

Public Administration in Mexico

By WILLIAM EBENSTEIN

*Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Wisconsin*

POLITICAL science, as the term is understood in Great Britain and the United States, does not exist as yet in Latin America. As in continental Europe, constitutional law, public law, and, more recently, administrative law are the only three fields in the organized study of government. This limitation is partly due to the traditional predominance of French and, to a lesser degree, Spanish scholarship in Latin America with the consequent emphasis on legal structure rather than on political processes. The pressure of government policies in Latin America, ranging in the different countries from subtle suggestion to imprisonment or assassination, has also proved to be a serious obstacle in the development of a real *ciencia política* south of the Rio Grande; there can be a science of politics only to the extent that freedom of inquiry and expression is guaranteed by law and protected by society. (This is, of course, also true north of the Rio Grande.)

What is characteristic of political science in Latin America is even more characteristic of the art and science of public administration. Political instability in some parts of Latin America, the emphasis on personal loyalties and services in an historical environment dominated by the *caudillo*¹ (boss, chief, leader), and the survival of extra-governmental organizations of considerable scope on authority, such as the church, are

some of the factors that have so far impeded the growth of a coherent body of public administration and its systematic study and instruction. Only recently, some major Latin American universities have established chairs in administrative law. The gradual industrialization of Latin America and the ensuing growth of business enterprises has fostered more interest in problems of administration on a large scale. In highly industrialized nations like England or the United States big business has often had to face administrative and managerial problems similar to those of the government, the biggest business in operation. There has been in such technologically advanced countries a continual give-and-take between private and public large-scale organizations. In Latin America, on the other hand, the church has been until recently the only organization other than government operating on a large scale and servicing millions of people.

As yet we have no account, in English or in Spanish, of the major political institutions in Latin America. There are competent discussions of particular aspects of politics in this or that country, usually confined to a relatively short period; but we have not been given so far a comparative study of such Latin American political institutions as the presidency, the party system, the press, the civil service, and the military. In the field of public administration there is an even slighter literature. It is therefore a real event in Latin American studies that we now have at our disposal a study of public administration in Mexico, written by Professor Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez and published in Mexico City in

NOTE: The author desires to express his gratitude to the Social Science Research Council for having given him the opportunity of spending the year 1942-43 in Mexico on a post-doctoral fellowship.

¹An excellent short account of the *caudillo* will be found in Frank Tannenbaum, "A Note on Latin American Politics," 58 *Political Science Quarterly* 415-21 (September, 1943).

1943.¹ Professor Mendieta y Nuñez is one of the leading social scientists of Mexico, who, as director of the Institute of Social Investigations of the University of Mexico and as the author of authoritative works on Mexican agrarian and indigenous problems, has done a great deal in bringing orderly methods into the investigation of some of the fundamental problems of Mexican contemporary life. His book on public administration in Mexico is the first of its kind, not only in Mexico but anywhere in Latin America. His method of analysis may appear somewhat unorthodox with its mixture of political, economic, sociological, anthropological, and legal data, but the resulting richness and color perhaps compensate for the methodological eccentricities.

Historical Background

IN THE United States there has been a tendency of long standing to interpret our political institutions in strictly American terms. According to that school of thought, inspired by patriotic motives, our political institutions began in 1776, and the period preceding that date is of interest only to the student of Colonial history. Similarly, since the achievement of independence in Mexico in 1821 there has been a tendency to forget, deny, or attack the Spanish basis of Mexico's political habits and administrative techniques and procedures. Now, however, in Mexico as in this country, we are beginning to find a more balanced appraisal of the preindependence political and administrative heritage. Without falling into the pitfalls of *Hispanidad*, Professor Mendieta y Nuñez stresses the significance of the colonial experience in Mexico.

Further, Mexico offers the fascinating example of an American nation in which the study of precolonial political and administrative ideas and institutions is of the greatest interest. In preconquest Mexico the Aztec king headed public administra-

tion, and he was assisted by the nobility, the clergy, and the military class; it is obvious that the subsequent Spanish theory and practice of government, before and after Mexican independence, did not constitute a marked deviation from the preceding Mexican (Indian) pattern.² This situation is in contrast with that in English-speaking North America, where the gulf between the Indians and the English settlers with their religious and political experience of self-rule was so wide as to be practically unbridgeable. In some parts of Mexico, where Spanish is neither spoken nor understood and where the social and political institutions of preconquest days are well preserved, the weight of tradition is particularly evident. In such areas, personal loyalty to the *jefe* (chief) of the local group or tribe still constitutes the main administrative vehicle through which political decisions and measures of a central or regional character are transmitted. The more impersonal, standardized procedures and agencies of modern public administration are absent in such communities.

This fact explains one of the greatest obstacles in Mexican public administration. The tendency in modern government, with its multitude of activities and agencies, is to create uniform standards for efficiency and economy. The difficulty in Mexico, from the days of the Spanish conquest, has always been to devise varying standards of political control and operation necessitating divergent administrative techniques and methods. In the old days, the lines of distinction were drawn in terms of Spaniards, *criollos* (sons of Spaniards born in Mexico), mestizos (persons of mixed Spanish and

² How strong this sense of continuity is can be seen from the fact that nearly all Mexican historians of their country start out with preconquest Indian life and civilization. Thus, e.g., the entire first volume of the recent four-volume *Historia de México* by José Bravo Ugarte is called *Elementos Prehispánicos*. See also the famous political history by Justo Sierra, *Evolución política del pueblo mexicano* (Mexico City: La Casa de España en México, 1940), pp. 3-58. The August, 1943, issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* contains several pertinent articles on this problem.

¹ *La administración pública en México* ([Imprenta Universitaria], 1942 [i.e., 1943]).

Indian blood), and Indians. All these differences have been swept away in law and, to a great extent, in custom. Nevertheless, even the recent Mexican administrations, inspired as they have been by the highest sense of justice and equality, have realized that several millions of Mexicans present special political and administrative problems because they have not been integrated as yet into the national Mexican civilization.¹

If it is true that some elements of pre-conquest political organization linger on in contemporary Mexico, it is even more true of postconquest colonial institutions. The great administrative conceptions and institutions introduced by imperial Spain into Mexico, the New Spain, have retained much of their vitality to this day. Administrative decentralization is a strong tradition in the United States because even before 1776 there was no one governor or viceroy of the Crown in North America. Each colony was set up by a charter of its own and led its own political life and had its own administrative procedures. When independence was won, this decentralization had become so strongly entrenched that federalism was the only practical solution. In Mexico, the situation was exactly the opposite. Political and administrative centralization of Mexico under the Crown of Spain, represented by the Viceroy in Mexico City, established a tradition of administrative hierarchy that is as strong today as ever. The president of the Republic is not only the political head of the nation but also the administrative chief in a sense which is not known in this country.

Again, as in colonial Mexico, the only real elements of administrative decentralization in modern Mexico are to be found in whatever autonomous life exists in municipi-

pal government. In colonial Mexico, the *ayuntamientos* were the only institutions in which elements of local administration, self-government, and elections of officials were countenanced. This tradition is still alive and could form the starting-point for a new revival of local and regional self-government.

The administrative machinery of Mexico differs greatly from that of the colonial period in one respect: the position of the Roman Catholic Church. In colonial Mexico, the church was not only a religious and economic body of the first order but also an important administrative organization. The fields of education, intellectual life, and social welfare were almost completely in its hands. Even purely technical education, the spreading of more advanced arts and crafts, was very largely its domain. In the rugged conditions of Mexican life after the conquest, the church was charged with many functions which it did not have in Spain itself. The state used the church for many of these tasks not only because it approved of the general attitudes which it taught (obedience to Spanish rule, social discipline, promise of future happiness in the world beyond), but also because the church was the only organization in Spain that had adequate personnel trained in the administration of vast territories and large numbers of people.

In contemporary Mexico the scope of public administration has been enlarged so that all former functions of the church, with the exception of religion, have been taken over by public agencies, federal or local. Much of the struggle between church and state in Mexico in the last ninety years is due to the historical root of the extensive administrative scope of the church in the colonial period. The borderline between administrative function and political influence is not very easy to draw. Where the church has insisted on its right to render services and perform functions of a purely technical and administrative nature, the state has seen the desire to maintain a posi-

¹See Darío Cruz Ramírez, *Hacia una legislación tutelar para las clases indígenas de México* (Mexico City: Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, 1940), pp. 40 ff.; Manuel Gamio, *Hacia un México Nuevo* (Mexico City, 1935), *passim*; and Andrés Molina Enriquez, *Los grandes problemas nacionales* (Mexico City: A. Carranza e hijos, 1909), pp. 270-361.

tion of real political authority. As in other countries, the struggle for political power has been carried on in Mexico behind the cover of administrative and functional divergencies.¹

Administrative Control and Planning

BECAUSE the Mexican legislative body, the Congress, has little effective authority, the scope and power of the highest government departments is inevitably very considerable. Under the presidential system, so typical of the political tradition in the Americas, the president's authority is broad in any case. In the Mexican system, which has a legislature, but one which cannot be quite compared with the British Parliament or our Congress, the highest administrative officers command enormous authority. As all members of the Mexican Congress normally belong to one party, the official government party, the president finds little difficulty in persuading Congress to pass laws submitted by him for its approval. In addition, the constitution confers upon the president ample powers of issuing decrees and regulations that, for all practical purposes, are the law of the land. The whole problem of delegated legislation presents, in Mexico, relatively few political and judicial issues because of the high degree of concentration of judicial, legislative, and executive powers in the presidential office. Whereas delegated legislation is a political problem full of tension and discord in Britain and the United States, it is but a technical issue in the operation of the Mexican system of government.

The president's term is six years. This enables a president to make fairly long-term plans and to build up political and administrative machinery of his own. How-

ever, he cannot be reelected, so that in practice his tenure is not so extended as that of a president of the United States who, as occasionally happens, serves more than one four-year term.

In selecting the highest administrative officers—the heads of the ministries and high government agencies, the *departamentos*—the president of Mexico is not completely free. Where the president of the United States has to consider claims in his own party, claims of various regions and interests, and, negatively at least, the sentiments of the opposition party, the president of Mexico has to take into account the claims of deserving leaders of the official government party, the only party that really counts (now called Party of the Mexican Revolution). Also, although the small opposition parties are not represented in Congress, they still have a legal existence and have to be appeased, directly or indirectly. In one sense, the position of the president of Mexico as the head of the administrative hierarchy is different, say, from that of our president: in Mexico, it is not customary to attack publicly the person of the president by the printed or spoken word. If criticisms of administrative officers of the highest rank are made, it is usually emphasized that deficiencies are not due to presidential shortcomings.

Seven years before the outbreak of the Russian revolutions in 1917, Mexico embarked upon a great revolutionary career of far-reaching social and economic changes which have by no means been completed. One of the central concepts of the Mexican Revolution is the idea that the nation, through the political organization of the state, is responsible for the achievement of progressive social objectives for the benefit of all citizens. This adherence to the philosophy of the positive state does not necessarily imply the adoption of socialism as the eventual goal of national policy. In any case, however, the Mexican Revolution was born in protest against the *laissez faire* ideology of the Díaz regime, to which the

¹ Authoritative Mexican opinion on this problem will be found in Alfonso Toro, *La iglesia y el estado en México* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Gobernación, 1927); Emilio Portes Gil, *La lucha entre el poder civil y el clero* (Mexico City, 1934); and Manuel Herrera y Lasso, *Estudios constitucionales* (Mexico City: Editorial "Polis," 1940), pp. 99–163. See also J. Lloyd Mecham, *Church and State in Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1934), pp. 395–501.

misery and degradation of the masses were attributed. State intervention in social and economic affairs has therefore been the watchword of the new regime from its inception. The large-scale expropriations of landed estates, owned by Mexicans or foreigners, the nationalization of the oil industry against the bitter opposition of British and American financial interests, and a series of legislative measures affecting the social welfare of the individual citizen have all proved that Mexico is fully aware that her pressing political, social, and economic problems cannot be solved without a substantial amount of planning. It is therefore rather remarkable that, so far at least, little attention has been given in Mexico to planning as a management tool in public administration. Public administration is essentially conceived of in terms of operation, and as yet there has not been an adequate grasp of the intricate administrative aspects of planning, integration, and co-ordination.

Likewise, the whole conception of financial management as a focal point of public administration is relatively new in Mexico. The struggle for the control and allocation of public finances was one of the chief origins of representative government in England many centuries ago, and much of the history of British politics can be written around the issue of the control of public finance. The Treasury in Britain and the Treasury and the Bureau of the Budget in the United States have always been planning agencies of the first order, even at a time when the term "planning" was loaded with unpopular and disreputable connotations. Lacking the historical background of the struggle for the control of public finance, Mexico has not developed, so far, the conception of financial management as a key tool of the effective coordination of administrative functions and authorities. The Mexican Treasury has, it is true, a separate section for the study and investigation of long-term economic and financial problems, but this section has in no way

the character of what could be fairly described as a central planning agency for the whole machinery of government. At best, it is engaged in research, or finding out and interpreting the facts, rather than in planning, or making policy.

In the context of Mexican politics there can be only one place in the administrative organization in which the practical difficulties caused by inadequate planning and coordination can be solved: the office of the president of the Republic. According to the law, the office of the personal secretary to the president does not possess the administrative authority of a ministry or high government department. But what the law has failed to provide for, the facts of administrative life have made inevitable. In a strictly extralegal manner the personal secretary of the president has become a sort of minister without portfolio. The president gives, through this office, a certain amount of unity and direction to the conflicting tendencies of different ministries and government departments, and the department of studies within this office provides a channel through which the planning, control, and criticism of governmental activities can be carried on from an over-all point of view. In the United States, too, some of the administrative assistants of the president have gained, despite their genuine passion for anonymity, a position of influence which is by no means clearly defined in legal or constitutional terms.

There are two drawbacks to the office of personal secretary to the president, in Mexico. First, there is no continuity of incumbency or administrative practice. By the very definition of this office, each president makes his appointments from among his closest and most trustworthy friends. As Mexican presidents can never be re-elected, six years is the longest period during which an appointee can hold this office. Thus, the office of the personal secretary of the president cannot build up the permanent staff and administrative tradition of, say, the Bureau of the Budget in the United

States. The second drawback is the fact that the office of the personal secretary of the president is essentially an operating agency, engaged in the daily routine activities of practical politics and immediate issues. If it has become the chief agency for planning, criticizing, controlling, and coordinating administrative authorities, it has developed that function by sheer necessity rather than as a result of deliberate planning. This union of planning and operating functions in the office of the personal secretary of the president clearly indicates the failure to appreciate the fundamental differences between these two types of activity.

The failure to do adequate planning is undoubtedly also due in part to the state of economic organization in Mexico. Speaking of the urgent need for more governmental and administrative planning in Great Britain, the London *Observer* (November 21, 1943) commented that "what is happening in government, under pressure and only half-consciously, is precisely what has happened, deliberately, in Big Business itself." If this statement accurately describes the situation in Britain, with her advanced industrial administrative and managerial standards, it also helps to explain the situation in Mexico, where economic organization is much less advanced.

The Civil Service

LEGISLATION on matters pertaining to the civil service is very recent in Mexico because, as Professor Mendieta y Nuñez points out, the Mexican governments from national independence onward were continually involved in internal disputes and in civil wars, and were therefore so unstable that they could not occupy themselves with the regulation of the civil service. Since the victory of the Revolution that began in 1910, however, Mexico has gradually gained in stability, which culminated in the great reforms of President Cárdenas, a master organizer and administrator. Soon after he came into office in

1934, President Cárdenas initiated the "Juridical Statute of the Workers in the Service of the Powers of the Union," which was subsequently modified by a similar statute of April 4, 1941, under the present administration of President Avila Camacho.

One of the most interesting features of Mexican legislation on civil service is the idea that public servants do not possess any mystical quality that raises them above the level of so-called ordinary workers and employees. The language of the law expresses this revolutionary attitude of the new Mexico by referring to public servants as "workers in the service of the Union" and by trying to apply the general principles of workers' legislation to public workers. Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution establishes the right of labor to strike. This is, in itself, quite remarkable. What is even more remarkable is that the same article also establishes the right of public employees to strike, provided the procedures of arbitration, set up by law, have failed. Employees of the Ministry of National Defense and members of the armed forces are deprived of the right to strike, and in case of war, strikes of any public employees are outlawed.

Although Mexican legislation started out with the ideological conception of the equality of public and private employees, the very nature of some of the work that public employees are called upon to perform has forced the legislators to recognize differences between public employees in terms of the more or less essential character of their particular functions. The Mexican civil service legislation distinguishes between "workers of confidence" (*trabajadores de confianza*) and "ordinary workers" in public employment. Nowhere is there a clear definition of the public "workers of confidence," and the definition that all those employees whose appointment has to be approved by presidential decree are "workers of confidence" is purely formal. In general, what is called the administrative class in other countries makes up the

"workers of confidence" in the Mexican civil service. It is interesting that while we think of the highest administrative class in this country or in England in terms of the policy-framing authority that it possesses, in Mexico the element of personal relationship between ministerial and departmental heads and their immediate subordinates is the decisive criterion in legally defining this top group in the bureaucracy. This is but one of the many ways in which the personal nature of Mexican, as indeed most Latin American, government and administration expresses itself. It reflects surviving elements of the old feudal Spanish order in which personal trust and confidence were the determining factor in governmental relationships.

One of the main purposes of introducing the concept of the "workers of confidence" into legislation was to deny them the rights of unionization and the strike which were granted to the other groups of public employees. It was realized that there could be no stability of public authority if the highest government officials or members of the armed forces could combine in order to strike and thus coerce and negate the very governments of which they were instruments.

The question of trade-unions among public employees has caused a good deal of discussion and, in some cases, legislation. Since 1927 Great Britain has had special legislation, under the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, forbidding associations of civil servants to be affiliated with political or labor organizations which admit members outside the civil service. In this country there is freedom of trade unionization among public employees not as a matter of specific authorization but because there is no legal rule against it. The right of public employees to strike has not been definitely settled, but so far our government has denied its existence.

In Mexico the civil service statute specifically deals with this whole problem. Public employees are explicitly authorized to form

trade-unions for the purpose of studying, improving, and defending their common interests. However, only one trade-union in each "bureaucratic entity" is legally recognized—the trade-union that represents the majority of the workers. In general, each ministry, autonomous agency, or bureau represents one entity which forms the basis of trade-union organization. "Workers of confidence," or members of the administrative class, are excluded from such trade-unions, on the ground that high officials will probably tend to side with the government as an employer rather than with the employees of the lower brackets.

One of the most remarkable legal provisions of the Mexican civil service statute is the rule that once a public employee has become a member of a trade-union of his "entity" he cannot voluntarily resign his membership. He is obliged to continue his membership, unless he is expelled from the union. Needless to say, this confers a very real authority on the leadership of such trade-unions. Actually, the civil service statute declares expressly that the closed-shop principle cannot be recognized by the government in any case. However, since the law recognizes the principle "once a trade-union member, always a member" for public employees, one of the main efforts of such organizations consists in selling employees the idea of membership. The trade-union principle is much more practiced in Mexico than in most other nations, and if the trade-unions of public employees do not possess the full-fledged monopoly of the closed shop, they have something which is very similar to it.

The trade-unions of public employees are under the legal obligation to register with the Arbitration Tribunal, which examines their constitution, their membership, and their claim that they represent more employees than any other trade-union in a particular "bureaucratic entity."

The Arbitration Tribunal is made up of three members: one representative of the government, one of the employees, and a

third member chosen by the two. Its main function is to settle disputes between public employees, individually or collectively, and the government. The Arbitration Tribunal also settles the important question of who represents, legally, a given category of public employees. Despite the name of this board, its decisions have legal force, and it is actually more nearly a court than an arbitration tribunal. In some of the cases it decides, as in those between the government and its employees, it has more nearly the character of an arbitration tribunal because both parties to the dispute are represented on the board. This is not the case, however, when it decides intra-union conflicts.

Another important function of the Arbitration Tribunal is the certification that a strike of public employees is legal. The right of public employees to strike is not absolute. Thus, employees of institutions of public health and safety are expressly exempted from the categories of public workers who have the right to strike. Otherwise, this right depends on the interpretation of the Arbitration Tribunal. If it decides that the projected strike is illegal and the workers proceed to strike, the law provides that they must be immediately dismissed. If the tribunal decides that the strike is justified, the government will ordinarily give in. Much depends on the political situation. On several occasions the unions have insisted on striking in order to maintain their prestige among their members and the public at large, although they could probably have won their demands peacefully. On the other hand, there is no question that in other instances political pressure of the government has operated through the Arbitration Tribunal and has led to solutions which the government wishes at the moment. The relations between the trade-unions of private or public employees and the government are of a much more intimate character than in this country or in Great Britain. And this intimacy is described by some observers of

Mexican affairs as a relationship of domination of the trade-unions by the government.

The great problems of the civil service in Mexico are the relative failure to recognize the merit system in appointments and promotions and the relatively high prevalence of personal gain through public employment. As to the first evil, it is only fair to point out that England had institutions of political self-government for centuries before it introduced, less than a century ago, a real merit system into its public service. In the United States, the merit system is of even more recent origin and still has to face the hostility of those who are unwilling to give up the sweet uses of patronage for the benefit of political, and personal, friends. It is therefore not surprising that in Mexico the merit system for appointments and promotions, although provided by law, has so far been very largely a dead letter of the statute. The practical application of the merit principle in Mexico is delayed in part by the failure to establish a national civil service commission on the British or American model. Following the example of most continental European countries, Mexico does not know the institution of a national civil service commission that tackles the whole problem of the civil service—methods of classification, standards of attainment for entry into and promotion within the civil service, salaries, and all the other administrative issues upon which the efficient management of public service depends. Instead, each government department in Mexico (as in Europe) solves its own problems of personnel as well (or as poorly) as it can, and there is no institutional safeguard or device to prevent overstaffing in one place and understaffing in another, or unevenness of standards among departments.

The present political regime of the "Mexican Revolution" is of recent origin, and the leaders of that regime know that latent enmity still exists among members of the privileged groups who are unwilling to accept the new state of affairs. As long as that relative insecurity exists, it is hardly

to be expected that technical merit will replace political trust and reliability as a guiding criterion in making appointments and promotions. Mexico is on the road toward democracy. In a generation or two, the present social and economic democracy will result in greater political democracy. This change will be accompanied, no doubt, by an increasing application of the merit system.

Political instability throughout the history of Mexico since the achievement of independence has also resulted in the evil of militarism in government and administration. With few exceptions, the presidents of Mexico have been army leaders. The apostle and first leader of the Mexican Revolution, Francisco I. Madero, issued in 1908 his clarion call for civilian, democratic government which galvanized Mexican public opinion against the militaristic despotism of General Díaz. Government by civilians was Madero's foremost demand for a new Mexico.¹ Madero became the first president after the triumph of the revolution in 1911, but in 1913 he was assassinated by General Huerta. The civil war which ensued lasted for over seven years. War and revolution filled the decade from 1910 to 1920, and continued sporadically in the next decade. A host of generals were made in the turbulent period and, paradoxically, the end of the Mexican Revolution saw more influence of the military than had the beginning. Since that time, army men have considered high posts of a political, financial, or diplomatic character as a domain of their own. Only if Mexico continues on the road of stability will the prestige of the generals and colonels decline.²

The poverty of Mexico also obstructs the introduction of the merit principle. It is a common experience in all poor countries

that a career in public service or the army is considered very desirable when other economic opportunities are scarce. Many a Mexican thinks that a career in the public service or the army is the only one open to him, because much of the business, mining, banking, and other types of private economic activity is controlled by American or other foreign interests. Also, since Mexican standards of living are low, public employment assures at least a minimum of economic security as well as a certain amount of social prestige.

The second great problem of the Mexican civil service is often referred to as "administrative irregularity." It may interest students of political psychology and artistic expression that there are in Mexico fifteen terms to denote graft. Professor Mendieta y Nuñez writes as follows: "The immorality of the bureaucracy which is in direct contact with the public or which exercises any sort of function which affects private interests is beyond any doubt. . . . But it is clear that this judgment, which is not ours but a general one, admits of exceptions. The immorality of those who manage the material interests of the State is no less evident." But, Professor Mendieta y Nuñez explains, this phenomenon is partly due to the fact that the people themselves look upon a public figure who does not acquire wealth while holding office as an imbecile: "For the thief who fails, jail and ignominy; for the thief who triumphs, all the goods of the world. This is the social law of our country, at least for the time being."³

According to the "Law of the Responsibilities of Federal Officials, Employees and High Officials of the States" of December 30, 1939, all public officials and employees, on assuming public office, must declare before the attorney general of Mexico the real estate and cash deposits in their name. Obviously, it requires little ingenuity to circumvent this provision. Proceedings against malefactors in office are discouraged

¹ Francisco I. Madero, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (San Pedro, Coahuila, 1908). This is still one of the greatest works on Mexican political problems.

² A classic indictment of the role of the military in Mexican government will be found in Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *El militarismo mejicano* (Valencia: Prométeo, [1920]).

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 296.

by the provision that charges of alleged takings of bribes must be made openly and not anonymously and that they must be preferred not later than one year after leaving office.

As a good patriot Professor Mendieta y Nuñez is rightly indignant about the widespread political and bureaucratic corruption in his country; but the picture is perhaps not so unique and black as it seems to him. It might be said with some justice that the main difference between corruption in the United States and in Mexico is that in this country fewer individuals are in the habit of obtaining illicit revenue and that the amounts involved are usually larger. In Mexico the idea seems to prevail that illegal extra-income from bribery should be fairly equitably distributed among all levels of the administrative hierarchy. Some claim that this method of corruption, while admittedly demoralizing more employees, is at least more democratic!

If Mexico develops a truly functioning party system, the problem of integrity in the public service will be easier to solve, because the existence of two or more parties is a protection against the plundering of the public.

Another way of helping to meet this problem would be to raise the salaries of public employees. While the wages and salaries of Mexican workers in private enterprise have been adjusted in the last ten years to rising living costs, the salaries of public employees have been raised very little, if at all. One reason why the Mexican public takes small-scale bribery of minor officials for granted is that everyone knows that official salaries are not high enough, even for Mexican standards. There is a vicious circle involved at this point. The government claims that it does not have enough funds to pay higher salaries; yet one of the reasons why revenues are low is that they flow partly into the pockets of the officials rather than into the public treasury. The official who accepts bribes may think that he is merely getting the additional sal-

ary he ought to receive from the government in the first place. Clearly, such a system puts a premium on attitudes and abilities which are not conducive to the highest standards of equity and efficiency.

Conclusion

PUBLIC administration in Mexico and its problems and difficulties can be understood only against the background of Mexican society and politics. The objectives of the triumphant Mexican Revolution require a large, well-trained administrative staff to carry out the long-term social, educational, and economic reforms. The high rate of illiteracy (about 40 per cent), the relatively moderate degree of industrial and managerial experience and skill in private business, the feudal elements of the political structure—all combine to make the administrative realization of these long-term policies difficult.

Despite these grave obstacles the progress made so far is remarkable. Time after time, in Mexico and abroad, it has been predicted that lack of administrative personnel and experience would prevent achievement of the objectives of the major Mexican reforms in the fields of education, agriculture, and labor legislation. Yet in each case the record shows that the reforms have been carried out, on the whole, quite satisfactorily. Mexico is still in an era in which professional politicians and army leaders who participated in the Revolution have a great deal of influence and authority. As in Soviet Russia, however, the expert in ideological manipulation is increasingly being replaced by the expert in managerial and administrative skill. Mexico, like other Latin American nations, is sending more and more young men and women abroad to acquire those skills at a speedy rate. A new generation of leaders is growing up that rebels against those elements in Mexican government and politics that pervert and defile the objectives of the Mexican Revolution. President Cárdenas will go down in Mexican history as a great president not

only because of his fearless struggle for popular rights and achievements but also for his record as a first-class administrator who has given more stability to Mexico than any president who preceded him. In the present administration of President Avila Camacho, himself a man of no exceptional administrative talent or energy, there are men like Jesús Silva Herzog, Ramón Beteta, and others who have shown themselves to be administrators of the highest ability and integrity. The younger generation in Mexico looks to these men as the representatives of a new type of governmental leader in their country. Lastly, the fact that the first treatise

on Mexican public administration has recently been published—the fact that a man of the great intellectual and scholarly achievements of Professor Mendieta y Nuñez puts the problems of public administration in Mexico before his countrymen—augurs well for a brighter future.

In the last thirty years Mexico has been, in many ways, the leading Latin American nation, in terms of political, cultural, and social reforms. It is not impossible that the high degree of energy and genius displayed in those reforms will also soon translate itself into administrative progress of a far-reaching character.