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THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION

Abstract

The National Revolutionary Party was founded in 1929 to win elections and to resolve conflicts between different political groups after the Mexican Revolution. But it was also created in order to face the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy to the Constitution of 1917 and the measures that the revolutionary governments had established to “defanatize” the Mexican people and to limit the social influence and therefore the political power of the Catholic Church. In the past decades nevertheless, the PRI has evolved from initial anti-clerical and even anti-religious positions towards more respectful positions of religious freedom, in line with the logic of a State that considers itself to be plural and respectful of differences. On the other hand, party authorities do not always respect their liberal and revolutionary tradition, the secularism of the state and the principle of separation that guarantees the moral autonomy of individuals against corporations. At times, the search for legitimacy generates political dependence and eventually leads to the imposition of the creeds and dogmas of majorities with respect to minorities of all kinds consequently eliminating the free will of broad sectors of the population that do not share those principles and expect the protection and guarantee of their rights by the secular State.

Keywords: Anticlericalism, Catholicism, Evangelicals, Revolution, Public Sphere, Religion

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Introduction

The National Revolutionary Party, which assembled the main factions of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and has been in power since, was founded in 1929, in the middle of a storm.³ An important part of it was the religious question. The party, according to specialists, “was designed to win elections and to resolve conflicts between different political groups”⁴. But it was also created, we must add, in order to face with unity one of the most important challenges that the Revolution had encountered: the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy, and quite a few parishioners, to the Constitution of 1917, and the measures that the revolutionary governments had established to “defanatize” the Mexican people and to limit the social influence and therefore the political power of the Catholic Church. The problem had arisen ever since some members of the Catholic hierarchy and leaders of the National Catholic Party, founded in 1909, participated in the plot to overthrow President Francisco I. Madero, the revolutionary leader who initiated the rebellion and had later won democratically the Mexican Presidency. This is why the Constitutionalist, the revolutionary form the north of the country who reacted to the coup and his assassination by the military, considered the Church and the Catholic Party as enemies of the Revolution, denying them any participation in the reconstruction of the revolutionary institutional fabric and doing everything possible to prevent the Catholic leadership from having influence and power in the political future. From then on, within the revolutionary movement, secular currents of all kinds would be expressed, from the most anti-religious to the most liberal, through anticlerical ones. All of them agreed on the need to limit the power and influence of the Catholic hierarchy in the future. This position would not change in the following decades.

The immediate antecedent of the founding of the party, which generated a crisis of governability, was the assassination of the President-elect, General Alvaro Obregon, on July 1928 at the hands of a religious fanatic. At that time the government was trying to control an armed rebellion in the Bajio, a very catholic and clericalized region in the Center-West of Mexico, which threatened to spread to other regions and could be used by revolutionary factions that were critical of the regime or by foreign interests. The drive for unity was important in more ways than one. In fact, that this unity was finally built around the new party without showing fissures was one of the elements that favored the formal end of the so called Cristero war, through the “arrangements” of June 1929, which allowed the reopening of the temples. In any case, in the years to come, the National

3 The National Revolutionary Party, then Party of the Mexican Revolution (1938) and finally Institutional Revolutionary Party since 1946, has won the Presidency of the Mexican Republic since 1929 up to now with the exception of the period 2000–2012. It has remained in power also in most governorships and municipalities. Accused of massive electoral fraud since the beginning, a more democratic system has been in place since the last decade of the 20th Century.

4 Reyna, J.L., *Para entender el Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, p.8, Nostra Ediciones, México, 2009.

Revolutionary Party and its heirs (the Party of the Mexican Revolution and the Institutional Revolutionary Party) would constitute for decades the main bulwark against the ecclesial attempts of imposing conservative values and also in order to influence policies of the new regime⁵.

This first anti-clerical stage, which can be identified with the Maximato period (the Chief Maximo was the former President Plutarco Elías Calles) between 1929 and 1934, was followed by one of conciliation, established by a new President, Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), who had understood that religious persecution was being used as a political instrument to destabilize his government by some of the most radical sectors of the party, protected by Calles. The key moment of this new policy, based on common nationalist elements, was the oil expropriation of 1938, which was supported by a Catholic hierarchy that had already received clear signs of détente for the past two years.

None of the above, however, cast any doubt on the effective control that the Mexican State exerted on movements of the masses, particularly through workers', peasants' and popular organizations. In fact, although the Catholic hierarchy continued to refer to its social doctrine, in practice it abandoned the organization of workers to the State. In exchange for this undisputed dominance, the government relaxed its controls over the Catholic school system, tolerating its efforts in the educational field.

The party, which had been transformed in 1938 into the Party of the Mexican Revolution, was reorganized under a corporate logic, through the sectors mentioned above, including that of the armed forces, from which two years later they would disassociate, thus initiating its political neutralization. The various presidents of the National Executive Committee of the PRM and then PRI would have to reflect the position of the mainstream, whose main exponent was always the President of the Republic. Some of them, such as Emilio Portes Gil or Lázaro Cárdenas himself, occupied both positions, although not simultaneously. It was thus natural that the party reproduced the political line established by the Head of the Executive Branch.

Thus, when General Manuel Avila Camacho affirmed during his presidential campaign that the nation shuddered at the spectacle of the Second World War and closed ranks with the countries of America "in order to consolidate in our continent a Christian international policy, more just, more noble"⁶, it was clear that the times of anticlericalism had passed. The presidential candidate of the PRI also reiterated his conviction that freedom of conscience should be respected and guaranteed "by definitively moving away from all religious persecution and that

5 The formal origin of this party is in the Manifiesto of the Organizing Committee of the National Revolutionary Party, issued on December 1st 1928 by the general and former president Plutarco Elías Calles. The Manifiesto invited "all political parties, groups and political organizations of the Republic, with a creed and revolutionary tendency, to unite and form the National Revolutionary Party". On March 6th 1929, the PNR was definitively founded, as a response to the need to end warlordism and to establish the peaceful transfer of power. See: E. Krauze, Plutarco Elías Calles, *México XX Century Collection*, Mexico, 1999.

6 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, p. 74 & s.s., Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993.

national politics should strengthen and ennoble the high values of the Mexican family”⁷. Even more importantly, once President-elect, Avila Camacho affirmed that he was a man of faith, reiterated that he was not a Socialist but a Democrat and that the Communists would not participate in his government. Regarding his personal beliefs, answering the question: Are you Catholic? The President-elect replied: “I am a believer”. He would then add: “I am Catholic by origin, by moral sentiment”. Then, as to whether “his Catholicism” [which he claimed never to practice] clashed with Article Three of the Constitution, concerning secular education, Avila Camacho replied that no, that said article dealt with fanaticism, but not with Catholicism, thus avoiding having to deny the adherence to Catholicism that the journalist attributed to him. Thus, the President-elect presented himself as a believer, close to more conservative values and above all making a distinction between religious fanaticism and Catholicism, and in doing so closing the door to any form of religious persecution and opening the possibilities to other forms of cooperation with religious entities, particularly with the Catholic Church. At the same time, this inaugurated a more liberal stance, in the sense that the particular beliefs of public officials did not matter politically, as long as the constitutional spirit of separation of Church and State remained and the churches remained outside of public affairs, at least publicly. Negotiations between the Catholic hierarchy and the Government could be carried discreetly or even secretly, but they could never lead to the alteration of the constitutional regime or to a political intervention by the Catholic clergy, which was the main source of concern for the regime⁸.

And so, in just over a decade the party had gone from a persecutory stance, to one of tolerance, and finally to one of recognition, if not collaboration. None of which meant, however, the end of the disputes between the Mexican State and the Catholic Church, especially in the social and educational field. Thus, at least since 1938, a “modus vivendi” had been established which essentially meant a nationalist alliance with the acceptance of the demands of social justice proclaimed by the Revolution, in exchange for tolerance in educational matters. This implicit and informal agreement was to last several decades, until social and political circumstances forced changes in both the structure of the State and the anti-clerical positions that had to be reviewed in a constitutional reform. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) would later on formally abandon its original positions and in 1991, like the other major parties in the country (to its right and left), it proposed a constitutional reform, finally agreed upon, in which legal personality was restored to the Churches and therefore a series of rights to the them, formally denominated “religious associations”, like the right to have properties relevant to their mission or the possibility of owning and administering primary

7 Ibidem.

8 Ibidem.

and secondary schools, among other questions⁹.

The constitutional reform of 1992 in religious matters, the emergence of a religious plurality that this then showed, and the defeat of the party in the 2000 presidential elections, would modify the PRI's perspective on State-Church relations again. The dozen years in which the rightist National Action Party (PAN) would hold the Presidency of the Republic (between 2000 and 2012), also had important effects for the party, since without the natural leader who had historically been the President of the Republic, partisan politics suffered the effects of a feudalization, a product of the rise to power of the PRI state governors who, at that juncture, became the party's de facto managers. The return of the PRI to the Presidency of the Republic in 2012 does not seem to have completely reversed this process, even though politics in religious affairs is a federal not a state matter.

Meanwhile, Mexico formally became a secular Republic in 2012, while the Constitution was also modified to include freedom of ethical convictions and conscience in addition to that of religion that was already established.¹⁰ This entire history, as long and complex as it is, does not fit into the narrow space intended for this text. Nevertheless, some key and critical moments, can illustrate the trajectory of a party in a subject as sensitive as it is defining of its essence.

Between anticlericalism and tolerance

The transformation of the PRM into the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1946, in line with the program of institutionalization of the Revolution, coincided with the end of World War II and the new airs of democratic civility that were being promoted. But it also coincided with the arrival of the Cold War and new balances within the party, which ended up sensibly weakening the already diminished socialist currents within it, particularly within the CTM and the labor movement in general. Since it became clear that the war was about to be concluded, the Church redoubled its attacks against the Mexican Communist Party and elements belonging to the official sector suspected of sympathizing with the USSR. This was done in the midst of an anti-communist campaign at the national level, which had its origins in the power struggle within the official party. The left was relatively weak on all fronts and the church took advantage to join the attacks that were directed against it. The main targets of these attacks were union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the leaders of the teachers' union, Luis Chávez Orozco and Luis Álvarez. In fact, in 1946, the Guadalupean [from the Virgin of Guadalupe banner] National Association of Workers was founded. However, despite this and other efforts, such as the National Catholic Confederation of Labor, the Church never succeeded in consolidating a powerful Catholic trade

9 Ibidem.

10 In fact, separation of Church and State affairs and freedom of worship was established in Mexico since the liberal revolution and the so called "Reform Laws" of 1859-1860, by President Benito Juárez.

union movement, since the PRI never allowed any real competition in the organization of the masses. In this context, Miguel Alemán's ascent to the Presidency would confirm the trend towards institutionalization, but also of a move towards the right by the party and the regime, which did not mean the abandonment of corporatism¹¹.

In 1947, the Truman doctrine and the open anti-communism of Pius XII had their equivalent in Mexican society, for both the government of Miguel Aleman and the Mexican episcopate were interested in diminishing the influence of the communists and the official left within the union apparatus, mostly controlled by the State. With the eventual weakening of the more radical or socialist liberal groups, the Church and the followers of the President eliminated a common enemy and thus remained the only contenders in the battle for control of the masses. The government replaced the doctrine of national unity, which was more apt during wartime, for a thesis in favor of valuing Mexican heritage. From the end of 1947, the PRI began to reorient its ideology towards a stance in which any kind of imperialism was rejected and it intended to fight for the revolutionary conquests against those who from that perspective tended to impose ideas that were not in line with the Mexican reality. As a result, the revolutionary rhetoric did not disappear, nor did the resistance of the more secular and liberal groups within the party. For example, at the end of 1950, a commission presided over by the then Dean of the UNAM drafted and handed over to the Chamber of Representatives a preliminary draft of the Penal Code, which proposed repealing the law of July 31st 1926, which established all the sanctions to the violation of the laws of cult. This project obviously encountered strong opposition. And yet, in 1951, the apostolic visitor (there were no formal diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Vatican) from the Holy See, Guillermo Piani, declared that while the resistance of Catholics could be understood before, "today the systematic opposition to a decent regime, which had covered the church with attentions, could no longer be explained". Part of this change was a more conservative orientation of the party, in view of the changes of the Mexican economy; the government supported and relied on a new business class that emerged from the growing industrialization and, in addition, there was also greater control over the labor movement through what was termed "union charrismo", which consisted, experts say, "in the alliance between the governmental apparatus and the union leaders, who supported the regime over the needs of its members"¹².

In spite of this general orientation of the Alemán government and the good formal relations between the State and the Catholic Church, towards the end of Alemán's six-year term (1946-1952), the Catholic hierarchy constantly criticized government corruption. At the same time, the Mexican episcopate carried out

11 Ibidem., p. 108.

12 J.L. Reyna, *Para entender el Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, Nostra Editions, México, 2009, p. 49.

a moralizing campaign, reacting to the model of liberal society that was developing, proposing instead a social and moral renewal¹³. In the same way, before the presidential elections, the clergy demanded again the repeal of Article 3 of the Constitution¹⁴, concerning secular education, exerting pressure through organizations such as Mexican Catholic Action and the National Union of Parents (UNPF)¹⁵. However, the government's response was critical of clerical pretensions.

When President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958) took power, he declared himself in favor of "freedoms of expression, of thought, of press, of belief and of criticism, at the same time that he established a strict separation between the affairs of government and the clerics"¹⁶. Ruiz Cortines reiterated the liberal practice of Mexican presidents, maintained in spite of everything in the previous six years, which established a strict separation between public and private affairs. At the same time, the Catholic institution continued to protest against the anticlerical norms established in the Constitution of 1917. Thus, in 1954 the clergy made a vigorous campaign to raise awareness among Catholics to fight for the repeal of Articles 3°, 5°, 24°, 27° and 130°.

Mexican liberalism regained strength in that six-year period. When the Senate of the Republic approved in October of 1956 a decree declaring the year 1957 as the "Year of the Constitution of 1857 and of Mexican Liberal Thinking", the episcopate responded by publishing a day later statements about the civic duties of Catholics. This led to protests from various senators, who asserted that Catholic hierarchs were entering "a very dangerous terrain by encouraging their parishioners to take political action under episcopal inspiration." They accused the Church "of participating directly in national politics and violating the Constitution". So did the representatives of the official left, such as the secretary general of the CTM, Fidel Velázquez, who denounced the eminently political character of the episcopal statements, thus reaffirming the traditional partisan role of the main confederation of Mexico. There were, however, other positions within the PRI itself, which, although stating some doubts, claimed that the clerical statements contained "a patriotic background"¹⁷. The president of the Regional Committee of the PRI in the Federal District (capital of the country), had a much smarter position, trying to prove that Catholics could be supporters of the PRI, marking a distinction between their position as believers and as citizens. He affirmed that the statements of the episcopate did not mean a political participation, much less support to a specific political party. He argued that the PAN wrongly implied that the Church supported it, but that this was not the case since the Church was

13 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, p. 126 & s.s., Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 141.

15 The origins of the UNPF date back to the difficult days of the socialist experience in education, which put the six-year plan into practice before Cárdenas took power. See: J. Vázquez, *Public Education*, *Historia de México*, 1974, p. 119.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 127.

17 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993, p. 158 & s.s.

not an instrument of anyone. He then affirmed something that was undeniable, but which broke with the old idea of the incompatibility between Catholic beliefs and PRI political affinity: "Catholic citizenship has acted and acts within the PRI, where it has found a marked respect for the Church and its practices"¹⁸. In fact, it would have been impossible for the regime of the Revolution to have sustained itself without the support of Mexican Catholics who, up until 1950, represented more than 98% of the total population. Although these claims were qualified as unofficial by the PRI national president, this position would gain ground in the future, since it avoided the incorrect identification of all Catholics with the PAN and signified a warning to the Church of the danger of being identified exclusively with one political party or group.

In 1958, presidential candidate Adolfo López Mateos began his campaign in a town in Zacatecas, where the local priest served as keynote speaker and before the presence of nuns, who "did not hide their excitement"¹⁹. The fact was described by the press as a historical event; for it was the first time that a member of the clergy spoke in public alongside the revolutionaries, which meant a break with the secular tradition of the party and the regime. However, the fact that the priest spoke in a conciliatory tone and within the PRI campaign, meant for some a triumph for the government. On the other hand, the church benefited in turn for the sole reason that the candidate himself had allowed religious laws to be broken, seeing as the priest had participated in a political act. However, shortly afterwards, in a speech delivered in Guadalajara, López Mateos stated that "Mexico must necessarily be governed by liberal institutions"²⁰. In fact, the weight of ideological differences soon became evident. One of Adolfo López Mateos's first actions as president was the creation, in 1959, of the National Commission of Free Textbooks, but it was not until mid-1961, when the church began to attack textbooks, in states with strong clerical presence like Chihuahua. On February 2nd of that year, a demonstration of over 100,000 people was organized by the National Union of Parents and the Regional Anti-Communist Committee. What was at stake around the issue of textbooks were two different conceptions about primary education. The State sought to infuse into the youth of Mexico a series of values that would consolidate the Mexican community and shape their understanding of reality and history within guidelines that identified them as members of a country with liberal profiles. On the other hand, opponents of the mandatory textbook rejected it because it was considered part of a totalitarian State project. Thus, while opponents of the text began to call it "single text", to highlight the authoritarian nature of the State measure, its advocates called it a "free and mandatory text"²¹.

18 Ibidem, p. 158.

19 Ibidem, p. 173.

20 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993, p. 173 & s.s.

21 Ibidem., p. 190.

The textbooks came with an 11-year Educational Plan, which led to a renewed conflict between the State and Church between 1959 and 1962, around free textbooks. The UNPF, then the ecclesiastical hierarchy and finally the National Action Party (PAN), argued that the government's decision was unconstitutional²². The UNPF accused the government of directing education toward socialism. One of the most significant protests against free textbooks was held in Monterrey, where protesters carried banners with the caption "Mexico yes, communism no".

During the 1960s, in the midst of the Cold War, with special implications for Mexico for its proximity to Cuba and the sympathy of many sectors of the party with that country, linked to anti-imperialist nationalism, relations between the State and the Church became more complex. On the one hand, the more conservative sectors wanted to rely on the Church in their anticommunist struggle. On the other hand, the more liberal and nationalist sectors saw in this approach a danger to the Mexican secular State and the principle of separation it sustained. In 1966 the social effervescence manifested itself in a growing agitation in the country's universities and in some political and social organizations that sought to open spaces for participation in decisions on national problems.

In the face of major ecclesial changes, such as the Second Vatican Council, and amidst major social transformations, with the rise of other political parties such as the PAN, which began to dispute the PRI's political hegemony, the Catholic hierarchy began to move from unconditional support to the government, to a position of "critical support" which, without questioning cooperation in the practical field, sought to qualify and shape some of the conceptions of the regime, especially those related to the social question. The party's candidate, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, began his campaign in a significant manner, in the very conservative and clerical state of Guanajuato, by speaking of the need for a "comprehensive development" of the country, which approached the Catholic integralist discourse, which refers to the need to integrate religious and political positions²³.

The student movement of 1968 would signal the symbolic beginning of the end of a social model that had been ideologically marked by optimism in the benefits of the Mexican economic and political system. In this context, the church as a social institution had to reformulate its relationship with the State and society, and also face a growing sentiment of protest within it, which went in the same direction as that expressed in other sectors of society²⁴. Following a conservative and anticommunist logic, the Catholic Church remained institutionally apart from the students' repression and massacre of October 2, 1968, keeping absolute silence, with few exceptions, such as that of Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo in Cuernavaca. The expression of what happened was limited to a brief

22 Ibidem., p. 193.

23 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993, p. 225 & s.s.

24 Ibidem, p. 239.

statement by Cardinal Ernesto Corripio, in which he invited the people and the government to come to come together, but without alluding at any point to the massacre of hundreds of young people²⁵.

The crisis of hegemonies

In 1970, Mexico was already a country transformed by the regime of the Revolution but, equally for that reason, a country that no longer responded to old social or government criteria. In the sphere of beliefs and religious groups this transformation would also force a redefinition of the government and the hegemonic party.

One of these changes was that of increasing religious plurality. Although inadvertent at first, in the following years that would imply that the PRI would have to face something more than the historical relation with that equally hegemonic Church. The Church, in turn, much like the party of the regime, would have to face new questions arising both from this growing plurality, and from internal dissidence. All this in the midst of growing social protests, of political questionings and without eliminating the ideological/doctrinal conflict between liberalism and Catholic social doctrine.

The struggle between Church and State for educational control continued throughout the decade of the seventies. In 1973 a new Federal Education Law was approved, in which the State reaffirmed itself as the absolute leader in education, subordinating individuals to official standards²⁶. In that same year the UNPF was once again scandalized with the textbook of Social Sciences directed towards sixth-year students, edited by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), since they considered it of socialist tendency. The PAN attacked the free textbook, censored secular teaching, declared itself for freedom of religious education and considered the new order as a step forward for the State to maintain the monopoly of education that would lead to socialism and later to communism. Meanwhile, the PRI deputies pointed out that they did not contradict any religion, and that the aim was to provide scientific education, leaving religious education to the home and churches²⁷.

Despite tensions and divergences, which would not cease to exist, President Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) made surprising gestures along the lines of what would be called the "democratic opening". One of these was the official visit he made to the Holy See within the framework of an intense international activ-

25 Leija M. Veloz, The relationship between the Catholic Church and the State in Mexico, 13 years after the constitutional reform, in: *Religion, Society and Politics in Mexico during the 20th century*, M. Pacheco (ed.), National Institute of Historical Studies of the Mexican Revolution, Mexico, p. 180.

26 Septián V. Torres, Church and Education in the Twentieth Century, in: *The Catholic Church and Politics in Today's Mexico*, p.258-259, UIA, Mexico, 2000.

27 Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993, p. 121 & s.s.

ity and the efforts to carry out the Charter of the Economic Duties and Rights of States, which the President himself had proposed at the UNCTAD II meeting, held in Santiago de Chile in 1972. During those years, between 1972 and 1975, the distinguished intellectual Jesus Reyes Heróles, author of three volumes on Mexican liberalism and profound defender of the secular State, was in charge of the party. He himself maintained that the President's visit to the Vatican did not entail the possibility of any change in the Church-State situation. Some leaders of Masonic lodges also voiced their opinion. The supreme council of the 33rd grade published an open letter stating that important reactionary sectors were capitalizing on the trip, hinting that the purpose of the interview was to make a Concordat. However, if partisan orthodoxy was well protected in this sense, this did not prevent President Echeverría from having important symbolic gestures such as the aforementioned meeting with Pope Paul VI on February 1974²⁸. Another of them was the support to the construction of a new Basilica of Guadalupe, through the Mexican Society of Credit (SOMEX), by creating a trust that would provide sufficient funds to finish building it. As a correspondence, Abbot Guillermo Schulenburg promised to inaugurate the Guadalupean temple on October 12th 1976, two months before the end of President Echeverría's term²⁹. In fact, this type of gesture and the effects of the Second Vatican Council, in a Church also affected by radicalisms of all kinds, led the Catholic hierarchy to support, albeit critically, government efforts to achieve the social transformations that many longed for.

In the same way as in previous years, the picture was certainly more complex. Two issues would dominate the ideological conflict between the State and the Catholic Church: family planning³⁰ and textbooks³¹. In effect, the government reoriented its population policy in 1972, seeking to reduce high birth rates, through a responsible parenting strategy. Many bishops issued a document on the subject, pointing out that the State had no right to force marriages to have many children, few or none. Civil authorities responded to the allegations and a controversy was created on the coercive aspects of birth control. Finally, the episcopate was obliged to issue a communiqué, in which it clearly stated its reprobation of all pressure (direct or indirect) on couples to induce them to use certain contraceptive means, to avoid having children. In the end, the government, with the central support of the PRI, managed to impose its criteria and policy.

On the other hand, the new free textbooks, distributed since 1974, found opposition in ecclesial sectors in 3 points: sexual education, evolution of the spe-

28 Ibidem, p. 229.

29 Leija M. Veloz, *The State-Catholic Church Relationship in Mexico, after the Constitutional Amendment*, PhD thesis, UAM-X, Mexico, 2007, p. 415 and s.s.

30 In January 1975 President Echeverría promoted the reform of Article 4 of the Constitution, granting the right to decide the number of children, thus touching on one of the most sensitive areas for the Catholic Church. See: Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, First Reprint 1993, p. 314 & s.s.

31 The new textbooks, distributed since the end of 1974, found opposition in ecclesial sectors basically for their affirmations in three points: the sexual education, the theory on the evolution of the species and the socialist systems. Ibidem, p. 317.

cies, and socialist systems. As in 1962, the National Union of Parents led the opposition to the books. Echeverría at a meeting of the SNTE, said that “textbooks have already begun to receive the clashes of the old, dark and most stubborn and negative interests in the history of Mexico”. Also some PRI members of the Chamber of Representatives reacted and stated that the UNPF attacks came from the clergy. The episcopate reacted by issuing a statement trying to tone down the rhetoric, while maintaining Catholic doctrinal principles. To this, the Minister of Education, Víctor Bravo Ahuja, replied: “It seems unfortunate that the declaration of the ecclesiastical hierarchy concerning free textbooks coincides with the pronouncement and the campaign of rumors and false information carried out by obscurantist and retrograde sectors against national institutions, and with the desperate acts of terrorist aggression, which attracts young people, disoriented in their eagerness to achieve social transformations through violence”³².

Political turmoil, which included all kinds of rumors and acts of violence, had taken over the Mexican political scene. In that context, in 1977 Jesus Reyes Heróles, then Secretary of the Interior for José López Portillo, announced the intention to carry out a political reform to strengthen the country’s formal democracy. The measure had a double objective: to counteract the repressive struggle against guerrilla movements and to be an instrument for a renewal in the forms of formal democracy of the political system. On the other hand, the government wanted to strengthen a political system weakened by abstentionism.³³

The political reform, once set in motion, nevertheless had unexpected results. Within the framework of that reform, the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) proposed that “the ministers of the different cults, as citizens, should enjoy the right to be part of any political party”, under the logic that in a democratic country no can be denied, under any pretext, any party or social group of any kind, the right to express themselves politically and participate in the public life of the nation. The PCM proposal indeed referred not only to members of the clergy but to army members and tended to eliminate “second-class citizens” in the country. The proposal and the reactions to it were symptomatic of the political and social change that was taking shape. The PAN, for example, although not opposed to a reform for which it had always fought, stated that it had not suggested amendments to Article 130 of the Constitution. For its part, the National Synarchist Union (an extreme rightist movement) opposed the legal intervention of the clergy in politics because - according to them - the Church would misuse their spiritual influence to exert political manipulation. For his part, the leader of the leftist Mexican Workers’ Party, Heberto Castillo, argued that asking the ministers of the various religions to participate in politics with every right was “to accept the political action of those who obey obedience to a government other than that of Mexico” and forget that they were a privileged minority. Castillo added

32 Ibidem, p. 318 & s.s.

33 Ibidem, p. 361 & s.s.

that if the priests' freedom of political action was obtained, the path would be "to the political organization of denominational groups with religious influence over the depoliticized people"³⁴. In short, the distrust of any form of political intervention by the clergy transcended the limits of the PRI.

In this context, the visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico was announced in order to participate in the work of the Latin American Conference of Bishops to be held in the city of Puebla in January 1979. The Church indicated that the visit was of a pastoral nature and that it didn't have any political meaning³⁵. This provoked conflicting positions even among members of the presidential cabinet. Secretary of the Interior Jesús Reyes Heróles opposed any opening of the system in favor of the church³⁶. Nevertheless, despite criticism, the newly appointed Pope John Paul II was received in Mexico by President López Portillo, who accompanied by his wife and his sons, told him: "Sir, welcome to Mexico; may your mission of peace and harmony, and the efforts of justice in which you endeavor be successful over the next days. I leave you in the hands of the hierarchy and faithful of your Church, and may everything be for the good of humanity". Later, the President received the Pope in the official residence, and there they had a private conversation of around an hour in which they officially dealt with issues such as peace, disarmament, human rights and justice³⁷. However, it would later transpire that the Pope had agreed to give a private Mass in the official residence itself, which would have been attended by the President's mother and other close relatives. In any case, John Paul II's visit to Mexico would open a new stage of visibility for the Catholic world in Mexico, which would have social and political repercussions in the medium term.

The party and the modernization of relations with the Churches

At the beginning of the eighties the regime entered into crisis both economically and politically. The sudden drop in oil revenues, the growing weight of the foreign debt, and the authoritarian nationalization of the banks generated discontent among various sectors of the population. It was evident, moreover, that the time of a presidency without checks and balances and a regime with weak and inefficient opposition could not continue. The so-called civil society began to awaken and this had consequences for all political organizations, including the PRI, which suffered a major split, headed by two leaders of the revolutionary nationalist sector: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who had been the CEN president between 1975 and 1976. The earthquake of 1985 was a key moment for the construction of a civil society that demanded changes and

34 H. Castillo, *Priests in politics?*, *Proceso*, No. 32, 13 June 1977, p. 30. Quoted by: Roberto Blancarte, *Cit. Op.* Note No. 5, p. 363.

35 A. Núñez Isse, *John Paul II. Six days in Mexico*, BANCOMER Foundation, Mexico, 1979, p. 34 and s.s.

36 Acevedo C. Alvear, *The Catholic Church in the History of Mexico*, JUS Editorial, Mexico, 1995, p. 210.

37 F. Perea, *The Pope in Mexico*, Co-edition Diana and newspaper Novedades, Mexico, 1979, p. 57.

in particular the democratization of the political system.

The conjuncture of the crisis served as a framework for Cardinal Ernesto Corripio to declare: that it was necessary to leave the “narrow legal corner in which they had been surrounded”³⁸. This attitude showed that the implicit agreement between the State and the Catholic Church had become fractured³⁹.

During the six-year presidential term of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), the political and economic system came under scrutiny in an increasingly palpable fashion, which was reflected in specific electoral conjunctures that put the PRI hegemony in check. The cases of Oaxaca and Chihuahua, which had diverse geographic, social and ideological origins, stood out. In the first, the pastoral work of Bishop Arturo Lona and his support for the Colegio Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Isthmus (COCEI) was an emphatic example. When that organization participated in the local elections of 1986, and in light of what they considered to be an electoral fraud, bishop Lona backed the manifestations of protest made by the members of the organization, resulting in the annulment of the elections.

In Chihuahua there was also a special juncture in which the Catholic hierarchy became directly involved, openly confronting the ruling party and supporting the PAN in its allegations of electoral fraud in local elections. The local clergy published the document *Voting With Responsibility: A Christian Orientation*, which caused various political groups to request the government act swiftly against the intervention of the Church in politics⁴⁰. However, faced with the compromised position towards the civil society by the bishops of Chihuahua and the announcement of the possible closure of temples (which brought back memories of the Cristero war in the political imagination), the federal government was able to reverse the measure by means of an intervention before the Holy See, through the Apostolic Delegate⁴¹.

The aftermath of the electoral conflict in Chihuahua was significant. The Catholic Church, with its more committed position, reinforced its social and political influence. On October 1986, the bishops issued a new document entitled “*The Road to Peace*”, reiterating their position against electoral fraud and the illegitimacy of the elections, launching a call for peace based on social justice. A month later, the bishops sympathized with several farmers’ protests and opposed an electoral reform project. They also established an office for the protection of human rights. In response, the federal government incorporated in the Federal Electoral Code fines ranging from 500 to 1,000 days of minimum wage, as well as imprisonment of 4 to 7 years for members of the clergy who voted

38 “The Clergy Criticizes Nationalization”, *El Universal*, 1982, p. 16.

39 S. Loaeza, The end of ambiguity. Relations between Church and State in Mexico 1982-89, *Political Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1989, p. 20.

40 Ibidem, p. 64 & s.s.

41 V. Quintana, Mexique: Transformation économique et crisis politique au Chihuahua, *Problèmes d’Amérique latine*, No. 4850, 1987, pp. 43-80.

for or against any political party. The Catholic bishops of Chihuahua protested against such a reform that criminalized their social participation. Seven months later this article was amended to eliminate the prison sentence, even though the fines remain (even now, in all the following electoral codes) against those members of the clergy who induce the vote for or against any candidate or party⁴². The bishops inaugurated the so-called “democracy workshops” in January 1987 to educate citizens about the Church’s proposals on social and political issues, including rethinking the relationship between Church and State. As a specialist put it, the Church would be strengthened and the PRI weakened:

“The best possible explanation for the majority position of the bishops of Chihuahua, of Juárez City and their clergy, is their desire to respond to the aspirations and demands of the sectors of society to which they are closest: the middle classes... Their social and political visions will be the same: desire for greater participation, fear of socialism, rejection of State intervention, desire for efficiency and honesty, etc. In that sense, the Church of Chihuahua has been able to better adapt to the society that surrounds it.”⁴³

The situation required a change in the political system and in the party. This change would come from within. Once it was announced that Carlos Salinas de Gortari would lead the PRI ticket for the presidential elections, the episcopate called the candidate to initiate an open and frank dialogue so that in that administration an agreement could be reached in Church-State relations⁴⁴. The electoral process of 1988 convulsed the foundations of the country. The aspiration for a democratic change was felt strongly and the party in power was faced with opposition from both the left and the right. Within the PRI, there were non-conformities and criticisms, which ended with a major rupture that would lead to the most disputed elections in decades and the formation of a partisan left (PRD), which in the future would dispute key territories from the PRI, particularly in the capital and some other entities of the Republic⁴⁵.

From this, it would come as no surprise that President Salinas invited to his inauguration the principal leaders of the Catholic Church in Mexico, including the Apostolic Delegate, on December 1st 1988. There, the President referred to the need to modernize the relations of the State with several sectors, among them “the Church”. Although the discussion would later on be extended to the relationship with “the churches” (plural), thanks to the intervention of specialists in the subject, the fact is that until that moment political decisions only took into

42 Various Authors, History and Actuality in Church-State Relations in Mexico, *Political Studies*, No. 4, 1989, pp. 1-30.

43 V. Quintana, Mexique: Transformation économique et crisis politique au Chihuahua, *Problèmes d'Amérique latine*, No. 4850, 1987, p. 79.

44 *Punto Magazine*, October 1987, Mexico.

45 José Romero de Solís, *The sting of the spirit. Contemporary History of the Church in Mexico*, IMDOSOC, Mexico, 1994, pp. 480-481.

account the relationship with the Catholic Church. In fact, since 1990, leaders of the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches gave Salinas a document in which they emphasized that they also had a significant presence in the country and that they should be taken into account in the face of any constitutional change, further reaffirming their respect for the separation of State-Churches.

In 1989, during the second visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico (the longest and most dynamic of the five that he made to the country), the possibility of amending the Magna Carta was once again discussed in the media. The opinions of various social groups and in particular of most of the PRI sectors were inclined to maintain the 1917 legislation. The workers union (CTM) remained the most reluctant to any change, and the middle class unions (CNOP), perhaps due to the diversity of interests that made it up, was the most ambiguous in this regard⁴⁶.

In any case, an important debate took place between 1988 and 1991, in which it became clear that many sectors of the PRI, starting with the Secretary of the Interior, did not agree with the reforms. The appointment in 1990, of a personal representative of the President to the Pope (which announced the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican) further fueled the debate⁴⁷. However, despite internal opposition, once the PRI regained the majority in the Chamber of Representatives in the 1991 midterm elections⁴⁸, President Salinas encouraged "to promote the legal status of the Churches under the following principles: institutionalize separation between them and the State; respect the freedom of belief of every Mexican, and maintain secular education in public schools". He affirmed that this would promote "the congruence between what the law dictates and the daily behavior of citizens, taking a step closer to internal harmony within the framework of modernization"⁴⁹. Once this was done, it was the PRI itself that presented the reform initiative and it was received in the Chamber of Representatives on December 10th 1991. A week later, with few exceptions from left-wing parties and with some dissident voices inside of them, all parties voted almost unanimously in favor of the reforms to Articles 3°, 5°, 24°, 27°, and 130° of the Constitution, which came into effect once they were approved by the Senate and the majority of the states of the Federation, on January 1992⁵⁰.

Supplemented by an "Act on Religious Associations and Public Worship" that passed in July of that same year, and with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Holy See, announced in September of that year,

46 The PRI and the Churches, in: *Power. Salinism and Catholic Church; A new coexistence?*, Roberto Blancarte (ed), Mexico D.F., Grijalbo, 1991, pp. 259-269.

47 For this, a brief summary of these debates can be consulted in: M. Palacios Alcocer, *Constitutional Amendments in Ecclesiastical Matters*, Toluca, Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, 1994, pp. 93-117.

48 M. Veloz Leija, *The State-Church relationship in Mexico, a sui generis case in Latin America*", on the webpage for the Institute for Research in Social Sciences, University of Salvador, Argentina: www.salvador.edu.ar/csoc/idicso, p. 15.

49 José Romero de Solís, *The sting of the spirit. Contemporary History of the Church in Mexico*, IMDOSOC, Mexico, 1994, Note 54, p. 69.

50 M. Palacios Alcocer, *Constitutional Amendments in Ecclesiastical Matters*, Toluca, Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, 1994, Note 56, pp. 157-182.

the constitutional reforms in religious matters of 1992 would seriously modify the relations of the State, the federal government and the PRI with the Catholic Church and with the various religions and Churches of the country. The register of "religious associations", a category established to give legal recognition to the Churches, would show in a short time the enormous religious plurality in Mexico and would change the perspective that the parties themselves had on the religious question. It was no longer just a question of solving the relationship with a Church that would, moreover, be more and more pluralistic internally, with its diversity of currents and positions within Catholicism. It also opened the perspective of a Protestant, Christian or evangelical world, with an enormous institutional, doctrinal and ideological multiplicity. In addition to this, the presence of other religions of different origins and beliefs, rooted in the country, or of other minority ones, with a historical presence or of recent creation, would be more and more evident. In any case, this new world of religions, which became evident with a register of religious associations, and that now numbered in the thousands, also required a new reflection on the role of the secular State, as guarantor of freedom of conscience and of equity between them. In other words, the country's growing democratization, which began in the late 1980s, was to receive a major boost in the next decade. Such a democratizing impulse would have to be strengthened by the growing awareness that political plurality was accompanied by an enormous social diversity, and a growing religious plurality. The Mexican State could no longer be identified with a single party, just as Mexican society could no longer be assimilated to a single ethnic composition (the *mestizo*) or to an exclusive religion, considered as the only true one.

The rebellion of the so-called Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), on January 1st 1994, would claim in this regard the right of indigenous peoples to preserve their own culture, within the framework of a nation that no longer demanded a single ethnic, political or religious identity. That year was a tough trial in many ways for the PRI. In addition to the indigenous rebellion that undermined the legitimacy of a regime in principle stemming from a popular protest, the assassination of its presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio and other distinguished leaders like Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu, opened a huge gap in credibility of the party, especially in relation to its ability to remain united, let alone to govern the country. Due to social pressure, President Salinas declared a cease-fire and the beginning of peace talks with the insurgents, which would initially take place in the Cathedral of San Cristóbal, desacralized for that purpose. The negotiations were to last for years and they would involve the Catholic Church in Chiapas, particularly the Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Samuel Ruiz. The episcopate would later form its Commission for Peace in Chiapas, at the same time that Bishop Ruiz would do the same with a National Intermediation Commission, despite accusations that he was not exactly an intermediary but part of the conflict. President Ernesto Zedillo, convinced of the principle of

separation between the State and the Churches, as well as the bishop's lack of neutrality, would have very harsh words for him, pushing him in fact to leave the diocese. Events such as the Acteal massacre of a community of indigenous people, in which the government's role was unclear, whether through negligence or omission, in addition to accusations of having created or allowed the creation of paramilitary groups, would further muddle the situation in Chiapas.

The PRI, discredited and weakened, began to lose the popular support that, despite everything, it had retained for decades. At the same time, the electoral bodies were gradually transferred to autonomous organizations, which guaranteed, to the best extent, elections free of fraud. In 1997, on the occasion of the first elections in the Federal District, the PRI lost that entity to the PRD and has thus far never recovered it. Elsewhere, particularly in the north of the country, the PAN also snatched several states and multiple municipalities. In the South of the country or in the poorer states, such as Zacatecas, the left took advantage of the many dissents within the PRI to gain political space. Finally, in 2000 the PRI lost, for the first time in 70 years, the elections for the Presidency of the Republic.

Beyond what the result of those elections meant for the whole country, for the PRI it was a huge jolt and the end of a *presidentialism* that until that moment had established the pattern in the behavior of its militants. From that moment, a phenomenon of feudalization of power was generated, that has not been completely reversed with the return of the party to the Presidency. During the twelve years of federal PAN governments, governors, local caciques, municipal presidents, deputies, senators, trade union leaders and other political actors affiliated to the PRI, supported the party in various entities of the Republic and rethought their relationship with the central power. This has had important repercussions on the relationship of the party with the religious question. One of them has been the fragmentation of politics in the matter, that before could be multi-form, but that in this millennium shows both the diversity of positions within the PRI and its lesser ideological consistency, which leaves it exposed to political pragmatism. Thus, although the *Law on Religious Associations and Public Worship* clearly states that it is the responsibility of the Federal Executive, through the Ministry of the Interior, to apply it, and that the state and municipal authorities as well as those of the Federal District will only be "auxiliaries of the Federation", the truth is that since the year 2000 there has been a tendency for each local authority to establish its own policy on religious matters. This has led to serious setbacks in the secularity of the Republic, even though it was constitutionally formally conceived as secular (as well as representative, democratic and federal), since December 1st 2012.

The problem is that we now observe how, due to the ignorant and irresponsible action of many politicians, the secular state is losing, by leaps and bounds, an autonomy that had been arduously and occasionally bloodily gained from the Reform Laws and with the Revolution of 1910. And the PRI, since its founda-

tion as PNR in 1929, was constituted as the party guaranteeing the secularity of the Mexican State. The decriminalization of abortion in the Federal District, approved in April 2007 and confirmed by a ruling by the Supreme Court of Justice in August 2008, provoked in the ensuing months an organized reaction, well-orchestrated by the Mexican Catholic episcopate and followed by the politicians of 16 states of the Republic, approving reforms conducive to establishing the defense of life from conception to natural death in the local constitutions⁵¹. It is worth remembering that this proposal was the first point in the famous catalog of promises that Vicente Fox had made to the Catholic episcopate during his campaign for the presidency in 2000. The tragedy, for all those within the PRI who have defended the secular state and the freedoms that this supposes, is that all those reforms that were made in those 16 states of the Republic were possible due to a conjunction of votes that came essentially from the PAN and the PRI. That these reforms were made under the presidency of CEN headed by a woman who defined herself as an advocate for women's rights, particularly sexual and reproductive rights, shows the degree of ideological weakening of the party, its conversion to more conservative values, as well as the rise of local powers, much more vulnerable and perhaps even inclined to accept the pressure of the Catholic episcopate.

But ignorance about the role of the secular state, ideological confusion, and religious conservatism mixed with political pragmatism would all seem to have cemented themselves in the PRI. The most striking example of this was the consecration that some PRI governors (César Duarte Jáquez from Chihuahua and Javier Duarte de Ochoa) made of their states to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Virgin Mary, in April and May of 2013⁵². That these acts were made just a few months after the Constitution was reformed to establish the secularity of the Republic is a sign of the disorientation and ideological fragmentation of the party. That these acts and reforms in the states have been made following the ideological position of the PAN and the more conservative attitude within the Catholic Church is also a reflection of a reorientation of the party towards an electorate that, due to violence, to the economic crisis, and the lack of legitimacy of the political class, has also tended to adopt more conservative ideological positions. But that also means that the PNR-PRM-PRI has ceased to be an ideological vanguard that pushes society towards its betterment and has become simply just another party that fights, in the midst of an enormous crisis of legitimacy and credibility, for what it thinks people want. The more socially conservative Churches have

51 The decision of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation endorsing the constitutionality of the interruption of pregnancy until 12 weeks, in the Federal District (D.F.) on April 2007 was the starting point for federal entities to prohibit the advancement of this right in its constitutional provisions. It is the case of: Morelos and Baja California (2008), Colima, Chiapas, Sonora, Quintana Roo, Guanajuato, Durango, Jalisco, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas and Yucatan (2009), whose local constitutions are in favor of protecting life from the moment of conception until natural death. *República Laica* TV program UNAM, episode: "Abortion: current status of the right to IVE", February 2015.

52 <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/05/22/opinion/023a1pol>, accessed on April 2015.

thus established their realities in the public and political scenes, while the party fails to recover and define itself in the liberal and secular tradition that always characterized it.

Conclusions

The PRI is a party that does not deny, and even proclaims, its affiliation with Mexican liberalism and the Revolution of 1910. Its *Declaration of Principles: A shared Mexico* maintains:

“Our origin comes from the great social values of the Mexican Revolution... We recognize our roots in the consolidation of the Liberal, Secular, and Federalist Republic, in the struggle for national sovereignty and the independence of Mexico... We are a political party that neither depends nor accepts any subordination to any foreign political party. We do not accept economic, political propagandistic support from foreigners, religious ministers, religious organizations or churches... We speak for a secular state for the twenty-first century, which maintains the impartiality of institutions and guarantees the safeguard of the private sphere of individuals against any interference of corporation, creed or dogma, and fully recognize the exercise of their free will... We speak for a state that recognizes the mandate of the majorities but at the same time is inclusive and respectful of minorities... We are in favor of a full citizenship, founded on values of tolerance and fraternity, recognized in its pluri-ethnic and pluricultural richness, requiring the application of affirmative actions and public policies that prevent differences in race, gender, sexual diversity, age, culture, religion, disability, origin or economic, political, and social condition be translated into inequality, injustice or motive for discrimination”.⁵³

Despite this clear *Declaration of Principles*, the party authorities do not always respect their liberal and revolutionary tradition, the secularism of the state and the principle of separation that guarantees the moral autonomy of individuals against corporations. At times, the search for legitimacy generates political dependence and eventually leads to the imposition of the creeds and dogmas of majorities with respect to minorities of all kinds. The secularism of the Republic is a continuous process and the party is a central element in its construction, which must be respected in its history and in its liberal-revolutionary tradition.

On the other hand, it is also clear that the PRI has evolved from initial anti-clerical and even anti-religious positions towards more respectful positions of religious freedom, in line with the logic of a State that considers itself to be plural and respectful of differences. However, sometimes this is confused with policies

53 Declaration of Principles: “A Shared Mexico” <http://pri.org.mx/TransformandoaMexico/Documentos/DeclaracionDePrincipios2013.pdf>, accessed on April of 2015.

that end up erasing the principle of separation, incorporating in the public policies dogmatic principles of some religion and thus consequently eliminating the free will of broad sectors of the population that do not share those principles and expect the protection and guarantee of their rights by the secular State. In other words, there is not always clarity and absolute congruence between established principles and social policies. Hence it becomes crucial to rescue the principle of separation not only between State and Church, but also between religion and politics, as well as between personal beliefs and public function. Interviewed at the Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI in Silao, Guanajuato, the then PRI candidate for the presidency, Enrique Peña Nieto said: "I am, for in the end you know it, since I have publicly made my faith known, I am a Catholic, and I believe that everyone professes it in the way that each one considers best. In my personal case, and in light of the public responsibility to which I aspire, as I have done in the past, I will observe and I will have to profess my faith in a very intimate and private way, just as I have done in the past with other responsibilities"⁵⁴. Many questioned that this declaration of private faith had been made, however, in a religious ceremony of public worship in the middle of a pre-election campaign and before half a million people, which somehow made a dent in the distinction he made. On the other hand, there is no doubt that this statement is part of a long tradition of the candidates and presidents emanating from the PNR-PRM-PRI. They all made a distinction between their personal beliefs and their public functions, even if at times it seemed that they were breaking the principle of separation. Manuel Ávila Camacho was a "believer" and from a Catholic family, Miguel Alemán and Adolfo López Mateos flirted openly with the Catholic clergy, Luis Echeverría broke the tradition of non-open communication and met with Pope Paul VI, José López Portillo, despite his very liberal reception to John Paul II (he called him "Sir" and left him with his faithful, wishing him luck), then performed a private Mass in the official residence of Los Pinos.

Beyond these distinctions and the difficulty sometimes in evaluating the behavior of public officials (Lopez Portillo, for example, could have argued that the religious ceremony in his residence was strictly private, even if it was celebrated by the Pope), the truth is that three elements become crucial in this matter. The first is the desire to follow, ideologically, the principles of secularity (education, for example, but also in the area of women's health) and separation of Religion and Politics, State and Churches, and Public and Private spheres. Officials emanating from the PRI are not always aware, nor are they convinced, of these principles. The second is the will to carry out a secular policy that respects and guarantees

54 It should be noted that this religious ceremony was attended by other candidates for the Presidency, Josefina Vázquez Mota (PAN), Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD-PT Coalition) and Gabriel Quadri (PANAL). None of them violated the *Law of Religious Associations and Public Worship* because it only prevents officials from officially attending religious ceremonies of public worship. It is not clear, however, whether in the pre-campaign period there are impediments to candidates to attend these ceremonies and somehow use (or be used by) religious symbols.

both the freedom of conscience of all individuals (whether or not they share the doctrine and dogma of their churches, whether they are believers or not), as well as equity necessary to all religions and beliefs or lacks thereof. Officials members of the PRI, who are immersed in a Catholic or anticlerical culture (or both at the same time, since they are not exclusive), have not always honored such essential principles of secularism and democracy. Finally, the third element is the application of the law to those who have violated the principle of secularity established in Articles 3°, 5°, 24°, 27°, 40 and 130° of the Constitution, as well as in the *Law on Religious Associations and Public Worship*. None of the governors and municipal presidents who violated these principles even received a warning from the authorities responsible for overseeing these norms, thus adding an undesirable sense of impunity and ungovernability.

In sum, the PRI has been by and large a central contributor to the construction of the Secular State in Mexico since its inception in 1929 as the PNR. The party has gone through several periods in which it has redefined its structure, its organization but, at least formally, it has always maintained its secular principles. Among them, the secularism of the State and the separation between the State and the Churches remain central. It depends to a great extent on their performance that the secular Republic today continues to maintain and enrich them. It should not cost them too much work. It's in their genes. But they must recognize them and respect them.

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Роберто Ј. Бланкарте, Моника Ц. Велос Леија

НАЦИОНАЛНА РЕВОЛУЦИОНАРНА ПАРТИЈА И РЕЛИГИЈСКО ПИТАЊЕ

Сажетак

Национална Революционарна партија (НРП) је основана 1929. године у циљу добијања избора и решавања конфликта између различитих политичких група након Мексичке револуције. Поред тога, она је основана у циљу сукобљавања са опозицијом која је долазила из римокатоличке хијерархије према Уставу из 1917. године и мерама које је револуционарна влада успоставила како би се „дефанатанизовао“ мексички народ и ограничио друштвени и политички утицај римокатоличке цркве. Међутим, у последњих неколико декада НРП је еволуирала од иницијално анти-клериканске и чак анти-религиозне позиције према позицији која више поштује верске слободе, у складу са логиком државе која је верски различита и поштује те разлике. Са друге стране, партијско руководство не цени увек државну либералну и револуционарну традицију, принцип секуларности и одвајања кој гарантују моралну аутономију индивидуе. С времена на време, потрага за легитимитетом формира политичку зависност и може водити до успостављања вере и догме већине заједно са поштовањем за мањине, која елиминира широк део популације који не дели те принципе и који очекује да секуларна држава штити и гарантује њихова права.

Кључне речи: антиклериканизам, римокатолицизам, евангелици, револуција, јавна сфера, религија

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