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Barbara A. Tenenbaum*

Murals in Stone. The Paseo de la Reforma and Porfirian Mexico, 1873-1910

Legend has it that Emperor Maximilian decided one morning that he wanted an avenue which would run directly from his Alcázar de Chapultepec to the Palacio Nacional downtown. He named his new road the Calzada de la Emperatriz in honor of his wife, the Empress Carlota.[1] Many historians have claimed that Maximilian planned the new boulevard in emulation of the transformation of Paris then taking place under the direction of his patron, Emperor Napoleon III, and the latter's construction manager, Baron Haussman.[2] In fact, Maximilian was hardly an uncritical admirer of the new Paris. During a trip to the "city of lights" in 1856, the Austrian prince watched the construction of the Avenue de l'Imperatrice (now Avenue Foch), which probably inspired him in the naming of his calzada. In other ways, as he confided to his brother, the Emperor Franz Joseph:

> The City of Paris produced upon (me) an unfavourable impression... even our modest Vienna has more of the quality of an imperial city, which is utterly lacking in Paris... Just as the First Empire took as its model the Rome of the Caesars, so the second edition takes pleasure in a stiff imitation of the same style. On all sides one has an impression of the transitory; it is all very brilliant, but unmistakably intended for the moment alone. Nowhere does one obtain the idea of anything lasting.[3]

Indeed, the Emperor of Mexico wanted the new boulevard strictly for his personal convenience. He entrusted Francisco Somera, the well known urban developer, with all the details concerning its construction. Somera was the obvious choice. From, 1850 to 1866 he served as regidor on the Mexico City Ayuntamiento in charge of both roads and canals, as well as sewers and pavement, and in 1856 he sat on a committee studying the flood problem in the Valley of Mexico. In 1862 he reorganized the Obrera Mayor in the capital, then controlled by lay administrators, into the Dirección General de Obras Públicas, staffed with civil engineers and architects from the Academia de San Carlos. During the Empire Somera became city chief magistrate (alcalde), and then head of the Treasury Committee of the Ayuntamiento, which set rates for property taxes. Meanwhile, he had been carefully buying urban real estate since 1858. In that year Somera began to lay the groundwork for the subdivision of the city to be known as the "colonia de arquitectos", and because of his standing in the government he provided better urban services more rapidly to residents of his areas than to other city dwellers. But he had no intention of being the Baron Houssmann of Mexico City; unlike his French counterpart, he speculated in land in order to enrich himself. For example, in 1866 he sold part of the section which lies in the trapezoid formed by present-day Gómez Farías, Sullivan, and Miguel Schultz streets' and Avenida Insurgentes, to the imperial government as an adjunct

*The Catholic University of America

[1]Salvador Novo, *Los paseos de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City, 1980), pp. 35-36.

[2]Mauricio Gómez Mayorga, "La influencia francesa en la arquitectura y el urbanismo en México," in Arturo Arnáiz y Freg and Claude Bataillon, eds., *La intervención francesa y el imperio de Maximiliano cien años después, 1862-1962* (Mexico City, 1965), p. 185. Gómez Mayorga flatly states that "Maximilian wanted to make Mexico City into a little Paris".

[3]Egon Caesar Conte Corte, *Maximilian and Charlotte of Mexico* (New York, 1968), pp. 51-52; David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, 1958), p. 98; Howard Saalman, *Haussman: Paris Transformed* (New York, 1971), figure 25.

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to the new calzada. The government paid him 29, 816 pesos for an area of 32 000 square varas (.93 pesos/square vara), the highest figure he would receive in this entire career.[4]

The avenue was ready in 1865, but after the Empire fell and the Republic was restored two years later, Benito Juárez wanted nothing to do with it. His successor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, revived interest in the calzada, appropriately renamed Paseo de la Reforma, and enouraged civic leaders to formulate plans for its beautification. The curious assortment of both liberals and former conservative figures who took up the task falls into two distinct groups –the "francophile progressives" and the "nationalist mythologizers".

Although Maximilian had scorned the "new" Paris precisely because of its modernity and lack of tradition, the "francophile progressives" embraced it as the center of civilization, culture and progress. One of the admirers of such urban splendor was Ignacio Cumplido, founder of the Mexico City liberal daily, *El siglo XIX*. He had Paris in 1848, and again in 1860 after much of the reconstruction had taken place; his admiration for the city developed into a desire to see its beauties replicated in Mexico.[5] In 1873 when he became the member of the ayuntamiento in charge of boulevards, Cumplido took advantage of the opportunity to see to it that the area on both sides of the Paseo would be lined with trees in emulation of the Champs d'Elysées.[6]

The famous railroad entrepreneur, Antonio Escandón was another "francophile progressive". Escandón, brother of the highly successful moneylender and entrepreneur Manuel Escandón and son-in-law of the slighjtly less successful but perhaps more notorious moneylender and entrepreneur Eustaquio Barron, had actively promoted the development of the railway during the Empire. He spent those years combing the capitals of Europe for investors to fund his dream and in so doing became quite at home in London and Paris. In accordance with his entrepreneurial outlook, Escandón saw the redesign of Paris not in terms of the greening of the city so dear to the heat of Napoleon III, but as a way to produced new commercial space. The creation of the spectacular star (L'Étoile), formed by the juxtaposition of seven or eight avenues with the Arc de Triomphe at its center, opened a wealth of possibilities for him. The Étoile symbolized the Paris of Napoleon III, the power of the centralized state, and the new privileged position of its servitors, the haute bourgeoisie.[7] Mexico, in contrast, barely had a civilian governing class, and few if any people living there in 1873 could have considered themselves haute bourgeois. However, Escandón believed that the construction of a new, beautiful city would stimulate the birth of that class within the country. As he envisioned it, Mexico City would have many toiles, to be called glorietas, where important streets me the Paseo de la Reforma. Furthermore, the task of designing the new capital would be considerably easier than it had been in Paris, for the urban landscape was still be fully articulated in the Mexico City of the 1870's. To get that process underway, Escandón gave the city a monument to Christopher Columbus in 1873 to adorn the first of the glorietas and commemorate the opening of his railroad in that year.[8] The next phase in the development of the avenue was to plan for other statues to grace the remaining glorietas. This task was enthusiastically undertaken by those interested in the new avenue as a vehicle for their ideas –the "nationalist mythologizers".

[4]María Dolores Morales, "Francisco Somera y el primer fraccionamiento de la ciudad de México, 1840-1889", in Ciro F.S. Cardoso, *Formación y desarrollo de la burguesía en México, siglo XIX* (Mexico City, 1978), pp. 188-230

[5]Cumplido wrote to his friend León Ortigosa, September 5, 1851, "I wish that in your trip through Europe, you take advantage of the time as you please and enjoy the magnificent spectacle of the Exposition and how much more those truly civilized countries present;" *Correspondencia de Ignacio Cumplido a León Ortigosa en la Biblioteca del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* (Monterrey, 1969), p. 44.

[6]Novo, *Los paseos*, p. 38.

[7]Anthony Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850-1970* (London, 1970), p. 169; Pinkney, *Napoleon III*, pp. 62-64; Saalman, *Haussman*, pp. 14-15.

[8]José María Marroqui, *La ciudad de México*, 3 vols. (Mexico City, 1900), vol. 1, p. 647. For more on Escandón, see Tenenbaum, "Development or Sovereignty: Intellectuals and the French Empire," in Charles Hale and Roderic Camp (eds.), *The Intellectuals and the State in Mexico* (Mexico City and Los Angeles, in press).

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The first leader of the group was Vicente Riva Palacio, son of General Mariano Riva Palacio, a former governor of Mexico State, and María Dolores Guerrero, the only child of martyred President Vicente Guerrero. Vicente Riva Palacio, too, had a distinguished career, serving as an alternate to the Constitutional Convention of 1857 and then as secretary to the ayuntamiento until the beginning of the civil war. Félix Zuloaga imprisoned him for his liberal politics, and Miramn ordered him transferred to solitary confinement. In 1861 he was elected a federal deputy and began his career in journalism as a member of staff of the newspaper *La Orquesta*, and beginning this same year he also wrote a series of plays with Juan Antonio Mateos. When the French invaded in 1862, Riva Palacio outfitted a band of guerrillas and went to Puebla to serve under general Ignacio Zaragoza, and later fought alongside general Jesús González Ortega. After Juárez set up a capital in exile at San Luis Potosí, Riva Palacio helped edit a newspaper there called *El Monarca* and later served as the republican governor of the state. Next he became governor of Michoacán and founded another newspaper, *El Pito Real*, where he published his stirring song, "Adios Mamá Carlota". In august, 1867 he bid farewell to his troops and returned to his former position on the editorial board of *La Orquesta*, also becoming that year a magistrate of the Supreme Court.

As the República Restaurada began, Riva Palacio became a strong supporter, together with Ignacio Altamirano, of the idea that Mexico needed a national literature. In keeping with this he wrote his first novel, the romantic *Calvario y Tabor*, which exalted the national soldier, "el chinaco". However, he soon turned his attention to the colonial period, with special emphasis on the social problems of the Church during that time. In 1870, Riva Palacio went to Europe where his stay in Spain seems to have exerted a special fascination. Upon his return to Mexico, he ran for the Presidency of the Supreme Court, but after José María Iglesias, the candidate favored by President Lerdo, defeated him for that position, Riva Palacio joined the political opposition and founded a new newspaper, *El Ahuizote*. Some have credited Riva Palacio's literary efforts in that daily as having been instrumental in hastening Lerdo's fall from power, As a reward, Porfirio Díaz named him Minister of Development.[9]

While in this post from 1876 to 1880, Riva Palacio embarked on an ambitious program to beautify Mexico City in general and the Paseo de la Reforma in particular. As he noted in the *Memoria del Ministerio de Fomento 1877-1878*:

> Public monuments exist not only to perpetuate the memory of heroes and of great men who deserve the gratitude of the people, but also so awaken in some and strengthen in others the love of legitimate glories and also the love of art, where in those monuments one of its most beautiful expressions is to be found. To create recreational areas or boulevards, is to distract members of society with licit diversions within reach of all and allow them to mingle while avoiding the isolation and the vices which are common in population which lack those means of communication.[10]

With this introduction, Riva Palacio opened a competition of the best "monument dedicated to Cuauhtémoc and to the other leaders who distinguished themselves in defense of the nation in the period". He also indicated that he planned two other monuments to stand in the glorietas --one to honor Hidalgo and the other heroes of the Independence, and the second to pay homage to Juárez, the other patriots of the Reform, and those who distinguished themselves during the War against the French (referred to as "the Second Independence)". Eventually Riva Palacio changes his mind and divided the third statue into two –one for Jurez and the Reform, the other for Zaragoza and the heroes of the War against the French.[11]

[9]Clementina Díaz y de Avando, "Prólogo", in Vicente Riva Palacio, *Cuentos del General* (Mexico City, 1968), pp. ix-xx.
[10]*Memoria de Fomento, Colonización, Industria y Comercio,* 1876-1877, 3 vols. (Mexico City, 1877), vol. 3, pp. 353-354.
[11]*Ibid.*, p. 358.

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Only two statues were eventually mounted on the Paseo de la Reforma. The first, an homage to Cuauhtémoc, was planned in 1876 and finally unveiled in 1887. Riva Palacio's selection of Cuauhtémoc (or Cuauhtemotzin as he was called) as his first subject for public veneration is particularly fascinating. For one thing, Mexico City already had a monument to the last Aztec emperor, a bust which had been unveiled on the Paseo de la Viga on August 13, 1869, the anniversary of the conquest of Tenochtitlán. In the customary tributes given on that occasion, the speakers followed the standard themes of the long-standing creole cult of the Aztecs. This reverence toward the Aztecs had begun in the seventeenth century, notably with the research of the Jesuit Manual Duarte on the Aztec god Quetzalcóatl which has customarily been attributed to Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, professor of mathematics at the University of Mexico. Sigüenza y Góngora constantly compared the noble Aztecs with the royalty of the Greco-Roman world in his writings, and even connected them with the Hebrews, the Egyptians, and the Christians, espousing the belief that the god Quetzalcóatl was really Saint Thomas the Apostle. The Jesuit priest Francisco Javier Clavijero amplified the same themes in his *Historia antigua de México* published in Bologna in 1780, although he never accepted Sigüenza's belief in the Quetzalcóatl-Saint Thomas identification. Clavijero thought that the Conquest was God's punishment for the sins of the Aztecs, but stressed that Aztec polytheism was superior to the Greek or Roman varieties.[12]

By linking Quetzalcóatl with Saint Thomas, creoles in New Spain sought to disassociate themselves from the "motivation" and gift of the Spanish Conquest –the conversion of the Indians to Christianity. If Saint Thomas had indeed come to the New World and been transformed into Quetzalcóatl in Mexico, Viracocha in Peru, and into other dieties elsewhere in the region, then Christianity had been revealed to the New World centuries before the coming of the Spaniards. The revelation of the faith at such an early date put the Western Hemisphere on equal terms with Spain and was poignant evidence of creole equality with peninsulares at home and in Europe.

Only a few years later the Dominican Fray Servando Teresa de Mier gave these ideas which fueled creole nationalism even greater virulence and political significance. In 1794, he delivered a sermon linking the miraculous appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe with the missionary work of Saint Thomas. In 1813, while in England, he published his *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España, antiguamente Anáhuac*, proclaiming in this work that Spain had contributed nothing to Mexico. His arguments were continued in the writing of Carlos María Bustamante, and eventually the theories of these two polemicists found a home in liberal political though.[13]

The speakers at the unveiling of the bust of Cuauhtémoc in 1869 emphasized three major themes. They continued in the Mier-Bustamante tradition, speaking of the Spaniards as blood thirsty villains and Cuauhtémoc as a hero. For example, Gerardo María Silva described Cortés as a leader "whose laurels if they had not been stained by so many vile betrayals... would have made him a hero, but history and legend do not grant such a title except to those who have fought for their country or have liberated the land from their country or have liberated the land from the monsters who oppress it, and not to those very monsters who have desolated it with their cruelities".[14] No mention here of human sacrifice, Aztec brutality, and oppressive tribute collections. In keeping with their glorification of the Aztecs the speakers branded as traitors those Indians who fought against them and sided

[12]Benjamin Keen, The Aztec Image in Western Thought (Rutgers, 1971), pp. 192-193, 292-299. For a brilliant discussion of the evolution of the creole cult see Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1812*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago, 1976).

[13]*Ibid.*, pp. 317-320; Charles Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora* (New Haven, 1968), Chapters 1 and 7.

[14]*Discursos pronunciados el día 13 de agosto de 1869 en la inauguración del busto de Cuauhtemotzin erigido en el Paseo de la Viga* (Mexico City, 1869), p. 50.

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with the Spaniards, such as the Tlaxcalans.[15] From here it was but a short leap of logic to identify Cuauhtémoc and the Aztecs as representatives of the entire Mexican nation. For example, the speakers took care to link Cuauhtémoc with other national heroes of later periods. In his address, Antonio Carrión noted that "the public spirit of the Mexicans which was extinguished with the breath of Cuauhtémoc, certainly did not remain dead forever, but stayed dormant for three hundred years to rekindle itself again in Dolores on the night of September 15".[16] And as Felipe Sánchez Solís closed his speech, he noted, "The Cuauhtémoc represented in this monument will always stand before his people.... the fatherland of Cuauhtémoc will be one of the first nations in the world".[17]

Despite the public support for the cult of the Aztecs, such ideas about the pre-Columbian past and the Conquest were by no means universally accepted in 1867, least of all by Vicente Riva Palacio himself. In an address given in the Alameda of Mexico City on September 16, 1871, the soon-to-be leader of the "nationalist mythologizers" spoke of the conquest in quite different terms. He described the indigenous rulers of America before Columbus as "monarchs, who without more law than their caprice, bloody and terrible most of the time, governed the ancient people of the Americans, (and) fell to the energy of the soldiers of Cortés, Pizarro, and the Almagros; the monarchy disappeared to give way to the colony". Furthermore, he believed that the New World was the continent predestined for democracy and republicanism due to "amalgamation of conquerers and the conquered".[18] But by the time he announced the competition for the statue of Cuauhtémoc, Riva Palacio had undergone a startling ideological about-face and had become a champion of the creole cult of the Aztecs. Although there were undoubtedly many reasons for this, it seems likely that as Riva Palacio became increasingly involved with the creation of a national patriotic literature, he began to look at the past for heroes rather than for truth. This tendency fit the requirements of the time, for the men of Tuxtepec who had made Díaz President wanted to create something unique to proclaim their new epoch, as those of Ayutla had made the Reform.

So work on the statue began. Riva Palacio assembled a blue ribbon committee including the English graphic artist and design teacher at the University of San Carlos, Juan Santiago Baggally; the future architect of the Cafe Colón and of the renovations of the Iturbide Palace, Emilio Dondé Preciat; the former "First Imperial Architect" who converted the ruins of Chapultepec into a palace for Maximilian, the builder of the monument to the "niños héroes" of 1847 and the Hotel Gillow, Ramón Rodríguez Arangoity; the former architect of the city of Mexico, Manuel Gargollo y Parra; and, of course, Riva Palacio himself.[19] Francisco M. Jiménez y Arias, an engineer, won the competition and received a prize of one thousand pesos. Riva Palacio obviously preferred Jiménez' designs, for he was also awarded the commission for the monument to Hidalgo in Chihuahua, and for the relief monument in honor of the cosmographer Enrico Martínez which was to stand in the Palacio Nacional.[20] It is easy to understand why Jiménez was able to write winning proposals. In his submission for the Cuauhtémoc contract, he noted that to do the subject justice

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 35. Both Carrión and Sánchez Solís were minor historians, but each continued his interest in Indians; Carrión eventually published *Indios célebres de la Revolución*, and Sánchez Solís became one of the compilers of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* in a bilingual edition with Spanish and Nahuatl texts.
[18] Vicente Riva Palacio, *Discurso cívico pronunciado en la Alameda de México en el aniversario del glorioso grito de independencia el día 16 de septiembre de 1871* (Mexico City, 1871), pp. 8-9.
[19] *Diccionario Porrúa de la historia, biografía y geografía de México*, 3rd. edition (Mexico City, 1971), pp. 382 and 1915.
[20] *Memoria de Fomento 1876-1877*, p. 356; *Memoria de Fomento, Colonización, Industria y Comercio, 1877-1882.* (Mexico City 1885), vol. 3, p. 340.

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> no style of architecture would be more suitable than a rebirth which would include those beautiful details which today are seen in the ruins of Tula, Uxmal, Mitla, and Palenque, conserving as much as possible the general character of the architecture of the ancient inhabitants of this Continent, architecture which contains richness and detail so beautiful and appropriate that they can be borrowed to develop a characteristic style which we can call the national style.[21]

Riva Palacio, himself in search of a national literary style for Mexico, saw in Jiménez a kindred spirit and perhaps in his concept the solution to the same problem in the visual arts.

The statue was originally proposed was to contain three bronze figures –Cuauhtémoc (four meters high), Cacamatzin, King of Texcoco (2.8 meters high) and Cuitláhuac, identified in the proposal as "chief of the priests and Aztecs who led the struggle on the Noche Triste" (2.8 meters high). The total budget for the proposed statue came to $512, 032, approximately twenty percent of the amount which the ayuntamiento of Mexico City collected in taxes for the year 1877. Nevertheless, Jiménez left the description of the actual statue and its pedestal rather vague while promising that it would "not only take the character of Aztec architecture, but that of the ruins of various parts of the country in order to show architectural advances in all the parts which compose the Mexican republic".[22] When the plans next appeared as part of the *Memoria del Ministerio de Fomento, 1877-1882*, they had altered considerably. By then, Riva Palacio was no longer involved in the project. In 1880 Riva Palacio and others proposed that the Ministry of Development sponsor a Universal Mexican exposition for the same year in which foreign nations could exhibit their products and Mexico its own. Unfortunately, Porfirio Díaz saw the Exposition as a political ploy by some members of his administration to gain the 1880 presidential nomination for themselves, and so he killed the idea, citing budgetary restrictions. When the projects was rejected, Riva Palacio resigned from the Ministry on May 17, 1880.[23]

Díaz took over the Development Ministry on December 1, 1880 when he stepped down from the presidency, and held it until June 1881. He was succeeded by Carlos Pacheco, who also handled all of Díaz' business affairs in Mexico City. Díaz and Pacheco probably exercised considerable influence over the design of the statue. As a result, the plans which Jiménez presented on December 19, 1881 differed substantially from those originally conceived four years before. Because of "budgetary reasons", the "sculptural part" of the monument was cut by more than fifty percent. Although Jiménez did not refer to the changes specifically, the itemized budget present some clues. The new design omitted the two secondary statues of Cuitláhuac and Cacamatzin and two of the four bas-reliefs. The lion's share of the budget cuts came from the $44,637 reduction in the amount alloted for sculpture. The changes significantly altered the meaning of the status.[24]

The monument was finally unveiled on August 21, 1887, but by that time Jiménez, its designer, had died, and Riva Palacio, its promoter within the government, was in unofficial exile as Minister Plenipotentiary to Spain and Portugal. Pacheco had commissioned Miguel Norea, professor of sculpture at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, to fashion the statue, and Gabriel Guerra to do the two remaining bas-reliefs. Nore and Guerra remained true to the "national style" Jiménez and Riva Palacio had envisioned. The ayuntamiento of Mexico City organized rather elaborate festivities to inaugurate the monument. The "festividad cívica" was dedicated to "the memory of the heroic defender of the capital of Mexico during the conquest, the Immortal Cuauhtémoc, last ruler of the

[21] *Memoria de Fomento 1877-1882*, vol. 3, pp. 332-333.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

[23] Díaz y de Ovando, "Prólogo", pp. xx-xxi. For a different version of these events, see Ralph Roeder, *Hacia el México moderno: Porfirio Díaz*, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 119-125.

[24] Donald Coerver, *Porfirian Interregnum: The Presidency of Manuel González of Mexico 1880-1884* (Fort Worth, 1979), p. 45; *Memoria de Fomento, 1877-1882*, vol. 3, pp. 332-339.

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Nation, who valiantly preferred to see homes destroyed before he would accept a peace with the opprobrium of slavery".

At 8 a.m. on the morning of August 21, 1887, civil and military leaders, the Ayuntamiento, workers' societies, students, and invited commissions representing various communities gathered at the second glorieta of the Paseo de la Reforma. Upon the arrival of President Díaz, soldiers fired a 21-gun salute and military bands played the National Anthem. Then licenciado Alfredo Chavero, author of the first volume of the liberal history which Riva Palacio edited, *México a través de los siglos*, gave his address. After the First Magistrate of the Supreme Court unveiled the monument and another 21-gun salute was fired, Francisco del Paso y Troncoso delivered an address in Nahuatl. Francisco Sosa, Eduardo del Valle, and Amalio José Cabrera each recited poems, Demetrio Mejía read a prose selection, and the bands played. Afterwards the assembled guests sang the National Anthem once more and the President departed to another 21-gun salute.[25]

The new monument evoked the same sentiments expressed at the unveiling of the bust of Cuauhtémoc in 1869. As described by Francisco W. González in his article published in *El Monitor Republicano*, the standard identification of the Aztecs as the symbolic representation of the entire nation was stated and amplified.[26] But it was Francisco Sosa, Riva Palacio's successor as the leading proponent of official nationalism, who was most explicit about identifying Mexico solely with its Aztect pas. In his pamphlet written on the occasion of the unveiling, Sosa noted "our government is paying a debt of gratitude awed by the Mexican people for over three centuries by inaugurating the magnificent monument which will honor permanently the last of the Aztec emperors to whom goes the credit as the first and most illustrious of the defenders of the nationality founded by Tenoch in 1327". Sosa ended his essay with the observation that "the current government of the republic deserves sincere applause for having proceeded to complete a monument and repaying... a debt of gratitude contracted over three centuries ago".[27]

What Sosa did not say was how the government planned to use its version of the Cuauhtémoc cult for its own benefit. By building such a public commemoration, by eliminating the other two figures and concentrating solely on Cuauhtémoc, and by putting the monument at such a prominent location, the Porfirian proponents of an official liberal "national" history for the country sought to inculcate their view of the past and create public support for their domination of the present and future.

The design of the statue itself has a very important story to tell. As shown in Figure 1, the base of the statue was a replica of the pyramid of the sun from Teotihuacán (a), topped with designs from the Zapotec and Mixtec buildings at Mitla in Oaxaca (b). The middle potion contains a structure supposed to resemble the Temple of the Inscriptions at the Maya site of Palenque in Chiapas (c), but supported by columns reminiscent of those from Tula in the state of Hidalgo, thought to be the Tollán which the Aztecs believed was the center of the Toltec empire (d). The column formed by these structures made the pedestal for the statue of Cuauhtémoc on top, draped in a garment concocted from the pictographs in the codices, but which could easily have passed for something Socrates might have worn.[28] The statue vividly proclaims the government's decision that Mexico would henceforth identify itself officiaty with its Indian heritage.

This message is strongly conveyed in the bas-relief carved into one side of the base. The work by Gabriel Guerra known as "The torment of Cuauhtémoc" depicts his torture by fire at the hands of the Spaniards. The specific inclusion of this particular scene in the

[25] *El Monitor Republicano*, August 20, 1887, p. 3.
[26] *El Monitor Republicano*, August 24, 1887, p. 1.
[27] Francisco Sosa, *Apuntamientos para la historia del monumento de Cuauhtémoc* (Mexico City, 1887), p. 3 and p. 27.
[28] *El Monitor Republicano*, August 20, 1887, pp. 2-3.

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monument itself takes a position: by making Cuauhtémoc into a hero, it makes the Spaniards who tortured him villains. There will never be a monument to Cortés.[29]

Cuauhtémoc, however, is not simply a hero; he is also a martyr. As Francisco W. González noted in his assay:

> In Cuauhtémoc we do not see the last descendant of the Aztec kings...we view in him the hero of the fatherland... Cuauhtémoc conquered, Cuauhtémoc imprisoned and enchained, Cuauhtémoc powerless to defend his throne by means of arms, defended it suffering valiantly the wicked and terrible torments which the inhuman conquistadores applied to him to extract from his the renunciation of his rights, sealing with such heroic sacrifice the most solemn protest against usurpation, which later should produce its greatest and most precious fruits.[30]

González concluded his statement with the familiar *de rigeur* linkage of the martyrdom of Cuauhtémoc with the insurrection of Hidalgo. He stated that "the seed of the heroic sacrifice of Cuauhtémoc came to flower in the year 1810 under the hoe of the immortal cura of Dolores", thus seconding another theme of the 1869 evocation of the Aztec cult. Equally interesting is the subtle way in which González evokes the symbolic power of Jesus Christ by giving the impression that it took the noble Aztec not three centuries for his resurrection from the dead.[31]

The statue also revealed that Porfirians intended to assert that the rulers of Tenochtitlán henceforth would represent the entire Mexican nation. Although the statue does include elements form other Indian groups --the Zapotecs, the Mixtecs, the Maya-- these are shown as mere forerunners or supporters of the Aztecs, the pedestal from which the latter triumphantly rose. Through this identification not just with the Indian as opposed to the Spanish past, but specifically with the Aztecs *per sé*, the Porfirians proclaimed themselves heirs to their predecessors' imperial legacy. Their official version of Mexican history was to run neatly down the Paseo de la Reforma as exemplified in the proposed statues, as Cuauhtémoc flowed into Hidalgo into Juárez into Zaragoza into, of course, the current occupant of the recently renovated Chapultepec castle, Porfirio Díaz, another hero in the war against the French and clearly its triumphal product. But the official historians not only used the symbolism of the Aztecs to validate Díaz stewardship of the country; they also intended to use the selection of Cuauhtémoc and the veneration of the Aztecs to re-confirm the power of Mexico City itself and its right rule the nation by inheritance. Guerra's frieze of Cuauhtémoc's torture at the hands of the Spaniards bears the inscription, "To the memory of Cuauhtémoc and of the warriors who heroically struggled in defense of their country". Yet historians tell us that the Aztecs ruled over the majority of the population of Mexico in a tyrannical fashion and that more Indians fought against Cuauhtémoc than with him. Therefore the statue pays tribute to someone who "heroically struggled" against the majority of Mexico, but ironically the public veneration of Cuauhtémoc serves to legitimize him as the personification of Mexican identity and his capital of Tenochtitlán as its ancient seat of power.

But the instance on Cuauhtémoc as their first ancestor also permitted the Porfirians to claim their right over state revenues as the Aztecs had once taken them by force. The Aztec empire, the most centralized indigenous state Mexico had ever known, received hefty amounts of revenue of goods from outlying conquered territories as tribute to the might and terror of Aztec power. The statue thus delivers the symbolic coup to political and fiscal federalism and proclaimed the primacy of the central state as embodied in and ruled by Mexico City. Liberalism was to be wedded to centralism now that the latter's original conservative proponents had been defeated three times, Indeed, as early as 1873,

[29]Esther Acevedo de Iturriaga and Eloisa Uribe, *La Escultura del Siglo XIX* (Mexico City, 1980), Fig. 219, p. 42.
[30]*El Monitor Republicano*, August 23, 1887, p. 1
[31]*Ibid.*

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most of the conservatives were either dead, exiled, or like Escandón and Somera, active collaborators in the new order.

True to the programme embodied in their monument, the Porfirians quickly began their assault on what remained of Mexican federalism. Although the liberal Constitution of 1857 had strongly supported freedom of internal trade and Francisco Zarco had claimed that the state alcabalas "make the well being of the people impossible", governments since had never been able to enforce article 124, which ordered that eleven alcabalas and internal tariffs cease by June 1, 1858. Nor had they been able to enforce any of the laws passed subsequently affecting internal trade. The Porfirians opened their war on the state alcabala in October, 1877, a few months after Riva Palacio announced the proposed construction of the monument to Cuauhtémoc. The struggle began in earnest, however, near the end of the term of Manuel González in 1884, when the state of Veracruz called a meeting of governors to discuss the matter. According to the results of a survey put together by the representatives to that meeting, the alcabalas remained in place because they supplied up to 68 percent of state revenue, and the greatest beneficiaries of the tax were the major cities. On November 22, 1886, fifteen legislatures accepted the proposition that states could not tax foreign products nor keep goods form entering or leaving their territories. Although this was a step forward, most states continued to collect alcabalas, much to the annoyance of those like Veracruz which had abolished them. The issue dragged on until May 30, 1895, when Minister of Finance José Ives Limantour finally abolished the alcabala effective July 1, 1896, and with it the financial independence of the states from Mexico City.[32]

Although no journalist writing at the time discerned and discussed the government's motives for building this expensive monument to Cuauhtémoc, neither were they naive enough to read any indigenista messages in its design. On the face of it, the honoring of an Indian –the first such official act since the Conquest--could have been seen as a way to inspire the Indians living at the time to lift themselves out of their degraded state. After all, the statue was a heroic representation of what Indians had once been and could be again--strong, intelligent, leaders of nations--a kind of social Darwinism in stone which promised greatness perhaps to the lucky few. But the homage to Cuauhtémoc and the Indian, or at least the Aztec, past occurred at the very time Indians and their mestizo descendants were being deprived of their lands through increased use of the Reform laws, new legislation, and economic development. Furthermore, through the centuries, those creole thinkers interested in glorifying the Indians of antiquity, such as Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora and the liberal ideologue José María Luis Mora, concerned themselves with royal Indians like Cuauhtémoc rather than with contemporary Indians living at the time. Therefore, the Greek details on Cuauhtémoc's costumes and his white features are quite deliberate, and the drawings which appeared in the newspapers look equally white, if not more so. And it is hardly accidental that the "descendant" of Cuauhtémoc is the creole priest Miguel Hidalgo.[33]

The Norwegian anthropologist Karl lumholtz, who spent five years researching Mexican Indians between 1890 and 1898, has left Historians some evidence of Díaz' attitudes toward the Indian population. Lumholtz, himself a believer in Darwinism, noted in the preface to his two-volume *Unknown Mexico*:

> In the present rapid development of Mexico it cannot be prevented that these primitive people will soon disappear by fusion with the great nation to whom they belong. The vast and magnificent virgin

[32]Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna de México*, 9 vols.; *El Porfiriato, Vida económica*, vol. 2 (Mexico City, 1972), pp. 904-918, 1234.

[33]Keen, *Aztec Image*, pp. 192-193; Hale, *Mexican Liberalism*, pp. 218-220. Another example of this is the design by Antonio Peñafiel for the Mexican exhibit at the Columbian Exhibition held in Madrid in 1892, which looks more like an ersatz Grecian temple than any that Moctezuma would have recognized. See Ignacio Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archeology* (New York, 1980), p. 153.

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> forests and the mineral wealth of the mountains will not much longer remain the exclusive property of my dusky friends; but I hope I shall have rendered them a service by setting them this modest monument and that civilised man will be the better for knowing of them.[34]

Lumholtz had three separate interviews with Díaz during his five years in Mexico. According to his report of the last one, Díaz commented, "the Indians are good people if one explains matters to them, but they have been so cheated and imposed upon that they have become distrustful. During the French intervention, nearly all the soldiers of the Liberal party were Indians". Lumholtz told Díaz that the Cora and the Huichols had asked him to request that the President issue an order that their land never be given to whites. Díaz responded by asking, "Are there any among them who can write?" When the anthropologist supplied names, Díaz promised, "Then I will write to them".[35]

But the Indians needed far more than a letter from their President to save their lands. In 1883, the government approved a law calling for the survey of the unoccupied state-owned lands known as *terrenos baldíos*. The decree provided that the companies doing the work could claim as much as a third of the land they measured if they settled at least one person for each 500 acres. By 1892 the surveyors had taken control of thirty million acres, while over forty million went to other private companies and individuals, and in 1894 Congress eliminated the provisions requiring colonists.[36] The government, of course, favored their policy and claimed that Mexico's real land problem lay in illegal seizures by Indians. In addition, the Indians lost lands previously used to grow corn and beans to crops favored by capitalists export agriculture, such as sugar in Morelos and henequén in Yucatán.

Although the Paseo de la Reforma brought many specific messages to the Mexican people, it was also built for foreign consumption. With it, the Porfirians intended to give Mexico a real capital city in every sense of the word. As Francisco González pointed out, "the Avenue of our most grateful memories, which begins with the truly notable work of Tolsá (the statue of Carlos IV) and ends in the castle of the ancient Mexican monarches (Chapultepec), today converted into a recreation place for the leaders of the Republic, made lovely with the natural beauties of the soil and with national and foreign artistic creations, will later become one of our priceless treasures, which will provoke envy in other countries".[37] In fact the government had embarked on its campaign of beautification for Mexico City precisely in order to attract capital. But it could not complete the project single-handedly. Therefore, Francisco Sosa proposed that each state donate two life-size statues of its patriots to be placed on the grassy areas on each side of the avenue.[38] It was as if the rest of the republic was once again paying tribute to its capital as it had done centuries before.

The Paseo de la Reforma fulfilled its promise. As *The Mexican Financier* noted on September 9, 1998 in an article entitled "Municipal Embellishments":

> On the world-famed Paseo de la Reforma... [the] unveiling of that colossal figure [of Cuauhtémoc] the other day gave Mexico one of its noblest works of art on this continent. Thus in many ways the wise rulers of the Municipality are adding to the attractions of capital...the money expended in these notable works of municipal embellishment has been most sagaciously invested, for by beautifying the city, travellers will be brought here to sojourn during the winter months and the spirit of civic pride

[34]Karl Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico: A Record of Five Years Exploration among the Tribes of the Western Sierra Madre, in the Tierra Caliente of Tepic and Jalisco, and among the Tarascos of Michoacán*, 2 vols. (Glorieta, New Mexico, 1973), vol.1, pp. xvi-xvii.

[35]*Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 457-459.

[36]Charles Cumberland, *México: The Struggle for Modernity* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 198-204; Michael Meyer and William Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, 2nd edition (New York, 1983), pp. 458-464.

[37]*El Monitor Republicano*, August 23, 1887, p. 1.

[38]For complete details on his plan, and the list of eventual statues which were all male and all political or military leaders, see Francisco Sosa, *Las estatuas de la Reforma* (Mexico City, 1900).

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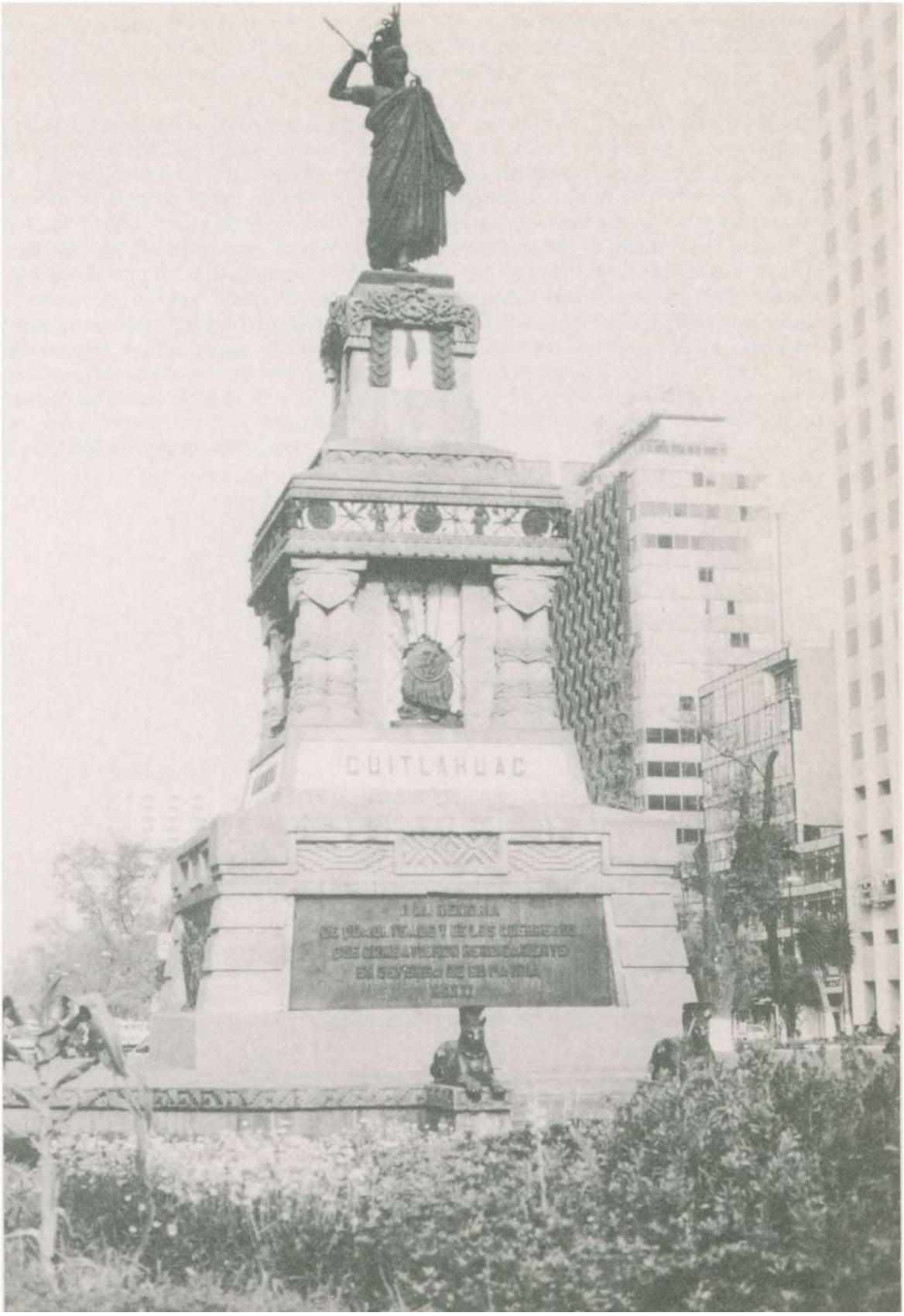

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> and enthusiasm evoked. We believe in the future of this City, in the ability of its rulers to make it one of the most beautiful capitals of the world. [Such a city] has demonstrated its right to ask of capitalists the money needed to carry out great works of permanent utility.[39]

Work on the Paseo de la Reforma continued and it became the choicest site for a new series of mansions built by the crucial moneymen of the day--Manterola, Scherer, Solrzano, Braniff, Aburto, and others--who all built residences there. A trolley line opened, operated first by mules and then by electricity, which ran to Chapultepec, and in 1889 the Café Colón designed by Emilio Dondé Preciat, opened across from the statue and became the "in place" for the industrialists and the financiers to make their deals.[40]

Work on the Paseo de la Reforma continued with the installation of the Indios Verdes statues commemorating two more Aztec emperors, Ahuitzotl and Itzcatl, in 1902. But by the time the monument to the Independence, the Angel, was unveiled in 1910, the Paseo de la Reforma was on the verge of losing its privileged position for financial negotiations. The revolutionaries would sweep away some of the foreign capitalists and create their own and somewhat different system. But the silent function of the avenue--the teaching of a nationalist and centralist view of Mexican history in murals of stone--goes on undisturbed either by political or seismic upheaval.

[39]*The Mexican Financier*, September 9, 1887, pp. 360-362.
[40]Salvador Novo, *Los paseos*, p. 41.

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