÑO DE UNA TARDE DOMINICAL EN LA ALAMEDA CENTRAL [1461]

1. Don José Ma. Vigil y Robles, historiador, y director de la Biblioteca Nacional, soñando con el pasado y evocando la historia de la Alameda.
2. Don Guillermo W. de Landa y Escandón, gobernador del D.F.
3. Don Jesús Luján, lagunero acaudalado, amigo y protector de artistas, en especial de Julio Ruelas.
4. Hernán Cortés, conquistador español de México
5. Luis de Velasco II, 8º. Virrey de México, fundador del paseo de la Alameda en 1592.
6. Fray Juan de Zumárraga, primer Obispo y primer Arzobispo de México. Mandó quemar vivo a un nieto de Nezahualcóyotl por idolatría en 1539 primera víctima de la Inquisición en la Nueva España.
7. QueMadero de la Santa Inquisición instalado en los terrenos pertenecientes al Convento de los Dieguinos [hoy Pinacoteca Virreinal] que luego se convirtieron en parte de la Alameda Central.
8. Doña Violante de Carvajal, hermosa judía perteneciente a la famosa familia que fue juzgada y condenada a la hoguera por la Inquisición, bajo la acusación de herejía.
9. Iglesia de San Diego, que estuvo en lo que hoy es la Calle de Dr. Mora en el extremo poniente de la Alameda Central. Hoy Pinacoteca Virreinal.
10. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz [1651-1695] La más notable poetisa de la Nueva España durante la Colonia, que mereció el nombre de La Décima Musa. Declaró el derecho de la mujer a la cultura y a disentir, por lo que resulta una de las precursoras de la lucha por los derechos femeninos.
11. Raterillo, soñando con la comida que comprará con el producto de su hurto.
12. Anciano Dormido, de atuendo otrora elegante, que sueña en su idilio al son de un vals, recordando el imperio de Iturbide.
13. Antonio López de Santa Anna, general y político que ocupó once veces la Presidencia de la República entre 1833 y 1855.
14. Winfield Scott, general norteamericano cuyas tropas ocuparon la ciudad de México y acamparon en la Alameda Central, durante la invasión de los Estados Unidos de 1846 a 1848.
15. Agustín de Iturbide, militar realista que ayudó a consumar la Independencia y comandó al *Ejército Trigarante* en su entrada a la capital de México en 1821. Durante 10 meses fue Emperador de México, de 1822 a 1823.
16. Pabellón Morisco, construcción que envió México a la Exposición Internacional de París, celebrada en mayo de 1889. Después estuvo en la Alameda Central y más tarde fue trasladado a la Alameda de Santa María para ceder su lugar al Hemiciclo a Juárez.
17. Anciana Viuda, soñando en sus amores con uno de los invasores norteamericanos, con quien tuvo un hijito rubio.
18. Pelado Borracho, soñando en sus glorias cuando era chinaco liberal.
19. Don Benito Juárez, héroe nacional y Presidente de México durante La guerra de tres años y *La Intervención Francesa*.
20. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, novelista y miembro radical del Congreso de la Unión, alcanzó el grado de coronel durante *La Intervención Francesa*.
21. Ignacio Ramírez *"*El Nigromante*"*, notable pensador liberal que, cuando estudiante, declaró en la Conferencia de la *Academia de Letrán* de 1836 que *"*Dios no existe*"*.
22. Leandro Valle [1833-1861] Joven soldado liberal que combatió a los norteamericanos [1847] y a los rebeldes de Puebla [1856]. Participó en La guerra de tres años [1858-1860] ascendiendo a general; en 1861 fue diputado federal y comandante del Distrito Federal. Combatiendo a los conservadores fue aprehendido y fusilado en el Monte de las Cruces el 23 de junio.
23. Viejo ex-militar conservador, soñando con el segundo Imperio.
24. Emperatriz Carlota, esposa de Maximiliano de Habsburgo.
25. Maximiliano de Habsburgo, noble austríaco nombrado Emperador por los conservadores Mexicanos y apoyado por el ejército francés, de 1864 a 1867. Fue fusilado en el Cerro de las Campanas.
26. General Mariano Rodríguez, oficial de la guardia de la emperatriz y tío de Diego Rivera

[1461] In *Rivera, Diego: Catálogo general de obra mural y fotografía personal*, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Publicaciones y Medios, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico 1988, pp. 215-217 and from the pamphlet of the mural

27. General Miguel Miramón, colaboró con el Imperio y fue fusilado junto a Maximiliano.
28. François Achille Bazaine, Mariscal de las tropas extranjeras durante *La Intervención Francesa*.
29. General Mariano Escobedo, militar republicano a quien Maximiliano rindió su espada en el sitio de Querétaro
30. Papelerito vendiendo *El Imparcial*
31. Globero
32. Dulcero vendiendo dulces típicos: muéganos, enjambre de nuez, pepitoria, etcétera.
33. Caramelero ofreciendo su mercancía: pirulís entre los que hay jinetes, corazones, damas, chiles verdes y rojos y la lira del poeta.
34. Manuel Gutiérrez Najera, el Duque Job, poeta precursor del Modernismo en América. Fundó la *Revista Azul*.
35. Lucecita Díaz, hija de Don Porfirio, y su primera esposa Delfina Ortega. Diego tomó como modelo a su hija Ruth.
36. Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz, segunda esposa de Porfirio Díaz e hija de Don Manuel Romero Rubio, Ministro de Gobernación del *Porfiriato*. Diego tomó como modelo a su hija Lupe.
37. José Martí, destacado poeta y padre de la independencia de Cuba, que vivió en México de febrero de 1875 a fines de diciembre de 1876. Tuvo una actividad notable en esos dos años en las letras Mexicanas, relacionándose con los más renombrados literatos de la época. En 1894 hizo un viaje rápido para reunir fondos para la invasión de su isla natal bajo el dominio español buscando su independencia. Murió en el combate de la sabana de Dos Ríos, el 19 de mayo de 1895.
38. Diego Niño, autorretrato del pintor, quien se representó de la mano de la Muerte Catrina [Tonantzin] y soñando en el amor por excelencia, que está personalizado por Frida Kahlo.
39. Frida Kahlo, pintora Mexicana que estuvo casada con Diego Rivera durante diecisiete años. Lleva en su mano el símbolo del ying-yang.
40. La muerte catrina, personaje creado por el grabador José Guadalupe Posada, a quien Diego representó con una boa de plumas que no es más que Quetzalcóatl, La serpiente emplumada de los prehispánicos. Así rinde culto a *"*nuestra madre la Muerte o sea Tonantzin*"*.
41. Ricardo Flores Magón, editor de *Regeneración*, publicación liberal antiPorfirista y precursor de la Revolución Mexicana a través del Partido Liberal, cuyos organizadores además de Ricardo Flores Magón fueron su hermano Enrique, Anselmo L. Figueroa, Praxedis G. Guerrero y Librado Rivera. Anarquista indomable, murió en prisión en Estados Unidos.
42. José Guadalupe Posada, extraordinario grabador que ilustró las publicaciones populares del México anterior a la Revolución, y a quien Diego Rivera consideró siempre como un maestro importante en su formación plástica. Una de sus más famosa creaciones fue La calavera catrina.
43. Librado Rivera, muy cercano colaborador de Ricardo Flores Magón, que sufrió persecución y prisión como todos los miembros del Partido Liberal, al cual pertenecía. Amigo y seguidor fiel de las ideas anarquistas de Flores Magón, en 1918 fue condenado junto con él a sufrir larga condena en Estados Unidos.
44. Gendarme cuidando que las *"*gentes decentes*"* puedan transitar tranquilamente sin mezclarse con gente del pueblo.
45. Joaquín de la Cantolla y Rico reanudó los viajes acrostáticos en globo en la capital de la República en 1863 [se iniciaron en 1784 y por peligrosos se prohibieron en el D.F. en 1862]. Sueña en su globo *República Mexicana* en el cual él mismo asciende, agitando una bandera tricolor.
46. Chiutlahua, *la Revoltosa*, legítima, caricortada y garbosa, que enfrenta al gendarme que le cierra el paso para que no moleste a las personas *"*decentes*"* que pasea en la Alameda. En esta figura Diego rindió homenaje a su segundo amor, una famosa tiple, vivido a la edad en que se representó en el mural.
47. Nicolás Zúñiga y Miranda, eterno candidato a la Presidencia de la República durante el *Porfiriato*. Sueña que el dictador le entrega la silla presidencial, la banda tricolor y la gloria.
48. Don Porfirio Díaz, general y político que ocupó la Presidencia de la República durante 30 años.
49. General *"*Lobo*"* Guerrero, apodado *General Medallas*, héroe del pueblo durante *La Intervención Francesa*, que recibió condecoraciones de mano de Don Porfirio Díaz y después, se convirtió en un personaje característico del paseo de la Alameda, de los chiquillos y bromistas que lo condecoraban con objetos brillantes. [1462]

[1462] According to the pamphlet of the mural there is between the previous and following Fra Diavolo, un *vividor*.

50. Matrimonio Extranjero, con dos niños que se burlan, él del *General Medallas* y ella, de una niña indígena que llora por que la sacan de la Alameda con su familia.
51. Gendarme, que impide que una familia campesina transite por la Alameda, reservada para las clases acomodadas, expulsándola por la fuerza.
52. Banda de Policía tocando en el Kiosko de la Alameda.
53. Un pelotari y un torero que pasean por la Alameda.
54. Familia pobre que es expulsada por la fuerza. Sus miembros sueñan con la lucha reivindicatoria de sus derechos. El padre y la madre aparecen como revolucionarios y el hijo dispara sobre el represor. La niña que llora es María de Jesús Velázquez.
55. Joven obrero que es expulsado junto con la familia campesina. Sueña con participar en la lucha popular que derribará el feudalismo Porfiriano. Los árboles de la Alameda que en el extremo izquierdo exhiben apacibles follajes, en esta sección cobran ritmos dinámicos que enmarcan la ola de violento colorido que emana de los sueños de los personajes representados.
56. Charro dormido soñando con buenas cosechas de maíz gracias a la ayuda de un arado de disco, con muchos pesos y un pellejo de pulque.
57. Vendedor de fruta ofreciendo su mercancía.
58. Intelectual leyendo los periódicos clandestinos de la época: *México Nuevo* y *El Antirreeleccionista*. La acción sucede el 15 de octubre de 1909, mientras el joven [José Vasconcelos] sueña con la corona de laurel, una talega de pesos y una amante hermosa. [1463]
59. Obrero revolucionario que habla a mujeres y hombres jóvenes de la pequeña burguesía y del artesanado sobre las ideas revolucionarias publicadas en *Regeneración*, editado por Ricardo Flores Magón, donde el ideal de *Tierra y Libertad* del *Partido Liberal* está explicado por Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, uno de los ideólogos precursores de la Revolución Mexicana que estallaría en 1910. Este personaje está representado por Manuel Martínez, que fuera ayudante personal de Diego Rivera durante años.
60. Chamaco de la clase media comiendo una torta. Aquí vuelve a autorretratarse Diego Rivera, soñando con la que habría de ser su familia, esposa, hijas y nieto, así como amigos cercanísimos.
61. Ruth Rivera Marín, hija de Diego y de Lupe Marín, su segunda esposa.
62. Rosa Rolando de Covarrubias, gran amiga del pintor y esposa del también pintor Miguel Covarrubias.
63. Guadalupe Rivera Marín, hija mayor de Diego y de Lupe Marín. Lleva en brazos a su pequeño hijo Juan Pablo.
64. Guadalupe Marín, segunda de las cuatro esposas que tuvo Rivera a lo largo de su vida y madre de Ruth y Guadalupe. Lleva en su mano un carrizo con rehiletes de colores.
65. General Francisco Mújica. Aparece como parte de la trilogía del pueblo: el campesino, el soldado y el obrero. Los tres sellan con las manos entrelazadas el compromiso del sufragio efectivo representado por la urna. Este sueño expresado por el obrero revolucionario del nivel inferior está coronado en la parte superior por la efigie de Francisco I. Madero y el lema Sufragio Efectivo. No Reelección. Tras él emerge la materialización del sueño de la industrialización de México.
66. Estudiante de leyes con la avidez pintada en el rostro, simboliza al "fósil" de Derecho que sueña con hacer una gran carrera política sin escrúpulos, enriqueciéndose y obteniendo inmenso poder.
67. Estudiante de la *Escuela de Aspirantes de Tlalpan*, con el uniforme del plantel militar, soñando con los traidores y asesinos Victoriano Huerta y Manuel Mondragón y con los Planes de la contrarRevolución.
68. Victoriano Huerta, general que mandó asesinar a Madero y Pino Suárez para usurpar la Presidencia de la República.
69. Manuel Mondragón, general cómplice de Huerta que comandó las fuerzas federales contra Madero durante la Decena Trágica.
70. Presidente de la República [¿Plutarco Elías Calles?, ¿Miguel Alemán?] despachando sobre la caja fuerte de Cinycomex, S.A.R.I. [Sociedad Anónima de Recursos Ilimitados], manejando inmensas cantidades de dinero y acariciando a una joven rubia con la anuencia de sus consejeros, uno de ellos un Arzobispo [Luis Gonzaga María Martínez].
71. El hombre de los cientos de millones, según definición de Diego Rivera, [¿General Maximino Ávila Camacho? ¿Ing. Alberto J. Pani?, ¿General Juan Andrew Almazán?], abraza a una joven mujer que se encuentra encaramada sobre un árbol [el joven árbol de la burguesía] mientras con la otra mano sostiene una

[1463] According to the pamphlet of the mural is Juan Sánchez Azcona, writer, *maderista*, etc, who is dreaming about José Vasconcelos.

alta pila de billetes. Un niño pequeño le da los brazos oculto casi tras los rehiletes [símbolo de la inconstancia y volubilidad de los políticos] que empuja la dama del árbol con uno de sus pequeños pies. *"*Es esta dama, feliz y heredera de centenas de millones, la culminación de la familia revolucionaria y el *"*pendant*"* de Violante de Carvajal [...]*"*
72. El México Moderno, donde pueden reconocerse el *Teatro Nacional* [después *Palacio de Bellas Artes*], la *Plaza de Toros*, el *Banco de México*, y otros edificios de gran altura.
74. Francisco I. Madero.
75. Zapatismo.

APPENDIX XXI: TODAVÍA OTRA TORMENTA [1464]

A fines de febrero de 1953 recibí el encargo de hacer un mural en la pared exterior del nuevo Teatro de los Insurgentes. Proyectado por los hermanos Julio y Alejandro Prieto, este teatro pertenecía al diestro político y compositor de canciones José María Dávila y a su vivaz y atractiva esposa Queta. Fue principalmente la señora Dávila la responsable de que se me haya ofrecido tan interesante trabajo.
El espacio en que tenía que pintar comprendía toda la fachada principal del teatro, que daba a 1a agitada Avenida de los Insurgentes. El problema plástico era extremadamente desafiante. Porque la superficie era curva en la parte alta, y convexa, y la mayor parte de la gente que había de ver el mural lo vería al pasar rápidamente en automóviles o autobuses.
Para establecer de inmediato el tema del mural y el propósito del edificio pinté en la parte baja del centro una gran cabeza enmascarada con dos manos femeninas enfundadas en delicados guantes de noche hechos de encaje. Cubrí el resto de la superficie con escenas de obras de teatro que reflejan la historia de México desde antes de la Colonia hasta el presente, convergiendo en el centro superior en un retrato de "Cantinflas", el genio Mexicano de la farsa popular, pidiendo dinero a los ricos y dándoselo a los pobres, como en realidad lo hace.
Esta escena fue la que precipitó La Tormenta. Cuando apenas se había terminado el bosquejo al carbón, alguien advirtió que "Cantinflas" llevaba una medalla de la Virgen de Guadalupe. Inmediatamente se levantó la gritería. Era blasfemo conectar algo tan bajo como un personaje de comedia con algo tan sagrado como la Virgen.
Entrevistado por los reporteros, "Cantinflas" dijo que si realmente había yo blasfemado contra la Virgen de Guadalupe en mi mural no permitiría nunca que ninguna de sus películas se exhibiera en ese teatro. Pero mi pintura se apegaba estrictamente a la realidad, pues él siempre llevaba la medalla puesta. Nadie, dijo "Cantinflas", podría quitársela nunca o burlarse de su reverencia y amor.
Cuando "Cantinflas" vio mi bosquejo quedó perfectamente satisfecho. Hasta posó conmigo en el andamio, junto al lugar donde había dibujado a la Virgen, para que nos tomaran unas fotografías. Estaba a mi lado, mostrando con orgullo la medalla para que el público pudiera verla en las fotografías una vez impresas.
Al tener yo el apoyo de "Cantinflas", la Prensa se puso de mi lado, señalando que no había nada de contradictorio entre "Cantinflas" y 1a Virgen de Guadalupe. "Cantinflas" era un artista que simbolizaba al pueblo de México y la Virgen era la bandera de su fe.
Una gran mayoría del público suscribió esta interpretación. Pero no se permitió que la agitación contra mi pintura se desvaneciera. En realidad, estaba organizada por una banda de rufianes dirigida por extorsionadores profesionales que pasaban por ser firmes apoyos de la Fe.
Los rufianes pretendían obligar a los Dávilas a darles un tanto por ciento de los beneficios del teatro − ese era el precio que ponían a la tranquilidad − . No sólo los Dávilas, sino el propio "Cantinflas", empezaron a asustarse de la situación, y por fin yo mismo dejé de encontrarla divertida. De manera que cuando llegué a la parte del mural donde estaba el bosquejo de la Virgen no la llegué a pintar, dándoles así el esquinazo a amigos y enemigos, falsos y verdaderos. Hacer este inesperado cambio, debo confesarlo, no me produjo poco placer.

[1464] Rivera, Diego, *Mi arte, mi vida, una Autobiografía hecha con la colaboración de Gladys March*, Editorial Herrero, Mexico 1963, pp. 219-220.

APPENDIX XXII: ¡YO NO MIENTO! MIS AFIRMACIONES EN EL MURAL SON EXACTAS [1465]

Es costumbre de mentirosos, galloferos y criminales, atribuir a sus víctimas sus propias cualidades y crímenes. Esto es un axioma que se aplica a todos los miembros del hampa mundial internacional, aunque lleguen a colocarse dentro de las embajadas por las rendijas consejeriles.
Por ésto no me extraña que un tal, que según leo en IMPACTO, se llama Mario Alvarado Rubio, haya tenido la desvergüenza de asegurar que ha sido mi amigo. Ese individuo sí miente, miente Mario Alvarado Rubio al asegurar que yo haya tenido la desgracia de conocerlo siquiera de vista.
No miento yo en nada de lo que afirmo en mi mural sobre el asunto de Guatemala. Mis afirmaciones son tan exactas, que la pintura ha sido reproducida no sólo en las revistas y periódicos más caracterizados de Europa, de acá y de allá de las cortinas, en Sudamérica, en México y lo que es más, en los Estados Unidos, cuyo Departamento de estado, por boca del honorable M. Dulles, me proporcionó el título de mi mural transportable, *"*Gloriosa Victoria*"*, según frase histórica pronunciada para el Congreso y la Prensa, en Washington, por este caballero. Esto consta en la prensa del mundo entero.
Cada figura, cada actitud, cada traje de los personajes, están checados con documentos fotográficos o escritos y el testimonio de quienes conocen personalmente a los personajes, todos ellos publicados por la prensa mundial o bien obrando en mi poder por transmisión directa.
Empezaremos por los niños muertos: obra en mi poder un telegrama dirigido a mí por una de las organizaciones culturales de Guatemala, organización no comunista, en el cual se me dice: *"*Siguen ametrallando escuelas desde los aviones y arrojando bombas. Pedimos a usted nueva opinión México para detener esta masacre*"*.
Los trabajadores guatemaltecos que cargan plátanos han sido hechos siguiendo fielmente documentos fotográficos. Todo el mundo conoce los barcos de la United Fruit Co., llamados Flota Blanca. Uno de ellos, el *"*Quirigua*"* carga el plátano en el cuadro.
El soldado superarmado bajo cuya culata están dos cadáveres de campesino y campesina guatemaltecos, es el verdadero retrato del pistolero personal del Sr. Castillo Armas, que aparece guardando las espaldas de éste en varias fotos que obran en mi poder, por lo demás publicado muchas veces en la prensa norteamericana, Mexicana y de otros lugares.
El retrato del Señor Castillo Armas sigue fielmente sus rasgos fisonómicos, características de su cuerpo y personalidades moral y psicológica como aparece en varias fotos sobre todo en una de ellas, la cual se ha seguido en sus detalles respetando cuidadosamente la camisa, la chamarra, la pavorosa automática encajada tras el cinturón con una moda antimilitar, hasta la prenda de vestir que no corresponde a quien entrega a su patria al imperialismo extranjero, es decir, el pantalón.
En cuanto a la actitud total de la figura, su atento saludo a Mr. Peurifoy, embajador de los Estados Unidos; Dulles, Canciller de los ídems, al que le habla a la oreja su hermano Allan, del mismo apellido, ex Presidente de la United Fruit Company, cuyo puesto dejó antes del asalto a Guatemala para no verse implicado en él, y para después asumir el de jefe de la policía secreta americana, está confirmada esa actitud, repito, por la opinión mundial respecto a sus relaciones amorosas con *"*Mamita Yunái*"* y los funcionarios norteamericanos que la sostienen.
Los fusilados atados de pies y manos, sentados sobre banquillos de madera, de cuatro patas, bendecidos por Monseñor Verolino, delegado de Su Santidad el Papa en Guatemala, que tomó parte en las negociaciones de paz en Salvador, cumpliendo con la cristiana misión de buscar la paz en la tierra para los hombres de buena voluntad, bendice los cadáveres de los ajusticiados según indicación pública del embajador Peurifoy, con toda justicia, puesto que indudablemente ya obtuvieron la paz permanente y eterna. Este hecho exacto está registrado en fotografía publicada en una revista editada en Europa que se reparte en el mundo entero. Obra en mi poder el ejemplar correspondiente de ella.
El mundo entero conoce y el poder del señor Castillo Armas lo ha publicado, que hubo más de 3,000 encarcelados sospechosos de comunistas; de manera que los presos pintados en el cuadro son cantidad infinitesimal en realidad con el número de emprisionados. Y nadie puede dudar de que esos patriotas víctimas de los amigos de la United Fruit y el *"*made in U.S.A.*"* sigan fieles a su bandera, la gloriosa azul y blanca, con el quetzal que sólo provisionalmente se encuentra enjaulado.

[1465] Rivera, Diego, "¡Yo no miento! Mis afirmaciones en el mural son exactas" *Revista Impacto*, nr. 268, January 29, p. 21, Mexico 1955.

Es conocido de todo el mundo el hecho de que campesinos de Guatemala, patriotas y valientes, armados aunque sea sólo de sus machetes, combatieron a los invasores de la patria y que éstos saben bien que tarde o temprano serán arrojados de ella por ese pueblo campesino heroico de Guatemala y que los intelectuales y los obreros, como los que los acompañan, y uno de ellos está retratado en el mural, combatieron ayer y combatirán mañana para aplastar en bien de la América Libre, a los enemigos de su patria al servicio del imperialismo extranjero.

Nadie dudará del retrato de la fachada de la Embajada de México en Guatemala y de nuestra bandera que dio asilo y protegió a los perseguidos por la United Fruit y Mr. Peurifoy, hoy destacado en Thailandia para un *"*job*"* semejante; tampoco podrá dudar nadie del retrato de la Catedral de Guatemala que hace fondo a Monseñor Verolino, ni menos aún de los retratos físicos y psicológicos de los traidores. Elfego Monzón que repartió dólares americanos antes del golpe para asegurar la inercia de los coronelitos del ejército guatemalteco oficial, ni del retrato de los coronelitos Dubois y el heroico Mendoza, que inició el ataque aéreo con una puntería que seguramente dirigió la justicia inmanente, pues su primera bomba le dio, incendiándola, en la casa de su propia madre, según está publicado en fotos de la prensa americana y del mundo entero.

Tampoco puede dudar nadie del retrato del volcán de Agua que se ve detrás de la Catedral, ni de los platanares cuyo fruto también cuidan y monopolizan los Dulles, Peurifoy y sus agentes criollos; ni del saco para café *"*made in U.S.A.*"*, puesto que el primer decreto del señor Castillo Armas llegado a la presidencia de la República, fue levantar las tarifas de importación para los sacos para café hechos en los Estados Unidos, arruinando con ésto una naciente industria textil guatemalteca patrióticamente establecida para dar empleo a más de 20,000 trabajadores que se han quedado en la calle.

Todo lo cual demuestra que miente Mario Alvarado ante la opinión pública mundial y para vergüenza de su nombre, si es que puede tener vergüenza, y demuestra también que mi mural les ha dado como la bomba de Mendoza, en la mera madre.

APPENDIX XXIII: RETRATO DEL DR. ATL [1466]

El Doctor Atl es un hombre de resorte, de resorte accionado por toda clase de fuerzas. Si se aplicara un adjetivo literario y desusado se le llamaría "Proteico".
Ramón Gómez de la Cerna hubiera dicho tal vez, hablando de él, que seria el hombre moderno por excelencia si no llevase barbas.
Las barbas que tiene Atl son su drama, pues sin barbas Atl no conservaría trazas de Romanticismo.
Y hubiera sido: un pintor super-naturalista, de la familia de Hiroshigue expresándose en maravillosas estampas, dibujos y acuarelas. Sería inmortal en todas las historias del arte.
Un geólogo vulcanólogo audaz y sabio, célebre en todas las sociedades científicas del mundo.
Un hombre público, poseedor de larga serie de carteras ministeriales en sucesivas administraciones.
Hubiera pasado seguramente o pasaría por la Presidencia de la República Mexicana siendo el más activo de los Presidentes. Hubiera sido el general de mayor sangre fría, más ingeniosas combinaciones personales estratégicas y más cuantiosos fondos de reserva en los bancos internacionales.
Gran ocultista, hubiera igualado a Paracelso.
Sería el Doctor Atl, botánico, teólogo, fluidoterapeuta, químico, físico, histólogo, enderezaría a los torcidos y resucitaría a los muertos.
Mandaría a las fuerzas de la naturaleza, sus extraordinarios aparatos transformarían las energías del tiempo, contrariando al tiempo, por modificar el espacio.
Don Juan, las listas del Tenorio llenarían apenas una semana de su carnet.
Financiero, como existe la casa Morgan preponderaría la casa Atl.
Cocinero, sus fórmulas hubieran hecho olvidar a Vatel y Brillat-Savarin, a causa de una alimentación enteramente nueva la humanidad hubiera cambiado hasta de forma.
Periodista, Hearts sería apenas su pequeño subalterno, el Trust mundial de la Prensa le habría dado la corona Imperial de la Tierra.
Pero, barbas tiene Atl y su genio múltiple hace de él, el hombre más simpático de México, el artista más inteligente, el hombre de mundo más atractivo y el más eficaz hombre de negocios tras la apariencia de la personalidad más pintoresca de su tiempo y su país.

[1466] Dr. Atl, *Un hombre más allá del universo*. Prólogo de Diego Rivera. Editorial Cultura, Mexico 1935.

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