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Dr. Hector Garcia
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Dear Dr. Hector:

My mother is mailing this letter in Corpus Christi after spending a couple of weeks with us. This is safer especially in terms of discussing my research.

Nava may return to San Luis Potosí in another month or two after two operations here and treatment for bladder cancer in Mexico City. If I had stayed in Corpus Christi, I would not have believed reports about the incredible amount of publicity Nava has recieved for the past three months. The four daily newspapers (wouldn't it be enlightening to have at least two in CC?) carry several articles weekly speculating on his possible candidacy for governor. One referred to him as "legendary," and most observers believe he would win quite easily in a fair election.

Meanwhile, I have been spending about half my time on library research. During the first three months, I have accomplished considerable research on the 1958 as well as the 1961 elections; as you may recall the government recognized Nava's victory in the former but not the latter. What I did not anticipate was the detailed information for 1961 where it now is very clear to me that the government used its overwhelming resources to brutally obstruct the development of an opposition party.

One of my goals this year was to meet the three Mexican scholars who have written on Nava. Last week I was fortunate enough to meet all three as the Frente Civico Potosino (the opposition organization here) held a series of presentations to celebrate their thirty-two years of existence. Tomás Calvillo and Carlos Martínez Assad made presentations, while Enrique Marquez Jaramillo attended one of the activities. All three were pleasant and made offers to get together. Calvillo has extended himself more by inviting me to collaborate with him on an article on Nava solicited by the Mexican political science journal. Such a venture is risky after knowing some one briefly, but it could be perhaps even more foolish to ignore such an offer.

Dr. Hector, hope all is going well. HAPPY HOLIDAYS! To avoid problems with mailmerge, I have continued this letter on the back side.

Warmest regards,

Bob Szdek

P.S. Quería mandarle una carta para explicarle lo que estoy haciendo. Saludos a su hermana.

Let me make some observations about Mexico without attempting to be judgmental. Perhaps you can understand my perspective better if you have read last week's Time with President Salinas de Gortari on the cover. The thrust of the article is that Salinas has made progress in the economic arena but has done nothing to make Mexico more democratic. I have difficulty with the article because it is written by U.S. journalists from a First World perspective. My hope is that most social scientists would recognize that the 1980s were harsh on Mexico. In fact, Mexico flirted with political instability especially with the 1988 presidential elections. My bias is in favor of democratic systems, but Mexico has had limited exposure to democracy at the local level--San Luis Potosí is an exception--and is now witnessing its first opposition governor in Baja California Norte. Understandably Salinas wants to put Mexico back on its feet economically before considering "glasnost." My perception is that as the economy improves over the 1990s [let's hope it does], then there can be more opposition at the local level, then at the state level, and then sometimes in the distant future at the national level. The Time approach seems to wonder what's wrong with Salinas because he has been in power for almost two years and he still has not make Mexico democratic. That seems absurd!

Of course, one could argue that Eastern European nations have made gigantic steps toward democratic development and so should Mexico. I think it's fair to point out that these nations do not have Mexico's demographic explosion and political culture. Moreover, let's see if the leaders of the Eastern European nations can satisfy their peoples' rising expectations.

My impression is that anti-U.S. sentiments are alive and well but perhaps not quite as visible as they were a couple of decades ago. For example, some individuals think that President Bush's activities with regard to the Mid-East situation provide another example of Yankee imperialism and lean toward supporting Saddam Hussein. Moreover, one cartoon in the newspaper showed two Mexicans wanting to fight in the Persian Gulf against the Gringos in revenge for some undocumented workers who have been killed in the U.S. Finally, at a recent, small gathering one individual began to argue that the U.S. is the most corrupt society in the world. However, we personally have been treated very well!

I'm having difficulty understanding the recent criticism in a local paper of Carlos Martinez Assad. An article on the front page of El Heraldo basically stated that he had no business accepting an offer to speak to the opposition group. The writer referred to him as a pseudo-intellectual, dishonest, ignorant of events in San Luis Potosi (and included a gratuitous attack of Calvillo and Marquez Jaramillo, among others). Of course, the writer did not listen to his presentation. In the U.S. a law suit would have already been filed, but here people are ignoring it. In closing, I hope they treat me equally and attack me viciously before the year is over because I want to be part of that academic crowd.