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THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
OF THE PAN IN CHIHUAHUA

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**BIBLIOTECA
C. I. D. E.**

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INTRODUCTION*

During the early 1980's, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) emerged as the most important electoral challenge to the PRI. Yet the strength of PAN was not evenly distributed throughout the regions of the country. It was stronger in the northern states of Durango, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Sonora, Baja California, and Sinaloa, where the PAN scored important electoral victories.

The novelty in these electoral contests was the unprecedented and overt participation of entrepreneurs, particularly small and medium-size entrepreneurs, who despite their recent incorporation to PAN became candidates of the party during elections.¹ The victories of PAN revealed a new determination on the part of the party to participate aggressively in the electoral arena in defense of democracy and regional autonomy. This sudden and unparalleled strength of PAN in the North is puzzling because throughout the government of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, workers and peasants were hit particularly hard by economic policies adopted by his administration, yet the strongest electoral challenge came from the right, not the left, and from the most dynamic region of the country, not from the most severely hit by the economic crisis. It was clear that the strength of the opposition is not directly and automatically related to the degree of discontent or the degree to which the economic interests of different sectors of the population are affected. Rather, it is related to the capacity of those sectors of the population who are dissatisfied with the government to organize in opposition.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze why the PAN acquired such unprecedented strength in the northern state of Chihuahua in the early 1980's, why it was weakened towards the latter part of the 1980's, and why it acquired strength again in 1992. Chihuahua is an interesting case to analyze because in no other state did PAN win so many municipalities as in Chihuahua, only to lose all municipalities and most deputies after 1986. It might be argued that the fraud explains the poor electoral results of the PAN in 1986, but in the local elections of 1989 and in the federal elections of 1991, PAN lost most important electoral positions, despite the absence of massive fraud.

I shall argue that entrepreneurs played a decisive role in the organization of the opposition against the government and that their mode of participation is

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critical in explaining the performance of the PAN in the electoral arena. The strength of PAN in Chihuahua, and the North in general, during the early 1980's was in great part the result of the entrepreneurs' participation in the opposition. Entrepreneurs, particularly small and medium-size entrepreneurs, overtly supported PAN and contributed financial resources to the party. But more importantly, they accepted nominations to be candidates of the party during elections and occupied critical positions in the organization of the campaigns. They infused the PAN with new leadership, tactics, financial resources, and organizations capacities.

Prior to the involvement of entrepreneurs in the PAN, the party was electorally weak and poorly organized. The role of entrepreneurs was therefore critical in tipping the balance in favor of the party. However, I shall argue that the mode in which entrepreneurs participated in the opposition did not contribute to the strengthening of the PAN in the long run. Entrepreneurs participated mainly in the organization of the campaigns and in administrative positions in the municipalities won by PAN, but they did not become involved in the party structure itself. As a result, after the elections of 1986, when the victories of the PAN were not recognized by the government, PAN lost its most important resource of strength and was left organizationally weak as a political institution. That, coupled with the withdrawal of financial support of the significant portion of entrepreneurs, contributed to the electoral weakness of the party in further elections.

The electoral strength of PAN in Chihuahua has been attributed to the fragmentation of the PRI in the state as well as to the active participation of a variety of social sectors who had previously been apolitical, like middle classes, housewives, youngsters, and even elements of the working class.² Although it is true that the electoral movement in the 1980's incorporated these sectors and that they provided the bulk of the vote for the PAN, they could not have organized without the leadership of the entrepreneurs. Before entrepreneurs joined PAN, the party had neither the resources nor the organizational capacity to mobilize wide sectors of the population, articulate the existing discontent against the government and stage an effective campaign against the PRI.

Other explanations attribute the strength of PAN in Chihuahua to the impact of the economic crisis in the state.³ Although the devaluations and the exchange controls affected many people and created discontent in the North, particularly in the border cities, the impact of the economic crisis in the northern states was less severe than in other regions of the country. By 1983, Chihuahua like other northern states was growing again. The worst part of the economic crisis was over, yet the opposition was gaining strength. Moreover, the entrepreneurs who became actively involved in the opposition had not been particularly affected by the economic crisis. It can be argued that only those entrepreneurs whose businesses were stable had the financial solvency to devote time and resources to political activities.

In the following pages I analyze 1) why entrepreneurs decided to organize in opposition to the government and challenge the PRI in the electoral arena; 2) why they became the leaders of a society-based opposition movement against the government, and 3) what were the consequences of the entrepreneurs' mode of participation in the opposition.

1. THE NATIONALIZATION OF BANKS: THE SPARK OF THE OPPOSITION

José López Portillo's last year of government became a great disappointment for all, but particularly for entrepreneurs. Upon taking power, JLP tried to win back the confidence of entrepreneurs, who had been alienated by the populist rhetoric of Luis Echeverría Álvarez. López Portillo "wooed" entrepreneurs with the wealth derived from the oil boom but stabbed them in the back in his last year in office. The rising levels of inflation, declining rates of growth, and the critical financial situation the government was confronting were evidence of the fictitious nature of the boom. But the nationalization of the banks, which affected the most powerful sector of the business community, and the anti-business rhetoric that accompanied such a measure, convinced entrepreneurs that even the most pro-business president could betray them. Unlike LEA, who was always regarded as a populist and anti-business president by the entrepreneurs, JLP was perceived as a traitor because of his abrupt change. The entrepreneurs, who had also participated to a great extent in this fictitious boom, blamed the government for the economic ills affecting the country, and interpreted the crisis as a result of the excess of power vested in the presidency.

Discontent among the business community was widespread, yet it did not translate into political opposition throughout the country or throughout all sectors and sizes of the business community. Paradoxically, big entrepreneurs and the bankers, who were mostly affected by the nationalization adopted a conciliatory tone. They were afraid of "provoking the beast"; the negotiations with the government over the value of the banks were at stake.⁴ It was the small and medium size entrepreneurs who had not really been affected by the nationalization, who adopted a more combative stance. They intensified their attacks against the government, issued statements in the media in defense of private property, and organized the reunions called "México in Liberty" in several Northern cities.⁵

As in the rest of the country, in Chihuahua the reaction of the business community after the nationalization of banks was not homogeneous. The entrepreneurs' political behavior was to a great extent conditioned by their degree of economic ties to the government. Some entrepreneurs, a minority, decided to become more active within the ranks of PRI in order to "change the system from within". Typically these entrepreneurs were owners of medium-size

enterprises that depended on government's contracts, concessions, purchases, and credits. They could not afford to give their support to the opposition.⁶ Other publicly said that they were in favor of PRI, but financially supported the opposition behind closed doors. These entrepreneurs were typically the biggest entrepreneurs of Chihuahua, who had also many economic and personal links with the government, and could therefore not afford to overtly support PAN. However, they considered the need to exert pressure on the government in order to force the authorities to behave more "responsible".⁷ Finally, the majority of small and medium size entrepreneurs gave their support to the PAN. According to the President of Canacintra in Chihuahua, "in 1982, about 80% of entrepreneurs gave their support to the PAN".⁸

Although there are a few exceptions,⁹ typically the entrepreneurs who became more actively involved in the PAN were highly educated small and medium-size entrepreneurs who were economically independent from the government, they had little access to the highly centralized mechanisms of decision-making, thus feeling politically marginalized. These entrepreneurs had less to lose by overtly supporting the opposition and perceived that there was much to gain.¹⁰

At first sight, the reaction of small and medium entrepreneurs appears contradictory because the nationalization of banks benefitted many of them. By transferring their debts to a public institution, the nationalization enabled entrepreneurs to negotiate easier terms of payment. Furthermore, their dollar debts were turned into pesos at a preferential rate.¹¹ Ideologically, however, they regarded the measure as a direct attack against private property and a warning of what the President was capable of doing. "The nationalization of banks was a powerful blow for us. The bankers were a symbol, they were the most powerful sector of the business community. If the government was capable of attacking them, who knows what could happen to the rest of us."¹² The nationalization of banks, as well as the erratic policies adopted by López Portillo during his last year in office, were a clear example of the "excesses" of a government that is left unaccountable of its actions, as well as of their powerlessness to confront such actions. To them, the enormous power vested in the executive created uncertainty and left them vulnerable to potential government's arbitrary behavior. After all, large entrepreneurs had privilege and direct access to the government and could use their political "liasons to defend their particular interests. Banker's and large entrepreneurs' timid response gave smaller entrepreneurs a clear signal of the absence of a strong and prepared leadership within the business community to come forward in defense of private property. It also convinced them that the traditional abstention on the part of entrepreneurs to actively become involved in electoral politics had been an omission and a mistake.

The decision of small and medium-size entrepreneurs to challenge PRI in the electoral arena revealed a double rivalry at work: one against the government, for its authoritarian practices, and one against the large entrepreneurs, who

had developed a set of privileges and enjoyed informal channels of communications with the central authorities, that smaller entrepreneurs lacked. For smaller entrepreneurs, particularly the younger ones, what had to change were the "rules of the game" that had governed the relationship between entrepreneurs and the government, which in their view, not only favored the continuity of an authoritarian political system, but also consistently discriminated against them. Being marginalized from the possibility of exerting pressure on the government from within, and having fewer opportunities of rent seeking, these entrepreneurs realized the need to establish *formal* mechanisms to limit and control the highly discretionary power of the executive. They criticized the intervention of government in the economy, not only because in their view it led to inefficiency, but also, because it allowed the government to use its discretionary power to benefit particular sectors of the population and create political clientele.

This radical and "liberal" political discourse paralleled other conservative movements throughout Latin America. As Edward Gibson argues, the intellectual substance of the "new right" consists of two elements: first, a frontal assault against state inefficiency, corruption and authoritarianism and second, an attack against the network between the state and economic elites that makes up the power structure of the developmentalist state, which includes not only labor, but also important segments of the business class.¹³ To these radical entrepreneurs, a democratic political system ensures not only mechanisms to make the government accountable for its actions, and a more efficient formulation and implementation of public policies, but also and equally important, a fairer system for doing business in Mexico.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF NEW LEADERS IN CHIHUAHUA'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY

By the time the banks were nationalized, the business chambers in Chihuahua were led by small and medium-size entrepreneurs. A brief analysis of the conditions under which these entrepreneurs developed is helpful in understanding why these entrepreneurs were able to acquire leading positions in their business chambers and why they became predisposed to participate actively and overtly in electoral politics.

Since the 1970's Chihuahua has experienced a dramatic economic growth thanks to the maquiladora program. In the last twenty years, Chihuahua's productive structure has been transformed from an agrarian-mining-and cattle economy to an industrial economy. The dynamism of maquiladoras has triggered the emergence of new businesses in the industrial, commercial, and service sectors, and has also created a flow of wages that has spurred in turn to the commercial

and service sectors.¹⁴ The population in Chihuahua has become more urban, the middle class has expanded, and many firms depend on non-unionized workers. A new generation of entrepreneurs emerged who had few economic links to the government and regarded themselves as self-made individuals.

Many of these entrepreneurs received their education at the Tecnológico de Monterrey during the 1970's, an institution regarded as one of the most important centers of "entrepreneurial culture".¹⁵ As students, they experienced the confrontation between business and President Echeverría, which was strongest in Monterrey. This experience taught them that they could not remain indifferent to the political situation and predisposed them to seek a more active participation in politics. Typically, young entrepreneurs became owners of small and medium-size business and perceived that they were successful "in spite of the government", from which they did not derive any benefits.¹⁶ In contrast to large entrepreneurs, they felt economically less privileged in the allocation of credits, subsidies, and government's contracts. Many of these entrepreneurs were linked to export markets and received credits from foreign banks, not domestic or government banks. Furthermore, unlike large entrepreneurs, they had no access to the central government and had no capacity to limit or control the highly discretionary power of the executive.

However, despite being politically marginalized and economically less privileged than big entrepreneurs, small and medium-size entrepreneurs were able to gain leading positions within their local business organizations. This was partly the result of their growing numerical importance, which gave them bargaining strength within the business community. But also, and more importantly, this was the result of big entrepreneurs' lack of a corporatist control over the rest of the business community. In contrast to Nuevo León, where large entrepreneurs exert an hegemonic role and are in control of their business organizations, in Chihuahua, big entrepreneurs do not have the capacity to generate consensus inside their business community.¹⁷ They do not exert a strong leadership and have remained apathetic to the affairs of their local business organizations. They have preferred to use their direct channels of communication when dealing with the authorities. That has increased the leverage of smaller entrepreneurs and has given them more room to maneuver within their business community.

As leaders of their business organizations, small and medium-size entrepreneurs acquired experience in talking to the local authorities and getting exposed to the press. They became opinion leaders in their own communities. As Francisco Barrio said, "being president of Coparmex became for me the greatest opportunity to receive a political education".¹⁸ Large entrepreneurs, in contrast, typically deal with the government behind closed doors, they are not prepared to speak in public, defend their ideas and persuade others.¹⁹

When the nationalization of banks was announced amidst the worst economic

crisis the country had confronted since 1929, small and medium-size entrepreneurs had the organizational resources to articulate and voice their discontent. They were the most organized sector of the population outside the tutelage of PRI. Neither the middle classes nor the workers had independent organizational resources to express their discontent and confront the government.

Yet, the business chambers constrained entrepreneurs in their capacity to effectively challenge the government. On one hand, the Chambers Law prohibits business organizations of participating in politics. On the other hand, business chambers are more efficient in defending particular issues related to the interests of its members, but are limited in fighting for a change in the rules of the game. Since entrepreneurs are a minority, they needed to make coalitions with other social classes. To that end, it was necessary to seek the support of a political party.²⁰

3. ENTREPRENEURS IN THE PAN: STRONG CAMPAIGNS, WEAK PARTY

When entrepreneurs decided to organize in opposition to the PRI, they first thought to create a political party. This was an initiative that originated at the CCE and the Concanaco in Mexico City. Representatives of these business organizations had a series of meetings with entrepreneurs in Chihuahua, but it was decided that rather than creating a political party, it was more expedient to support an existing party, the Partido Acción Nacional, which after all, shared many ideological principles with the entrepreneurs.²¹ PAN had limited resources, but it had the advantage of having a preexisting electoral structure, a recognizable name, and a tradition of being an opposition party. Moreover, in contrast to other regions of the country, PAN welcomed entrepreneurs to its ranks and allowed them to redefine strategies, tactics, and to organize the campaigns. As the General Director of Barrio's campaign said, "people in the PAN were wise enough to accept us and let us lead the movement. After all, we were nothing but intruders".²²

By the early 1980's, the PAN was weak as a political organization. It operated as a voluntary organization, and had no paid professionals working for the party. Its resources were meager, its cadres were mainly middle class professionals with little administrative experience, and it did not have the capacity to maintain the consistent participation of its sympathizers between elections. In 1982, the party did not even own a building.²³ In Ciudad Juárez, where the movement against the PRI was greatest, "PAN as an organization was in shambles: it had only 22 active people, it was more like a Friends Club".²⁴ However, despite its organizational weakness, PAN had been able to maintain 20% of the vote, a percentage that is more significant considering the high

abstention rate in the state.²⁵ PAN had become a traditional channel to express discontent against the government, yet it had no capacity of effectively mobilize people and win elections.

Entrepreneurs infused the PAN with resources as well as with organizational, administrative, and marketing experience they had acquired in their own businesses. They were able to coordinate an effective campaign in defense of the vote. For entrepreneurs, the very weakness of the PAN was attractive because it allowed them to have more room of maneuver and impose their conditions upon the party. For the PAN, on the other hand, it was an opportunity to gain strength and win elections.

The manner in which Francisco Barrio accepted to run as candidate of the PAN for the municipal elections in Ciudad Juárez provides a good example of the extent to which entrepreneurs were able to impose their conditions upon the party. According to Barrio, when he joined the PAN in 1983, he encountered a great void within the party. He participated in the organization of the campaign for municipal president, but there was no candidate. When PAN proposed him to run for the municipality, he accepted on two conditions. First, that the party would not interfere in how he ran his campaign, and second, that his candidacy would be launched first by a civic organization and only later it would be incorporated to the PAN. The party accepted both conditions. The Frente Cívico de Participación Ciudadana, an organization that was spontaneously invented,²⁶ launched Barrio as candidate for municipal president. Barrio knew that for many entrepreneurs, particularly those who had many economic interests with the government, it was, less compromising to support a civic organization than to support a political party. He was, thus, able to get financial support from many entrepreneurs, including the largest ones in Juárez. Only after he had gained support, he formally joined the PAN.²⁷

As a result of the participation of entrepreneurs in the PAN, the party started to acquire a political dynamism that had not been seen since 1956, when the PAN organized a strong campaign against the governorship with the help of many entrepreneurs.²⁸ The party collected significant financial resources that allowed it to stage well organized and aggressive campaigns. PAN adopted a new rhetoric, which was aggressive and determined to win, and articulated its fight for democracy as a struggle against centralism and in favor of regional autonomy, a popular demand in the state. It also incorporated new tactics, particularly the use of civil resistance and civil disobedience to gather the support and to mobilize wide sectors of the population. This was an innovative campaign strategy and a relatively uncostly way of building coalitions and making people participate, for it allowed people to show their support for PAN and yet remain anonymous. Actions such as stamping bills, honking horns, covering the plates of the car with PANista publicity, allowed people to get involved without being recognized, and consequently, "punished" by the govern-

ment. Finally, PAN relied on other civic organizations such as DHIAC, ANCFEM as well as the business chambers in a civic campaign for the promotion of the vote. Although there was not formal contact between the business chambers and the PAN, the former took an active role in reviewing the electoral lists (padrón electoral), encouraging its members and the citizenship in general to go to the polls, and demanding clean elections.

The dynamism of the campaigns and the success of PAN in mobilizing people and encouraging them to vote was reflected in the electoral results of 1983. In contrast to 1980, when only 18% of the people eligible to vote went to the polls, in 1983, 34% voted. In 1980 PAN only nominated candidates for 11 out of the 67 municipalities, and for 8 out of the 14 electoral districts. In 1983, PAN nominated candidates for 33 municipalities and for the 14 electoral districts. The party won seven municipalities,²⁹ the most important in the state and where the 75% of the population is concentrated, and 5 of the 14 local electoral districts. That gave PAN five deputies at the local Congress.³⁰ In the mid-term elections of 1985, PAN won 4 out of the 10 electoral districts, despite the massive resort to fraud. Faced with a growing strength of the PAN in the electoral arena, the government resorted to massive fraud in 1986, and as a result, PAN "lost" the governorship, all local deputies and all but one municipality.³¹

Although the electoral mobilizations in 1983, 1985, and 1986 incorporated many social sectors, ranging from women, middle classes, the church, and elements of the working class, the entrepreneurs became the leaders of this movement and adopted a critical role in its organization. They became the new "core" of PAN, in the sense that their actions were crucial in obtaining resources and in the definition of the party's political agenda.³² Yet, the entrepreneurs' mode of participation did not lead to the strengthening of PAN in the long run. Entrepreneurs confined their political participation to the electoral struggle, but their involvement in the party structure was limited and, after the elections, the majority refrained from adopting an active role as members of the PAN on a more permanent basis.

Entrepreneurs participated actively in the campaign committees and assumed a critical role in the definition of goals and strategies. But the campaigns were virtually organized outside the PAN. The campaign committees were run as parallel organizations with relative independence from the PAN. They had their own building, with their own director, treasurer, administrative staff, press manager, and logistics department. Most important decisions and all initiatives were taken by the campaign committee, not by the party itself.³³ Virtually all of the staff members in the campaign committees were entrepreneurs, and many of them were not even members of the PAN. This mode of participation did not fortify the PAN as an institution and created many problems between the organizers of the campaign (the newcomers) and PAN's traditional cadres.³⁴

Aside from participating in the campaign committees, many entrepreneurs

participated as an informal support group giving advice to the candidates, and financially, through the so-called "Grupo de Apoyo". This group was geared at collecting financial resources for the PAN during elections, although it remained independent of the party. It was an informal and behind the scenes organization where many big entrepreneurs, who did not want to be associated with PAN, participated anonymously.³⁵ The resources this group collected were crucial for the electoral campaigns of the PAN. However, these resources flowed to the campaign committee, and not to the party itself. After the elections, PAN lacked resources and did not have a solid organization for the collection of funds.

From 1983 to 1986, entrepreneurs also participated in administrative positions in the municipalities won by the PAN as well as in the city councils. In Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, most of the high level positions in the municipality were occupied by entrepreneurs.³⁶ The entrepreneurs presence in the government brought about a new style of policy making. Most of the municipalities governed by the opposition were characterized by their honesty in the management of their budget and their efficiency, despite their relative lack of resources. They were also characterized by the use of public force against popular organizations like the CDP.³⁷ Once in power, PANista government promoted the organization of many civic associations that later in 1986 provided a basis of support to the PAN. In the case of Ciudad Juárez, various associations emerged such as "Coalición de Comités de Vecinos" (Cocove); "Comerciantes Unidos y Democracia" (Cude); "Jóvenes para la Democracia"; "Acción Cívica de Empleados de Maquilas". All of these groups integrated the "Comité de Lucha de la Democracia" (Colude), an organization created before the 1986 elections to encourage people to go to the polls.³⁸ Although these associations promoted the activities of the PAN, they were not linked to the party. Many of these civic organizations, which successfully mobilized people for the elections, disintegrated after 1986. PAN did not strengthen its bases of support by organizing its constituencies and linking them to the PAN on matters that transcended electoral issues. The concentration on electoral matters gave the PAN strength on the short run, but after the elections were over, PAN was not strong enough to keep people mobilized or interested in the affairs of the party.

As Alberto Mesta (Secretary General of PAN in 1989) said, "in 1986, the strength of PAN was its campaign committee. PAN's state and municipal committees were weak. Guillermo Prieto Luján [the president of the PAN in Chihuahua] was alone. When the campaigns came to an end, the party fell apart. By the end of 1988, when Raymundo Gómez became president of the party, PAN was in shambles".³⁹

The very weakness of the PAN fostered the concentration of entrepreneurs' participation in the campaigns. The party offered no infrastructure, it had to be created anew. But equally important, for entrepreneurs, this mode of participation was a less risky way of getting involved in politics. By restricting their

participation to the campaigns, entrepreneurs had less to lose if the opposition lost and much to win if it won.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the periodic electoral contests made the organization of the party more difficult. According to Lau, after the victories of 1983, PAN tried to reinforce its organizational structure, but the electoral contests diverted the attention away from this task.⁴¹

After the elections of 1986, the weakness of the PAN started to become more evident. PAN was limited in its capacity to absorb all the demands against fraud and was unable to lead the post electoral struggle. The social mobilizations after 1986 went beyond the PAN, and were led by the civic organizations, the church,⁴² and the business chambers. "PAN did not have the structure to respond to what was happening. They could not absorb all the complaints. People came to the business chambers demanding them to do something. The business organizations issued statements declaring that the elections had not been clean. The presidents of the business organizations became spokesmen in the struggle against fraud, and caught the attention of the media."⁴³ The Coparmex, Canacindra, and Canaco in Chihuahua worked on a coordinated fashion and adopted an active role in condemning the fraud and demanding the annulment of the elections. They organized a business strike, in which 80% of the businesses in Chihuahua participated.⁴⁴

The civic associations, on the other hand, formed the Movimiento Democrático Electoral (MDE), where both the left and PAN participated condemning the fraud. This "movimiento" participated in the civil disobedience campaigns launched by those who had been in charge of the campaigns. However, soon the divisions between the PAN and this electoral movement began to appear. PAN, pressed by its national leader, Pablo Emilio Madero, wanted to stop the mobilizations and to adopt a less aggressive tone.⁴⁵ The social mobilization came to an end when governor Fernando Bacza assumed power, amidst a general environment of resentment and disappointment. In 1988 and 1989, PRI was able to win overwhelmingly with an abstention rate of 70%. PAN had lost its electoral strength, had little resources and had lost the active involvement of its most important leaders.

4. LEGACIES: EXPLAINING DE-MOBILIZATION AND ITS AFTERMATH

After the electoral results became irreversible, the entrepreneurs ceased to criticize the government and the PRI so vociferously. The president of Coparmex in Chihuahua, who had actively participated in the electoral movement, issued a statement declaring that "it is time to leave aside the existing differences and to adopt a more mature attitude. Now we are committed with the future of our state... Since a governor de facto exists, we need to give it our support and be prepared to judge its actions, although now it is time to work".⁴⁶

Big entrepreneurs, and many small and medium-size entrepreneurs who had participated in the opposition, reaffirmed their commitment to the government and openly gave their support to the PRI. In contrast to the past, the PRI welcomed them and opened them political spaces. Currently, entrepreneurs participate in the PRI through the so-called "Comités de Financiamiento de Campaña", and also as candidates of the PRI for electoral contests. The most recent case is that of Jesús Macías, PRI's candidate for governor in the 1992 elections. Macías was president of Canaco in Ciudad Juárez and later became Municipal President of that city.

The majority of entrepreneurs who actively participated in the opposition, on the other hand, withdrew from the political arena. They returned to their business, which in many cases were facing difficult economic problems due to the little attention they had received by their bosses. How can we explain their behavior, after they had become so actively involved in the opposition?

The de-mobilization of PANista entrepreneurs had been interpreted as a sign that entrepreneurs in fact used the PAN instrumentally to press the government and improve their terms of negotiations. Following this logic, once the government adopted favorable economic policies and a conciliatory attitude, there remained no reason to support the opposition.⁴⁷ I believe this interpretation, although partially true, is simplistic and misses the central point of why entrepreneurs supported the opposition in the first place. In addition, it cannot explain why many of these entrepreneurs have remained anti-PRI, despite PRI's efforts to win their support, as it became evident in the 1992 electoral process, where entrepreneurs participated again in the opposition.

Support for the PAN was not linked to the promotion of particular economic policies on the part of the government. In fact, it can be argued that if economic policies were the issue, the movement would not have been successful in incorporating such diverse sectors of the business community, that do not share the same interests and that, therefore, do not espouse the same economic policies. The motivation to support the PAN was to create checks and balances in the political system, for in their view, that is the best mechanism to make the government accountable for its actions and the safest guarantee to private property. Although many entrepreneurs welcome the government's economic policies, they still demand a greater political presence outside the tutelage of the PRI. They consider the latter as a precondition for curbing the traditional impunity of the government. As an entrepreneur said, "Salinas and Baeza are performing well now, but there is no guarantee that the president will not go crazy during the last year of his administration".⁴⁸

The retrenchment of entrepreneurs from the political arena does not necessarily mean that they have been "bought" by the government or that they give PRI their unconditional support. These entrepreneurs still sympathized for PAN, but were not active in the party. If the original "cause" that motivated

entrepreneurs to participate in the opposition existed, why did they not continue to fight against the government?

After the elections of 1986, there was a pervading sense of disillusionment and disappointment amongst all that had actively participated in the electoral movement, including entrepreneurs. People perceived that their commitment to the opposition had bared no results, and that they were powerless in bringing about changes in their political system. The enemy was bigger than it had been expected. Having oriented their efforts to the electoral campaigns, and with no more positions in local governments, entrepreneurs had no concrete political task after the elections were over. As Luis H. Álvarez said, "it is difficult to maintain the temperature high for long periods of time. There has been a profound disenchantment with the recurrence of electoral fraud. The latter has discouraged many entrepreneurs to retain their participatory attitude. But the sources of discontent remain, and the entrepreneurs who supported the PAN still sympathize with the party".⁴⁹

On the other hand, Baeza managed to neutralized the political situation by using "the carrot and the stick". Baeza's government adopted a conciliatory tone in an effort to win the support of the entrepreneurs. It has helped many entrepreneurs who participated in PAN in the solution of labor disputes and has been opened to hearing their concerns. According to a PRIista entrepreneur, "Baeza treats PANistas better than PRIistas".⁵⁰ But the government has also "punished" those entrepreneurs most critical to the government by auditing their enterprises. Furthermore, Baeza has adopted an openness towards PAN that has no precedent in Chihuahua. He meets with PAN officials on a regular basis and consults with them on most important matters. As Raymundo Gómez said, "we virtually rule in the state of Chihuahua".⁵¹ That has smoothed the tense political situation between entrepreneurs and the government and has thus given entrepreneurs less concrete and immediate reasons to organize in opposition again. When entrepreneurs do not feel aggrieved by the government, it is more difficult to justify their active involvement in the organization of an opposition movement against the PRI. That, coupled with the perception that the chances of success if they mobilize in the opposition were few, contributed to the de-mobilization of entrepreneurs after 1986.

In contrast to the disenchantment after the elections of 1986, in the 1992 electoral campaign, the perceptions that the electoral results would be respected and that the opposition had a good chance of success dramatically improved, thus encouraging many entrepreneurs to become again actively involved in the opposition. The 1992 electoral process revealed that the "perceptions of the chances of success" is a critical factor conditioning the entrepreneurs political behavior. The experiences of Baja California, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí encouraged entrepreneurs to become politically active again, for this time, it was perceived, the government would not be able to resort to massive fraud. The

decision of Francisco Barrio to run for the governorship also increased the chances of success in the electoral arena, and encouraged entrepreneurs to give their support to the party. The active engagement of entrepreneurs in the 1992 electoral process, both as candidates of the party and as organizers of the campaign, proves that despite their approval of the policies being adopted by PRI at the local and national level, they remained in the opposition.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have argued that the performance of the PAN in the electoral arena during the 1980's was in great part conditioned by the political behavior of entrepreneurs. When entrepreneurs became actively involved in support of the party, the party was able to organize effective campaigns, mobilize wide sectors of the population in support of the PAN, and (when the government did not resort to massive fraud) win elections. Conversely, when entrepreneurs withdrew their active support for the party, the party was not strong enough to organize effective campaigns and win elections. It was the very weakness of the PAN as a political organization that allowed entrepreneurs to play such an important role in the electoral process.

PAN became an emblem that unified a wide variety of social sectors in an electoral struggle. But in reality, as a political organization, PAN remained weak and was unable to capitalize the gains it had achieved in the electoral arena. What are the lessons of this experience?

The electoral process in Chihuahua during the early 1980's demonstrated that a necessary prerequisite in the struggle for democracy is the existence of strong parties, not just strong campaigns or strong electoral movements. The strengths and at the same time weakness of the movement in 1980's was that it was an electoral movement. During elections it is easier to mobilize people, there is a concrete goal, but after elections it is difficult to maintain the political involvement of people. A strong party requires to have a presence in the political arena between elections. To that end it needs resources, access to the press, professional politicians, and an organizational structure to maintain people interested in the affairs of the party on a more permanent basis. Strong parties are able to penetrate civil society and insure the commitment of its constituency on issues that transcend the electoral arena. More importantly, they provide the institutional mechanisms to maintain a permanent check on the performance of the authorities and make them accountable for their actions.

For PAN, the electoral defeats of 1988 and 1989 were a clear signal of the need to initiate profound changes within the party to solidify its structure. When Raymundo Gómez, Barrio's Campaign Director, assumed the presidency of the PAN in November 1988, he started to reorganize the party, a process that created

severe internal disputes. He encouraged the "professionalization" of the party, paying salaries to those assuming high executive positions so that they could devote full time to the party. With the arrival of Gómez, a number of entrepreneurs acquired administrative positions in the party. Today, as many PANistas claim, the party is stronger, and the campaigns are no longer managed independently of the party.

A stronger party decreases the political importance of outsiders, including entrepreneurs, in conditioning its electoral fortunes. If PAN is strong today as PANistas claim, it will not need to rely on "intruders" to direct their campaigns, and it will not be significantly hurt by big entrepreneurs' support for the PRI. However, only in the future will be possible to evaluate whether or not the PAN is in fact stronger today and whether it can penetrate civil society on a more permanent basis.

NOTES

¹ The candidates for the governorship in different northern states were Adalberto Rosas in Sonora, Rodolfo Elizondo in Durango, Francisco Barrio in Chihuahua, Eugenio Clariond in Nuevo León, Ernesto Ruffo Appel in Baja California, Manuel Clouthier in Sinaloa. None of these candidates had previous history of participation in PAN, but they had all been active within their business organizations. It is no coincidence that virtually all of these candidates had been presidents of the local Coparmex, the most active and radical business organization. The exception is Rodolfo Elizondo, who was, however, active in the Chamber of Commerce.

² For example, Alberto Aziz Nassif argues that the strength of the PAN in Chihuahua was the result of the involvement of many sectors of the population who had been previously apolitical. He contends that the argument that entrepreneurs were critical in the electoral strength of PAN is simplistic. However, he does not analyze how the movement was organized, who were its leaders, and what role entrepreneurs played in the electoral movement. He also does not disaggregate the business community and, therefore, when he looks at the reaction of big entrepreneurs, he concludes that entrepreneurs were in the PAN. Although he recognizes that small and medium-size entrepreneurs were committed to PAN, he does not analyze why this was the case and what were the implications. See Alberto Aziz Nassif, *Prácticas electorales y democracia in Chihuahua*, Cuadernos de la Casa Chata 151, Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores de Antropología, Mexico, 1987. For an interpretation that attributes the strength of the PAN to the dissatisfaction of the middle classes with the government, see Soledad Loeza, "Derecha y democracia in el cambio político mexicano 1982-1988", Conference Paper 24, Columbia University, 1989. Although it is true that the economic crisis affected the middle classes, not everywhere did they support the opposition so actively.

³ See Tonatiuh Guillén López, "Crisis y conducta política", *El Cotidiano*, número especial 1, 1987; Marco A. Rascón and Patricia Ruiz, "Chihuahua: La disputa por la dependencia", *Cuadernos Políticos* 47, July-September, 198; Victor Orozco O., "Las perspectivas del sistema político y la democracia in Chihuahua", in Rubén Lau, Vicent Jaime, and Victor Orozco, *Sistema político y democracia in Chihuahua*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la UNAM and Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1986.

⁴ Big entrepreneurs were afraid that if they reacted vociferously, then the government could

start expropriating more enterprises. Interview with Federico Muggenburg, former director of Centro de Estudios Económicos y Sociales del Sector Privado (CEESP), July, 1991.

⁵ These reunions were organized by the Coparmex, and supported by the Concanaco and CCE. Coparmex, a "business union", has been the most radical business organization because, in contrast to other business organizations, its members affiliate voluntarily. Concanaco became radical during the 1980's because it has a more decentralized structure than the Concamin, and consequently, small and medium-size entrepreneurs from the provinces achieved leadership positions at the national level. These reunions were aimed at defending private property and creating consciousness among the business community of the dangers of living under a presidentialist and authoritarian political system. Although the reunions criticized the nationalization of banks, bankers and big entrepreneurs, who had been pressed by the government, lobbied to stop these reunions. A big reunion was programmed in Mexico City, but it was cancelled. Interview with Javier Esteban, Director of the Centro Empresarial (Coparmex) in Ciudad Juárez, July 1, 1991.

⁶ An entrepreneur linked to the construction business said in an interview, "The success or failure of a business does not depend on the entrepreneurs alone. It is necessary to have good links with the government... I did not support PAN. It is necessary to correct the [government's] mistakes from within the system. If one leaves, there is no one left to improve the situation". Interview with Rodolfo Martínez, Chihuahua, February 10, 1992.

⁷ Big entrepreneurs adopted an "instrumental" position towards PAN and contributed with financial resources to the campaigns. But in 1985, when they were pressed by the government to withdraw their support for the opposition, they ceased to financially support PAN. That, as we shall see, contributed to the weakening of the party after 1986.

⁸ Interview with Óscar Sepúlveda, President of the Canacina in Chihuahua, February 11, 1992.

⁹ There are big entrepreneurs who overtly gave their support to PAN and who have remained loyal to the party. The most notable example is that of Miguel Fernández, a big entrepreneur from Ciudad Juárez.

¹⁰ A detailed analysis of the factor that account for the organization and political mobilization of entrepreneurs in Chihuahua is elaborated in my dissertation: *The New Conservative Opposition: The Political Organization of Entrepreneurs in Chihuahua*, University of California, Berkeley, in progress.

¹¹ See Enrique Pérez López, *Expropiación bancaria en México y desarrollo desestabilizador*, Mexico, Diana, 1987.

¹² Interview with Guillermo Pérez, President of Canaco in Chihuahua in 1986. Francisco Barrio said that although the nationalization of the banks did not affect his pocket, "it affected me psychologically. I was angered by López Portillo's attack against the business community". Interview with Francisco Barrio, July 6, 1991.

¹³ Edward Gibson, "Conservative Parties and Democratic Politics: Core Constituencies, Coalition-Building, and the Latin American Electoral Right", paper presented at the XXVI Latin American Studies Association International Congress, Washington D.C., April 4-6, 1991, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ See Rubén Lau, "Crisis y distensión electoral 1980-1990", *Noesis* 4, January-June, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1990. See also Brigida García, *Desarrollo económico y absorción de fuerza de trabajo en México 1950-1980*, El Colegio de México, 1988. She argues that the number of autonomous entrepreneurs has increased in the Northwest more than in other regions of the country.

¹⁵ Besides receiving a technical education, at the Tecnológico, entrepreneurs learned "entrepreneurial ideology". Interview with Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, Mexico City, March, 1991.

¹⁶ Interview with Alfonso Baeza, Chihuahua, November, 1991. The entrepreneurs in Ciudad Juárez are more linked to the United States market and are even more autonomous from the government than the entrepreneurs in Chihuahua. That explains in part why in Ciudad Juárez entrepreneurs are more radical than in Chihuahua city.

¹⁷ See Alejandra Salas-Porrás S., *Los grupos empresariales in Chihuahua (1920-1990)*, CIDE, mimeo, 1991.

¹⁸ Interview with Francisco Barrio, July 6, 1992.

¹⁹ "Eloy Vallina does not know how to talk", interview with Francisco Villarreal, a retired entrepreneurs who participated in the hunger strike against the fraud, together with Luis H. Álvarez and Manuel Oropeza. Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, July 1, 1991.

²⁰ As Gibson argues, "political parties are the most important vehicle for social coalition building in democratic politics". See Edward L. Gibson, *op. cit.*

²¹ Interview with Guillermo Vega, commercial entrepreneur and supported of the PAN in 1982. Chihuahua, February, 1992. The decision of entrepreneurs to support PAN has received many criticisms. According to Abraham Nuncio, entrepreneurs used PAN as an instrument to promote their class interests, which he a priori defines anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-popular. See Abraham Nuncio, *El PAN: Alternativa de poder o instrumento de la oligarquía empresarial*, Mexico, Nueva Imagen, 1986. I do not share this interpretation and argue that although it is true that big entrepreneurs adopted an "instrumental" position, many small and medium-size entrepreneurs decided to support PAN because they were convinced of the need to change the rules of the game in a more democratic direction.

²² Interview with Raymundo Gómez, Federal Deputy and former General Director of Barrio's campaign. He became President of PAN in Chihuahua in 1989. Mexico, February, 1992.

²³ Interview with Raymundo Gómez, Mexico City, November, 1991.

²⁴ Interview with Javier Corral, journalist and member of PAN. Ciudad Juárez. November 18, 1991.

²⁵ See Alberto Aziz Nassif, "Chihuahua y los límites de la democracia electoral", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* (XLIX) : 4, October-December, 1987. Chihuahua is one of the states with the highest abstentionism in the country, averaging 54%. See Pablo González Casanova (coord.), *Las elecciones in México. Evolución y perspectivas*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la UNAM, Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1985.

²⁶ Once Barrio collected signatures to be launched as an independent candidate, he called the press to announce his candidacy. Before the press arrived, they invented on the spot the name of the civic group, created a directive committee and named a president. Interview with Pablo Cuarón, President of the Frente Cívico para la Participación Ciudadana. Ciudad Juárez, July 3, 1991.

²⁷ Interview with Francisco Barrio, Ciudad Juárez, July 6, 1991.

²⁸ It can be argued that in many ways history repeated itself in 1986. In 1956 a group of entrepreneurs organized in opposition to the governor and gave their support to the PAN. A young entrepreneur with no previous history of political participation became the candidate of the PAN in 1956. His name was Luis H. Álvarez. For a brief historical review of this electoral process see Rubén Lau, *Las elecciones in Chihuahua 1983-1986*, Cuadernos del Norte (1): special issue, Chihuahua, 1989.

²⁹ These municipalities were Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Durango, Camargo, Parral, Delicias, Meoqui, and Casas Grandes.

³⁰ One of them was "frozen". PAN claimed there had been irregularities in the electoral process and succeeded in annulling the electoral results in this district. New elections were scheduled for 1985. In 1985 PAN won again, and PAN again succeeded in annulling the elections.

³¹ For a description of the electoral process and results see Alberto Aziz Nassif, "Prácticas electorales y democracia in Chihuahua", *op. cit.*; Rubén Lau, "Las elecciones in Chihuahua (1983-1986)", *op. cit.*; and Silvia Gómez Tagle, "Los adjetivos de la democracia in el caso de las elecciones de Chihuahua, 1986", *Argumentos*, UNAM-Xochimilco, June, 1987.

³² For a definition of the concept of "party's core constituency" see Edward Gibson, *op. cit.*

³³ Interview with Raymundo Gómez, General Director of Barrio's Campaign in 1983 and 1986, Mexico City, March, 1992.

³⁴ Interview with Alberto Mesta, former General Secretary of the PAN, Chihuahua, February 9, 1992. These conflicts became more damaging after the elections of 1986, when the PAN had lost all electoral contests.

³⁵ Big entrepreneurs contributed with financial resources to PAN until 1985, when the government pressed them to withdraw their support for the PAN. Due to the many economic links between these entrepreneurs and the government, as well as to the conciliatory attitude of the PRI, big entrepreneurs shifted alliances and openly declared themselves PRIistas. The two most important cases are that of Eloy Vallina, President of the Grupo Chihuahua, who declared himself a nationalist entrepreneur and a supporter of PRI after the indemnization for his bank (Comermex). Jaime Bermúdez, on the other hand, the biggest entrepreneurs in Ciudad Juárez who supported Barrio financially, was pressed by the government and PRI to run as candidate of the PRI for the municipal elections in 1986. The withdrawal of big entrepreneurs' financial support affected the party, particularly after 1986, when the momentum of the elections had passed. For although they were a minority, their contributions were very important.

³⁶ The cabinet members of Luis H. Álvarez's administration in the Municipality of Chihuahua were: Secretario del Ayuntamiento: Salvador Beltrán del Río*; Director de Obras Públicas: Luis Aguilera Marín*; Tesorero: Humberto Abud Abud*; Director de Servicios Públicos: Luis Herrera González*; Director de la Policía Municipal: Rodrigo Arriola; Oficial Mayor: Guillermo Luján Peña* and Miguel Fernández Iturriza*. In the Municipality of Ciudad Juárez, the members of Francisco Barrio's cabinet were: Secretario del Ayuntamiento: Sergio Conde Varela; Tesorero: Alfonso Murguía Valdez*; Director de Obras Públicas: José Antonio González* and Arcadio Serrano*; Director de Servicios Públicos: Rubén Raymundo Gómez*; Director de Seguridad Pública: Hector Mejía* and Rubén Raymundo Gómez*; Director de la Comunidad: Luis Monroy*. (* denotes entrepreneur.) Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, Mexico City, March 1992; and with Francisco Barrio, Mexico City, March, 1992.

³⁷ For an interesting comparative analysis of Barrio's administration with other PRIista's administration, see Gerardo M. Ordoñez Barba, *Participación política y administración municipal: El caso de Ciudad Juárez (1980-1988)*, Master's Thesis, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Maestría in Desarrollo Regional, 1990.

³⁸ See Rubén Lau, "Las elecciones en Chihuahua (1983-1988)", *op. cit.*

³⁹ Interview with Alberto Mesta, Chihuahua, February, 1992.

⁴⁰ A similar situation took place in Sonora and Nuevo León. See Graciela Guadarrama, "Entrepreneurs and Politics: Businessmen in Electoral Contests in Sonora and Nuevo León, July 1985", in Arturo Alvarado Mendoza, *Electoral Patterns and Perspectives in Mexico*, Monograph series 22, Center for US-Mexico Studies, La Jolla California, 1987.

⁴¹ Rubén Lau, *Ibidem.*, p. 44.

⁴² The high hierarchy of the church in Chihuahua wanted to close the churches as a protest against the fraud. But the government pressed the representative of the Vatican in Mexico, who in turn successfully lobbied to stop the political mobilization of the church. See Wilfredo Campbell and Rubén Lau, "Chihuahua: La otra Iglesia", *Cuadernos del Norte* 9, April-May, Chihuahua, 1990.

⁴³ Interview with Guillermo Pérez, President of Canaco in 1986, February, 1992.

⁴⁴ Interview with Alonso Baeza, President of Coparmex in Chihuahua in 1986, Chihuahua, November, 1991.

⁴⁵ Interview with Francisco Ortiz Pinchetti, journalist, Mexico City, March, 1992.

⁴⁶ Alonso Baeza, *Información procesada*, Chihuahua, January 1987. Quoted in Rubén Lau, *Ibidem.*

⁴⁷ Many writers have espoused this interpretation. For a good exposition of this perspective see Graciela Guadarrama, *op. cit.* She also assumes that there is a more coordinated strategy: negotiation on the one hand, and pressure on the other. Due to her failure to disaggregate

entrepreneurs, she does not see the divisions within the business community, their different interests. The different forms of political behavior reveal internal division, not a cohesive strategy.

⁴⁸ Interview with Matias Mesta, Chihuahua, November, 1991.

⁴⁹ Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, President of the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional of the PAN, Mexico City, March, 1991.

⁵⁰ Interview with Patricio Martínez, Director de Administración, Gobierno de Chihuahua, November, 1991.

⁵¹ Interview with Raymundo Gómez, Mexico City, November, 1991.

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