CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, THE STATE AND TELEVISION AS INFORMAL EDUCATION. CASE STUDY OF MEXICO.

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ENRIQUE E. SANCHEZ-RUIZ

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Principal Adviser)

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I dedicate this dissertation to Silvia and Aldo Rodrigo, to my parents, sisters and brothers.

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INTRODUCTION

The research reported in this dissertation constitutes an attempt to perform a historical-structural analysis of a socially relevant aspect of today's life in capitalist societies. The modern mass media of communication are already a normal everyday company for most individuals who live in urban settings, both in industrialized and in "developing" social formations. The media are constantly extending their reach to rural environments as well, in particullar in Third World countries.

Television, a mass communication medium that not long ago was considered a "luxury" good, is becoming available to larger and larger segments of the population even in poor countries, and so its influence is constantly extending in scope. From an extensive review of literature reported in Chapter 1, we have concluded that the commercial communication mass media, especially television, are powerful vehicles of *informal education*, with a considerable actual and potential influence on society. Hence, television is increasingly becoming a "parallel school" which, however, is not socially recognized as such. In developing countries such as Mexico, where the mode of organization of television has followed the

commercial model originally implemented in the United States, TV's "normal" task is considered to be that of providing entertainment and information, but not education, to its audiences. But, again, there is today an overwhelming amount of evidence that commercial TV is an important source of learning for people across ages, social classes, formal educational levels, etc. (although, obviously, age, formal education, etc., are important intervening and/or contextual variables that account for variations in the amount, quality and types of learning experiences from television).

The only source of income and revenue for commercial television is advertising. Thus, the fact that television operates in society as a commercial enterprise, with the principal aim of attracting and maintaining the attention of as large a number of people as possible, so that audiences can be "sold" to advertisers through the cost-per-thousand standard, while being at the same time an important source of learning experiences for those very audiences, raises questions not only of an academic character, but also of a political nature.

The main purpose of this dissertation has been to analyze, from a historical and structural perspective, the emergence and development of television in Mexico (the writer's country), in order to pinpoint what accounts for TV's predominantly commercial character, and what have been the

relationships of the medium with the process of economic development and with the State. Granted that TV is a pervasive informal educator, we were interested in bringing to light the historical and structural sources of the parallel school's "curriculum." In other words, after determining what historical actors, forces and tendencies explain the emergence of television in Mexico, our objective has been to discover: a) who have actually been the "informal educators," that is, what individuals, groups or classes have had control of the medium; b) who has benefitted from the development and expansion of TV in Mexico, and how those who have benefitted from TV's presence and its commercial nature are related with the groups and classes that have controlled and benefitted from the development process in general; and c) *what for* has been the social functioning of the medium, that is, what main functions has television fulfilled in Mexico's development process.

The theoretical and methodological view that has informed and guided the investigation is the researcher's own understanding of a dialectical, historical and structural method, briefly described in Chapter 3. Only one clarification about the approach is in order here. A dialectical approach was selected not because we think it provides ready-made answers to research questions and problems of social research. Rather, it is used because this

author considers a dialectical outlook to be a rich source of *significant questions*, regarding social relations, interaction and change. Concerning the concrete use of the approach itself, there is one important clarification to make. In the historical chapters of this dissertation it shall be apparent that the "contextual" description attempts to be rather detailed, and therefore at times it may seem longer than the usual historical contextualizations in studies that deal with a particular institution and/or process within a concrete social formation. Actually, such was the criticism from one friendly reader of the preliminary drafts of this document. However, if there is any contribution of this dissertation to the knowledge and understanding of the particular focus of study here--television in Mexico--, it should be the bringing into view of its complex, direct and indirect articulation with broader economic and political processes and structures. These processes and structures have provided not only a background, but a significant historical context, comprised by a hierarchy of determinations. The relatively long contextualizations are thus part of an approach that judges that "the concrete is concrete because it is the summing up of many determinations, thus the unity of the manifold" (Marx, 1976:31). This research is thus an attempt to show the interconnections among biography, structure and history (Mills, 1974).

Chapters 1 and 2 provide a theoretical framework for the analysis. The literature review in Chapter 1, as indicated above, shows that television and the modern media of communication are powerful vehicles of informal education. As such, the media are found to be important ideological apparatuses which participate in a hegemonic process, led by those groups and classes who have access to the ownership and control of the media. It is concluded that the media's social functioning is a potential influence for both social change and non-change, but given the structures of ownership and control of the media in capitalist societies, the media's most probable global social consequence is their contribution to the reproduction of the existing mode of production and domination structures. In Chapter 2 the economic and political dimensions of television are spelled out. A brief account of the Marxian theory of capital accumulation shows the potential contribution of TV as an advertising medium to the shortening of the circulation time of the circuit of capital, contributing through advertising to the realization of the value of commodities in the market. This applies in particular to the sector that produces consumption goods. Given the broad participation of the Mexican State in the economy in general and in TV in particular--the State owns the second largest *commercial* TV network in Mexico--, a section is devoted to current conceptualizations of the

capitalist State. Here, the mass media are found to be power resources, which help certain groups--including the State--to maintain hegemony over society. Another section of Chapter 2 describes recent contributions to the understanding of the process of internationalization of capital and capitalist "associated-dependent development." The role of the media, advertising and their relations with the expansion of transnational corporations followed by transnational advertising agencies, are touched upon in this section. It is found generally that television and the media are part and parcel of the process of associated-dependent development, within which the main motors and beneficiaries are transnational and national capital, and the State.

The historical analysis is presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 describes the emergence and consolidation of radio-broadcasting in Mexico, which occurred relatively parallel to the consolidation of the military-bureaucratic faction that gained power in the aftermath of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Economic and cultural influences from the United States operated in the establishment of radio as a commercial medium in the 1920s. This set an important precedent for the emergence of TV in 1950. The most important Mexican radio networks emerged in the 1930s from the association of a Mexican entrepeneur with the North American radio networks, with the State's sanction. State direct

participation in educational and cultural broadcasting began since radio's early days, but radio consolidated itself as an advertising vehicle, assuring the continuity of its commercial character.

Chapter 5 describes the emergence and development of television in Mexico, from 1950 to the 1970s. The Alemán administration contemplated in the late 1940s the existing alternative TV models (non-commercial BBC-type and commercial, advertising-based U.S.-type). The chapter shows that the decision in favor of the commercial model was the "most probable;" not only because of particular interests influencing immediately the decision, but also because the historical tendencies favored the establishment in Mexico of a U.S.-type system of TV: a) economic and cultural influence of the United States after World War II; b) growth of the advertising industry in Mexico with direct participation of U.S.-based advertising agencies, which followed the expansion of transnational corporations; and c) the industrialization process itself, which fostered the advertising function of television, and its prospective profitability. Chapter 5 shows also the tendency towards monopolization of the TV industry since its first years. The industry is increasingly controlled by a small group of individuals and families, who are part of the most important economic groups in Mexico. State participation is shown to have been favorable to the

expansion and monopolization of TV, even after the State itself entered into commercial television in 1972. The policies and actions of the Mexican State towards television are shown to have been consonant with its general economic policies and actions. The results of the development process fostered by the Mexican State are income-concentrating, and tending towards a greater integration of Mexico, in a subordinate way, to the world system of capitalism. Thus, directly or indirectly the beneficiaries of the expansion of television and of the development process in general are national and transnational capital and the State. The Chapter ends with a description of the Televisa corporation, which not only controls most of the television market in Mexico, but also the Spanish-speaking TV market in the United States and has heavy investments in most other mas media in Mexico. The owners of Televisa participate in many other economic interests, and are linked directly to the most important national and transnational economic groups operating in Mexico.

Chapter 6 analyzes the "right to information" issue and debate which arose from the "political reform" enacted by the López Portillo administration from 1977 to 1982. An amendment to Article 6 of the Constitution, which now guarantees both freedom of speech and the right to information, prompted several political groups and factions

to question the undemocratic structure of ownership and control of the media. After several public and private debates and political maneuvres, in which Televisa participated directly and indirectly, it was demonstrated that private capital was politically stronger than ever, with the help of the dominant factions within the Mexican State. The political reform and the right of information issue, it is suggested, were actually part of a "preemptive reform," geared towards incorporating symbolically the opposition into the public political debate, without having any real influence in the decision-making processes, or promoting change in any significant way. These events have translated into the reinforcement of the commercial character of television and into the corroboration and strengthening of the political power of the groups that control this medium of informal education.

It is concluded that the original and continued commercial character of television in Mexico, the medium's expansion and concentration of its control, are explained by the needs of national and transnational capital accumulation, with the mediation and participation of the Mexican State. An important contradiction is found between the growing social reach, influence and significance of this communication and informal education medium, and its control, appropriation and exploitation by a few.

As to the prospects for change, it is concluded that in the short term it is difficult to expect any significant change in television's structure of ownerhip and control. Thus, it is difficult to expect the Mexican TV system to serve other interests than those of the political and economic groups who control it today. The growing political and economic power of the Televisa corporation, and the support it receives from the State, make unlikely a shift of State policies towards a greater and better integration of the formal, nonformal and informal education systems in Mexico.

CHAPTER 1

Informal Education, Hegemony and the Mass Media.

All processes of education are processes of human communication, in its broadest sense, as processes of transmission of information. It is not clear, on the other hand, whether all processes of communication are educational. Here we shall deal with only one subset of social communication processes, namely, mass communication. In this chapter we attempt to demonstrate, through a review of available relevant literature, that the mass communication media, especially television, are today important vehicles of *informal education* both in industrialized and developing countries.

It is not unproblematic to define "education," which can be perceived in the relatively recent extensions of the term (King, 1982; La Belle, 1982), through distinctions between *formal* education, that is, the school system and its traditional institutions; *nonformal* education, or education out of the school system, but which shares with the former the traits of systematicity and purposefulness; and

informal education, which can be defined as:

> The lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insight from daily experiences and exposure to the environment--at home, at work, at play; from the example and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to radio or viewing films or television. Generally, informal education is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning--including that of even a highly 'schooled' person (Coombs with Manzor,1974:8).

Informal education, thus, encompasses what Schramm et al (1961) called "incidental learning," which was defined in relation to television viewing as "the learning that takes place when a viewer goes to television for entertainment and stores up certain items of information without seeking them" (ibid:75). But it also refers to the situation when the viewer goes to the medium for entertainment or information *with* the conscious desire of learning something.

With the development of the new technologies and associated social systems of information production, circulation, processing and consumption, traditional institutions like the school system are losing their centrality and relative importance in their functions of knowledge generation, accumulation and transmission, and cultural production and reproduction (McBride et al,1980:31-87; Jussawala and Lamberton,1982). A subset of new informational institutions, which has been present for some time now, comprises the mass

communication media. Of these, television is recognized as the medium that has expanded most rapidly, and exerted relatively more social influence than the other media. UNESCO's International Comission on Communication Problems, commenting on the educational importance of the mass media, concludes:

> It is difficult to deny the educational impact--and not only pedagogic in the strict sense--of the media of information and communication in general, even when the content of the message is not of an educational nature. The educational and socializing action inherent to mass communication implies that it should respond to the greatest possible extent to the development needs of society, and that it be considered a *social good* (McBride et al,1980:57;our emphasis).

This chapter reviews some of the most relevant available theorizing and empirical research on the "media of informal education," not only in search of support for the general thesis that the mass media indeed constitute today's "parallel school." But we shall also attempt to find connections to broader social processes, determinants and consequences, some of which shall be explored historically in this dissertation, for the case of Mexican television. Although research and theorizing from the industrialized countries are predominant in sections 1.1 and 1.2, the discussion focuses on the similarities, relations and implications that such findings and conceptualizations may have with respect to Latin American reality. Similarities and relations are to be expected, given a common

political-economic general context, the capitalist mode of production, and a relatively shared global cultural context--"Western" civilization and culture. This global economico-political and cultural context is today being reshaped in its "new universality" with the contribution of the media under scrutiny here, under the "leadership" of one nation (U.S.) and its transnational appendages.

Section 1.1 reviews the recent Marxist contributions on the issue we are studying. Section 1.2 analyzes the contributions of the empiricist research tradition, mainly generated in the United States. Curiously enough, we find a *relative convergence* in the recent findings and conceptualizations of the latter research tradition towards the general hypotheses and theories of the former tradition. Section 1.3 reviews some of the available literature on the media in Latin America, from the perspective of their educational consequences. The general convergence is again evident in this section. Section 1.4 includes a summary and some reflections on the inevitably *political* nature of the issue.

1.1. *Ideology, Hegemony and Informal Education Through Media Messages.*

A non-reductionistic Marxian perspective to the analysis of the social effects of the media departs from the assumption that the answer to the question "What is it that the commercial mass media produce?," is *not* a uni-dimensional and non-problematic answer. One can immediately think of "messages," for example, as *the* product of the media. However, from a historico-structural perspective, the "correct" answer depends on the concrete point of view and/or the level of abstraction-generality adopted. Let us very briefly clarify this.

If the interest of the researcher is an ideologico-cultural analysis, then media output, those messages "produced" by the media constitute "social discourses"(Veron,1976-a;1980), conceptualized as bearers or carriers (or, rather, "elicitors") of "social significations," "meanings," "sense"(Hall,1977;1982; Williamson,1978). Such social significations are produced from within particular codes (Eco,1978; Veron,1976-b; Hall, 1977), some of which are the "dominant" codes by virtue of their social prevalence over alternative codifications. When such social discourses reach the public sphere and are "decoded" and incorporated to the social processes of communication-signification, the global

social effect is part of an "ideological process" (Veron,1976-a), consisting of the imposition of particular "definitions-constructions of reality" (especially *social* reality), with concrete pragmatic, or praxeological consequences.

From a *political* perspective, which is almost inseparable analytically from the former viewpoint, the mass media produce *consensus* and *legitimation* of the prevailing economic and political power structures through their ideological functioning (Schiller,1974; Nordenstreng,1977; Golding, 1981), thereby participating in a "hegemonic process"(Williams, 1977).

Finally, if the researcher's interest centers on the *economic* consequences of the media, then the "culture industry's" products are "commodities." It is, however, problematic to define such commodities. Newspapers and magazines are bought and sold directly in the market, but, for example, network TV's source of income and revenues is the sale of *audiences* to advertisers (Smythe, 1981). Because TV programs (in this case) attract the audiences' attention, prepare them for the advertisers' persuasive messages, and then sell those same potential or actual audiences to advertisers through the "cost per thousand" criterion, those audiences could actually constitute the

real product of the media. Furthermore, at a higher level of generality, through advertising the media produce *consumption*, and therefore the realization of the value of consumer commodities in the market, thus contributing to the expanded reproduction of capital (Arriaga,1980; Esteinou,1980; Smythe,1981).

Within the Marxian perspective, the various functions of the media are considered as interrelated and interdependent, even though different concrete analyses may favor one or another particular structural viewpoint or level of abstraction. The literature reviewed in this section is centered on the ideologico-cultural perspective, but the political and economic determinations and consequences of the media's functioning in capitalist societies are always implicit.

The usual point of departure for research and analysis from this perspective is what British sociologist Peter Golding(1981:63) calls the "key problem of modern sociology," that is, the contradictory co-presence of economic, political and cultural inequalities, and their acceptance by the vast majority of those "worst affected" by them in contemporary capitalist societies:

> Inegalitarian societies continue to reproduce a social order which is not merely tolerated by those receiving least in the distribution of material and cultural rewards, but which also receives their loyalty and

acclaim(ibid).

The explanation to this contradiction centers on the "hegemonic process," in which the media are seen to fulfill an important function. But let us introduce first the educational and "cognitive" component of this function.

The first great cultural function of the modern media, asserts Stuart Hall, is the "provision and the selective construction of social *knowledge*, of social imagery, through which we perceive the 'worlds', the 'lived realities' of others, and imaginarily reconstruct their lives and ours into some intelligible 'world of the whole', some 'lived totality'"(Hall,1977:340-1). We know today that in modern societies most of the knowledge and information that people obtain and use is not received through direct experience, and not even through direct communication from first-hand participants in events or processes (political, scientific, etc.). Instead, this knowledge is usually arrived at through "vicarious experiences"(Moles and Zeltman, 1975:119; Gitlin,1979-b:11), via especially the school and the mass media. For example, most people know about current economic and political issues and events through the media (even if we account for social diffusion networks, the usual original diffusive source is the media). Thus, the communication media constitute today the principal "source of information about,

and explanations of, social and political processes"(Murdock and Golding,1973:206). This process of selection of "facts" and their "semantization"--that is, the provision of social significance and their codification through some signifying medium (Veron,1976-b)--,this "social construction" (Berger and Luckmann,1967) of social and political processes happens not only through news and explicitly informational programs and messages. It also occurs, critics of the media say, through the entertainment media output (Mattelart,1977), and has social effects accross social classes, ages, etc. (Barnouw,1978:104-5; Bennet,1982). The following quotation aptly summarizes the conception of the media as the most pervasive social educators in present day capitalist societies:

> The media bring a manufactured public world into private space. People find themselves relying on the media for concepts and symbols, for images of heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, even for a language. The media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness, by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity. They name the world's parts, they certify reality *as* reality--and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, those same certifications limit the terms of effective opposition. To put it simply: the mass media have become core systems for the production and distribution of ideology (Gitlin, 1979-b:11-2).

In this perspective the media "impose" upon the public a certain world-view (Mattelart,1976:24). But media messages provide information not only about world events and social

issues. They also convey values, attitudes and behavior patterns, which are learned and imitated, and which constitute the so-called "mass culture," because of their massifying, uniforming influences on the public at large (Pasquali,1963:40-54). "Clearly--indicates Peter Golding--the apparatus of cultural manufacture and distribution is such as to provide explanations, symbols and rhetoric which make the social order appear both inevitable and just" (1981:63).

Now, the ideology that permeates media messages does not *necessarily* emerge out of the "malign design" of a unified "ruling class". It is obvious that, in the last analysis, for example editorial policies are set by those who own and control the media, but the source of the media ideology should be seen as coming out of several factors: the concrete--and complex--patterns and processes of socialization and profesionalization within the culture industry itself (ibid); from its internal politics and, most importantly, from the nature of the external political conjunctures. Also deserving of atention are the structural determinants which define the media as *commercial enterprises* that are geared to produce profits for their owners, fulfilling more global economic functions (cfr. Chapter 2). This means that the media's function of ideologico-cultural transmission and reproduction cannot be adequately analyzed if attention is not paid to their various

levels of functioning in capitalist societies. That is, the "logic" of production in the culture industry is historically and structurally determined by its several levels of functioning:

> As the making of programmes for profit in a known market; as a channel for advertising; and as a cultural and political form directly shaped by and dependent on the norms of a capitalist society, selling both consumer goods and a 'way of life' based on them, in an ethos that is at once locally generated, by domestic capitalist interests and authorities, and internationally organized, as a political project, by the dominant capitalist power (Raymond Williams 1977a:41).

These functions are conceptualized, hence, as the structural sources of the specific codes, "frames," and "working ideologies" that generate the ideological content of media output in the concrete practices of media professionals (Hall, 1977:343; 1982; Gitlin, 1979-a,b; Veron, 1976-b; Kellner,1982). The former is the source of the structural link between the production and consumption of mass culture-ideology through the media, according to Murdock and Golding, who have attempted to elaborate a framework for the analysis of the media from the vantage point of political economy:

> The range of interpretive frameworks, the ideas, concepts, facts and arguments which people use to make sense of their lives, are to a great extent dependent on media output, both fictional and non-fictional. Yet the frameworks offered are necessarily articulated with the nexus of interests producing them, and in this sense all information is ideology. To describe and explicate these

> interests is not to suggest a deterministic relationship, but to map the limits within which the production of mediated culture can operate (1973:226).

The articulation of concrete interests with and within the media explains the apparent contradiction of the media appearing as powerful social influences, capable of initiating and fostering many kinds of social change, and their *global effect*, of supporting and reproducing the *status quo*, i.e., the sustenance of the fundamental social relations in capitalist societies (Szecsko,1981:14). The media's strong social impact is evident in, for example, the effectiveness of advertising in inducing new habits in developing countries, such as persuading mothers to switch from breast feeding to bottle feeding (Janus,1981; Roncagliolo and Janus,1980). The other side of the coin appears in the review of the papers on Mass Media and Social Change presented to the Ninth World Congress of Sociology, in which the critical perspective predominated:

> The papers provide us with a rather pessimistic view. Specifiically, while they may not be representative either of the different mass-communication systems of the world today, or of the various trends of research, one is struck by their emphasis on the equilibrium-sustaining, even conservative role of mass communication (Szecsko,1981:14)

Curiously enough, most of these papers conceptualize the social effects of the media as "powerful" (Katz and Szecsko,1981). But, again, for this research tradition, the

contradiction is only an apparent one.

"By virtue of the culture industry's ideology--indicates Theodor Adorno--, conformism substitutes autonomy and consciousness" (1973:76). In this line of analysis, then, the media are considered ideological apparatuses, whose principal global social function is to *contribute* to the maintenance of a particular economico-political order, under the hegemony of a class or class alliance (Sallach, 1974; Hall, 1977; 1982); Gitlin, 1979-a; 1979-b; Curran, 1982).

The former considerations lead us to the "hegemonic process" in which the mass media of informal education participate. The "key problem" of modern sociology which we mentioned above (coexistence of inequalities and their acceptance by those worst affected) is addressed from this perspective in terms of how those at the top of the social, economic and political ladder exercise "hegemony": "...the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent" (Gramsci, 1971:80n). This is a first approximation to Antonio Gramsci's concept, which encompasses what he called "social hegemony", i.e., spontaneous consent of the masses, and "political government", i.e.,legal repression by the State's coercive apparatus (ibid:12). Thus, "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination'

and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'" (ibid:57). Hall et al (1977:63), paraphrasing Gramsci, define hegemony as the capacity of a "dominant bloc" (cfr. Poulantzas, 1980:123ss) to actively "...conform economic, civil and cultural life, educational, religious and other institutions..." through the attainment of a relative "cultural social unity" (which recalls the "mass culture" concept, in its aspect of massification of consciousness):

> ...the importance of the 'cultural aspect,' even in practical (collective) activity. An historical act can only be performed by 'collective man,' and this presupposes the attainment of a 'cultural-social' unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded toghether with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world (Gramsci, op cit:349).

Gramsci was aware of the ideological complexity and multiplicity within a hegemonic relationship, as shown, for example, in his analyses of philosophy and "common sense" (ibid:325-51). Commentators on his work, such as Raymond Williams, also indicate that was the case:

> The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that while by definition it is always dominant, it is never total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society (Williams,1977:113).

Todd Gitlin (1980) carried out a rather thorough historical analysis of the complexity and contradictoriness of the hegemonic process in the United States, in relation to the

New Left movement in the sixties, the war protests and media coverage (especially TV networks'). A non reductionistic political analysis must account for the fact that "hegemony" is never sustained by one single, unified "ruling class," but "by a particular conjunctural alliance of class fractions; thus the content of dominant ideology shall reflect this complex interior formation of the dominant classes" (Hall,1977:333). The theoretical basis for this conception of hegemony stems from the oft-quoted passage from *The German Ideology*:

> ...the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that thereby, *generally speaking/*_ the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (Marx and Engels,1977:64)

Because of space limitations we cannot elaborate here on the specific structures of ownership and control of the media in capitalist societies (cfr. Compaine, 1979; Schenkel, 1974; Beltrán and Cardona, 1980; Sánchez Ruiz, 1981). But it obvious that, in such social formations, "ownership and control of the mass media, like all other forms of property, is available *to those with capital*" (Schiller,1976:4; our emphasis).

* our emphasis attempts to show a non-reductionistic approach

Raymond Williams (1977), who has strongly emphasized the processual, contradictory and changing dimensions of "hegemony," points out that it is, "in the strongest sense, a 'culture'," but goes beyond this concept in its "insistence on relating the 'whole social process' to specific distributions of power and influence." In this perspective, then, the hegemonic block, by virtue of its access to the means of "mental production," is the class or class alliance that possesses the capacity to "*define* the parameters of legitimate discussion and debate over alternative beliefs, values and world views" (Sallach,1974:166).

The hegemonic relation, in this sense, can only be realized through social processes in which the subordinate groups receive and internalize--to a greater or lesser extent--the elements of that complex of meanings, social significations and values which, in their contradictory unity, conform the dominant conception of reality. Such is an educational process, in Gramsci's words:

> Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations (1971:350).

The last lines of the quotation point towards what is called today "cultural dependency" or "cultural imperialism"

(Dagnino, 1973; Carnoy, 1974; 1980; Schiller, 1976), whose determinations we shall describe in Chapter 2.

In sum, the critical perspective that we have briefly summarized views the media as powerful ideologico-cultural forces. Some authors explicitly refer to this phenomenon in terms of "informal education;" for most of them, the terms of the analyses permit an interpretation of the ideological and hegemonic process in educational terms. The mass media of informal education thus are considered "hegemonic apparatuses," which, being in the hands of a small fraction of the population--that fraction which *can afford* to possess and control them--, exert their influence over the majorities. It is found that, under certain circumstances, and in the short run, the media are able to provoke and foster social change of some scope. Thus, the media's effects are conceptualized as *socially* powerful (even accounting for potentially counteracting psychological and microsocial factors). The main global effect however, given the hegemonic structure in which the media participate, is their contribution to the maintenance and reproduction of the fundamental social relations of capitalist societies, relations of exploitation and domination.

1.2. Learning from the Media: The Empiricist View."

This section reviews some of the literature produced from within the empiricist tradition of "communication research" on the issue of our interest. We shall not attempt here to make a systematic critical comparison of the two dominant research traditions in social science, so a word of caution is in order. The two perspectives depart from very different epistemological, ideological and theoretico-methodological assumptions about society and their objects of study. Our interest here is to report our finding of their *relative convergence* of conclusions on the issue of the media as agents of informal education, but given the differences in focus and levels of analysis between the two traditions, our own conclusions have to be taken as merely tentative and still acritical. However, we think this is a good first effort and approximation to a dialectical integration ("negation of the negation") of the two approaches.

Unlike the Marxian perspective, which approaches society from a structural, historical and critical viewpoint, the empiricist tradition focuses more on the psychological dimensions of the "process and effects of mass communication." The usual units of measurement and analysis are the *individual* social actors, even when institutional

aspects or aggregate "behaviors" are studied. The theoretical efforts are rather timid within this paradigm, which one researcher recognizes is still "long on empirical technique and short on thinking" (Roberts and Bachen, 1982:68. This relative lack of theoretical integration makes it difficult to synthesize the existing vast but rather scattered research. However, there actually are dominant and identifiable trends in conceptualization, and we shall rely here on several recent efforts to summarize this type of literature (e.g., Chaffee, 1977; McQuail, 1977; Katz, 1980; Murray and Kippax, 1981; Blumler and Gurevich, 1982; Roberts and Bachen, 1982; National Institute of Mental Health, 1983). The overwhelming majority of empirical studies referred to in this section have been performed in the United States. Let us see what this tradition contributes to our understanding of the "media of informal education."

During the last three decades, research on media effects in the United States and its spheres of academic influence was guided by a general assumption, the "law of minimal consequences" (McCombs and Shaw, 1977:4; Roberts and Bachen, 1982). This assumption originated in the 1940 research by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1960), in which the mediating role of interpersonal relations and selective perception was discovered (Noelle-Neumann, 1981:137-8). Joseph Klapper's (1960) influential book, *The Effects of*

Mass Communication, reviewing the research findings of the previous two decades, strengthened the assumption with its major conclusions:

1. Mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.
2. These mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but *not the sole cause*, in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions (Klapper, 1960:8; our emphasis).

Since the media do function amid a complex of social forces and factors of diverse nature, such conclusions seem appropriate. They even represent a step in conceptual sophistication, compared to the previous mechanistic and simplifying conception that saw omnipotent and socially isolated mass media "injecting" persuasive messages to a homogeneous, defenseless mass of isolated individuals, who would react immediately to their impact (De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975:133-61). Still, important conceptual *and* empirical distinctions were lacking, such as short- versus long-term and cumulative "effects," individual, psychological effects versus *social* effects, etc. Society continued to be conceptualized as a mere "sum" of individual behaviors. Even with the introduction of the functionalist theory of society to communication research in the fifties (Wright, 1975), with its important distinction between *manifest* and *latent* functions, the intentionality

behind media messages continued to be sought in the immediate environment of the producers (or "gatekeepers"), without regard to the structural interplay of interests and determinations over the "freedom of speech" or expression. What is important to point out here is that the "minimal consequences" assumption became an apologetic research program (to the delight of media controllers, recognizes Elihu Katz, 1980:124), rebutting criticisms to the "culture industry" from some Marxists (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977), and the elitist critiques of those who saw the "degradation of culture" with the coming of so called "mass culture" (cfr.Eco, 1969). In the light of research findings that denied or relativized the media's capacity to produce immediate, radical changes, in for example, persuasive campaigns, the historical, cummulative and macrosocial dimensions of media effects and social functioning were forgotten for some time.

Beginning in the mid-seventies, however, the limited effects model began to yield to the return of the "powerful media" view (Chaffee, 1977; Noelle-Neumannn, 1981; Roberts and Bachen, 1982). Let us see what this recent literature has to say, begining with the research on children and the media.

A specialist on the effects of the mass media on children has written that "perhaps the most impressive finding in the

research on children and the media is the enormous amount of learning that appears to take place, even at early ages"(Roberts, 1974:199). Similarly, one of the conclusions reached by Arenas (1975:85), after a rather extensive review of research findings on learning from television is that, in general, "children are prone to learn anything that TV presents as real," with the exception of cartoons, which they clearly recognize as fantasy. However, Quarfoth (1979:211) reports that children from four to fourteen had considerable difficulties explaining whether or not a TV program reflected real life. Comstock (1975:26) indicates that young persons often describe TV dramas as reflecting reality with accuracy, and points out that such a perception is more frequent among disadvantaged and black children. Schramm and Roberts assert that fantasy content also conveys a good deal of information that is learned by children: "Dramas, mysteries, and situation comedies include information about customs, norms, attitutes, and role behavior. This material about what to expect from the social world are facts which children need to--and do--learn"(1971:608). There is evidence, moreover, that "aggressive behavior has a high probability of being learned" (ibid:608), because the portrayal of aggression fulfills many of the conditions for incidental learning (cfr.Comstock, 1975; Roberts and Bachen, 1982:62-4). It has been found that heavy TV consumption may be symptomatic of a state of psychological distress (Comstock, 1975:27); in

situations of frustration, anxiety or insecurity in children and adolescents, "the media, particularly those stressing fantasy, offer a readily available escape. Numerous studies indicate it is an avenue often taken" (Roberts, 1974:193).

There is, overall, a vast literature and ample evidence on the role of the media as socialization agents (Himmelweit, 1977; Gordon and Verna, 1978:13-5; National Institute of Mental Health, 1983:29-30). Two areas of socialization are of particular interest. On the issue of "political socialization," it has been found that "not surprisingly, most children's introduction to the world of politics and public affairs comes though the media" (Roberts and Bachen, 1982:35). Atkin and Ganz (1980:355) conclude that children learn from the media, especially from television, "cognitive and affective orientations towards political actors, issues, and institutions," both from entertainment and informational contents (ibid; cfr. Rubin, 1976:51-60; Kraus and Davis, 1978).

The authors of an ambitious study on consumer socialization concluded that "there is little doubt that commercials motivate children to buy products or to ask their parents to buy products for them" (Ward, Wackman and Wartella, 1977:168). According to the same scholars, children either spend, or influence the spending of, about 20 billion dollars

every year in the U.S. (ibid:30). Research indicates that children, especially the younger ones, are typically unable to distinguish "commercials and the economic motive behind them from ordinary program content" (Comstock, 1975:27; Roberts and Bachen, 1982:58-60).

There is almost no empirical research attempting to trace media exposure and effects through time, from infancy to adulthood; but one of the major projects of this type found a *general* pattern of continuity, and "functional equivalence" in effects and preferences (Himmelweit, 1977).

It is worthwhile to quote at length what the pioneer of research on children and the media in the U.S. and tireless empirical researcher, Wilbur Schramm (1973:163), thinks of children learning from the media:

> They learn facts, they learn attitudes, they learn how people act and what is expected of them in many social situations. They model no small part of their behavior on what they see on the tube. They learn both directly and indirectly: indeed, they pick up a startling amount of incidental information from media content that is intended to entertain rather than inform. For many children entertainment media (especially television) provide a kind of social map. They learn what the distant world is like, who and what is worth looking at, what kind of behavior is valued, and this map is extremely vivid because children give themselves to entertainment media.

But not only children and adolescents are susceptible to the influence and teachings the media. Let us take a brief look

at what this literature says about the influence of the "parallel school" on adults.

According to Wilbur Schramm, two things are known with certainty on the effects of the mass media: first, that they reorder the leisure time of the people, because of the sheer fact that they absorb a great amount of time. On the other hand, adds Schramm (1973:254), "if we can confidently say that we know a second thing about mass media effects, it is that people learn an enormous amount from them." McCombs and Shaw (1977:5), explaining what they called the "agenda-setting function" of the media, indicate how in their opinion this "function" takes place through learning processes:

> Not only do they learn factual information about public affairs and what is happening in the world, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis placed on it by the mass media. Considerable evidence has accumulated that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality as they go about their day to day task of choosing and displaying news" (ibid.).

That is, explains McCombs (1981:210), the basic idea behind the agenda-setting hypothesis "asserts a direct, causal relationship between the content of the media agenda and subsequent public perception of what the important issues of the day are." The nature of this causal relationship is stated in terms of "direct learning by members of the public

from the media agenda" (ibid.). Hence, the agenda setting function of the media is said to be based on their "ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking" (McCombs and Shaw, 1977:5). The appearance of this research program in the early seventies spurred the proliferation of studies following the basic hypothesis and, even though problems have been found in the lack of theoretical and methodological integration of most of these studies (Becker, 1982), their general findings and conclusions support the original idea (Kraus and Davis, 1978:213-22; Murray and Kippax, 1981:618; Roberts and Bachen, 1982:44-8). Now, most of the research on agenda-setting has been centered on the informative contents of the media--specifically in news--, and on the short-term influence of the media's agenda on the public's agenda. Let us review first what the research says about other contents of the media, and then about longer-term "cultivation of beliefs."

There is ample evidence that people, especially from lower socio-economic strata, search for knowledge and information via the mass media, "even with what appears on its face to be purely entertainment programming" (Chaffee, 1977:215). In the times of "radio research" in the fourties it was found that some women searched--and found--from radio serials prescriptions for living and solving their personal problems

(Herzog, 1979:25-33). Furthermore, radio soap operas taught them how to express themselves in particular situations, and these members of the audience sought in the soap operas "recipes" to advise others on how to solve their problems, based on the serials' stories (ibid:27-8). Similar findings have appeared in research on TV soap operas (Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes, 1981).

A constant in research findings is that people of low income and education, as well as racial minorities in the U.S., usually look at TV as their principal source of information (Schramm, 1973:254-62; Roberts and Bachen, 1982:40-3), *but* that they also look at TV in search of behavior models (Arenas, 1975:87). When interviewed, indicates Wright (1975:150), they are more likely than white middle class persons to agree that "television shows how other people solve the same problems that they have, and that they can learn a good deal from television." Thus, the sheer fact of belonging to a particular social class seems to produce a differencial media impact.

Another fruitful research program that emerged in the seventies centers around the "knowledge gap." The "knowledge gap" hypothesis and research program that evolved during the last decade in the United States does not have any direct relation with Basil Bernstein's (1975) theory and empirical

findings on how the linguistic codes spoken by children of different social classes explain differences in their learning gains, which increase the probability of their reproducing the existing class structure. Other unrelated theories, which deal with knowledge and information gaps in society, are that of Pierre Bourdieu (1979) on "cultural capital," Jürgen Habermas' (1979) theory of "systematically distorted communication" (cfr. also Mueller, 1973), and the Scandinavian research program on "information gaps in society" (Ekecrantz, 1976; Nowak, 1977). However, the research findings bear remarkable conceptual relations, and are still waiting for an adequate theoretical integration. As originally formulated, the knowledge gap hypothesis asserts that

> As the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socio-economic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase" (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1970:159-60).

This hypothesis has received support from research in several different settings, for example, children watching Sesame Street in the U.S. (Cook et al, 1975), and in Mexico (Diaz-Guerrero and Holtzman, 1974; Diaz-Guerrero et al, 1976); in family planning campaigns in Venezuela (McNelly et al, 1976), agricultural diffusion in India (Galloway, 1977), etc. (cfr.Rogers, 1974; Rogers and Danziger, 1975). Attempts

have been made to conceptually improve the model (Katzman, 1973; 1974), establishing contingent conditions for its operation (Ettema and Kline, 1976), and searching for ways to counteract the gaps in applied campaigns (Shingi and Mody, 1976). One critique and attempt to reformulate the knowledge gaps research program centers on the assumption that *interest* in information is the crucial variable that accounts for the existence and broadening of the knowledge and information gaps (Genova and Greenberg, 1979). However, such a critique, even if based on accurate empirical findings, misses the point of the *sociological* relevance of the gap theory--and phenomenon--, by explaining it in psychological, individualistic terms. In this sense, the Scandinavian research program on information gaps adequately integrates to its analysis the differential in *subjectively felt* need for information, and the *observable* need for information (Nordenstreng, 1977:273-5; Nowak, 1977:235-7). The empirical findings, being similar to those described before, include the "interest" variable *explained* by a group of variables associated to the social position of the subjects; thus, those materially and informationally better off express their need for more information, while the materially and informationally disadvantaged do not feel such a need. Hence, as a sociological fact, it is the class structure, and not psychological dispositions, that explains the gaps and the "production of systemic ignorance"

(Ekecrantz, 1976). The original group of researchers that established the gaps hypothesis in the U.S. have recently pointed out that the knowledge gaps phenomenon is intimately related to social power and the reinforcement of existing power structures (Olien, Donohue and Tichenor, 1983).

Another line of empirical study of media effects, considered along with the agenda-setting approach as one of the most fruitful to emerge in the last decade (Murray and Kippax, 1981:618), is "cultivation analysis." George Gerbner and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania have been performing annual content analyses of representative samples of U.S. television programming, as well as yearly sample surveys of TV audiences, since 1967. The main conclusion of such content analyses has been that U.S. commercial television transmits a very high proportion of violence in its programming, and in general a description of a social world that is mean and egoistic (Gerbner et al, 1981:509-10). The basic premise of cultivation analysis is that "television images cultivate the dominant tendencies of our culture's beliefs, ideologies, and world views" (ibid: 513), because TV is the central and most pervasive mass medium in North American society. Remark the researchers:

> We have found that amount of exposure to television is an important indicator of the strength of its contributions to ways of thinking and acting. For heavy viewers, television monopolizes and subsumes other

> sources of information, ideas, and consciousness. Thus, we have suggested that the more time one spends "living" in the world of television, the more likely one is to report perceptions of social reality which can be traced to (or are congruent with) television's most persistent representations of life and society (ibid.).

The general results of the surveys show that heavy viewers tend to perceive a "cruel" social world: they tend to manifest more distrust of other persons, more fear of the world in general, an exaggerated fear of being involved in violence and more dependence upon established authorities (Weaver and Buddenbaum, 1980:371). "The cultivation analysis--assert Gerbner and coleagues--provides further strong support for the theory of pervasive cultivation of mistrust, apprehension, danger, and exaggerated 'mean world' perceptions"(op.cit.:524).

We cannot here describe the theoretical elaborations, or the research designs, which given the task have been--and increasingly become--complex. Basically, the long term consequence of the cultivation of TV images in the minds of the viewers, the authors think, is what they call "mainstreaming": "The mainstream can be thought of as a relative commonality of outlooks and values that exposure to features and dynamics of the television world tends to cultivate" (Gerbner et al, 1982:102). Analysis has begun on the cultivation of political images, and the first results tend to show that heavy viewers, while designating themselves

politically moderate, tend to hold opinions and views on the very far right of the spectrum about concrete issues (ibid:108-26). That is, self-designated "moderate" heavy viewers tend to be more conservative in their actual political opinions and attitudes than self-designated "conservative" light viewers. That seems to be the political "mainstreaming" process on the U.S. public.

An analysis of the empirical evidence on the impact of TV in 16 industrialized countries indicates that, in the light of the findings on "agenda-setting" and "cultivation," it is clear that television's reality "can influence, and, in some cases, supplant the individual realities constructed by the viewer" (Murray and Kippax, 1981:618). Hawkins and Pingree (1983), who recently performed a similar analysis of research findings, suggest that the cultivation effect operates through a process of learning and incidental information holding (informal education, in our terms).

But an important question immediately comes to mind: *Whose reality* is being constructed in the minds of the public? One recent study on the control over content in prime-time television drama in the U.S., concluded that the final form and content of television series are the result of a struggle between the direct creators, the regulatory agencies of the government, the three major networks, the Hollywood program

suppliers and their creative people, social critics, and --finally--citizen groups (Cantor, 1980). This struggle is described as taking place within concrete political and economic, organizational and cultural contexts. The only problem with this influential study is that it hardly refers to what is the most important--if not the only--source of income for network television. Advertising agencies and advertisers--the big corporations--are absent from the analysis; yet they are the central economico-institutional context from which TV programs' form and content emerges. The latter, which is called by Smythe (1981) the "free lunch," is the background--and it has to be an adequate one--for the commercial messages, which are commercial television's source of revenue.

In the early fourties, a short time before television's debut in U.S. homes, sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton offered an answer to our earlier question. It seems to us sociologically relevant even today:

> ...to consider the social effects of American mass media is to deal only with the effects of these media as privately owned enterprises under profit-oriented management.... Its salient characteristic [of the structure of control of the media] stems from the fact that except for movies and books, it is not the magazines reader nor the radio listener nor, in large part, the reader of newspapers who supports the enterprise, but the advertiser. Big business finances the production and distribution of mass media. And, all intent aside, *he who pays the piper generally calls the tune* (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1971:566-7; our

emphasis).

From another perspective, the advertising function should be considered a central structural source of the pervasive informal educators' curriculum. Unfortunately, the two sociologists just quoted did not follow up this line of analysis, and devoted themselves to more "academic" and "administrative research" (Lazarsfeld, 1972). Let us see what Latin American research has to say about the media of informal education.

1.3. *Media Images in Latin America*

Not as much concrete research has been performed in Latin America as in the United States, mainly because of lack of material resources and funding sources in Universities and research institutions. In addition, a good deal of research results are not circulated across countries, so the following review of the available literature does not pretend to be comprehensive or exhaustive. However, this section may show general trends in findings and conceptualization, which we shall see are very similar and related to those in the previous sections.

One constant in the research literature on the mass media in Latin America is its critical tone, even when researchers do not work under an explicitly critical theoretical framework like the Marxian approach. Three main reasons lie behind this critical hue: firstly, given the assumption that the media are important cultural generators and do have an influence on their audiences, researchers question the *commercial interests* behind the production of culture, which they do not consider the most appropriate for such a task, of important social consequences (Beltrán, 1976). Secondly, the structures of ownership and control of the media reflect in most cases the extremely concentrated and unequal distribution of wealth and resources that exist in our countries, so researchers criticize this undemocratic context for cultural production and information flows (cfr. Schenkel, 1973; Beltran and Cardona, 1980). Finally, through advertising and the importation of programs, among other factors, the Latin American media are embedded in a transnational web of foreign influence, control and ideologico-cultural penetration, both usually subtle and indirect, some times overt and direct (ibidem; Mattelart, 1974;1977; Schiller, 1976; Tunstall, 1977). Because of the aforementioned insufficiency of resources, much of the research has been devoted to the analysis of the media's "curriculum," through different types of quantitative and qualitative content-analytic techniques. Content analysis,

especially of print media, is a technique that requires relatively fewer resources than other empirical research techniques. However, there are several interesting efforts to use sample surveys, to probe the media's effects on their audiences. Let us review first what is known about some popular formats of print media, and then continue with the most pervasive and influential medium, television.

Feminine magazines are a very popular medium in Latin America, and are thought to exert a good deal of influence on their readers. Many of the most popular magazines in this genre are published by transnational corporations (Santa Cruz and Erazo, 1980). There is consensus among researchers that the central theme of such magazines is "*consume!*," through a mix of myths and fetishized images of the good life, triumph and beauty (Flora, 1980). Gargurevich (1973) content analyzed some Peruvian magazines and found no substantial difference between those published by national firms and the transnational ones. The Miami-based magazine *Vanidades*, the analyst asserts, shows an ideal system of life based on "good recipes and kitchen furniture, 'freely' acquired food, enthusiasm for free enterprise, imitation of feminine models (Jackie Kennedy, Golda Meier, Elizabeth Taylor)...." But, most of all, adds the author, one learns to totally reject any kind of liberation movement (ibid:93). Regarding women's liberation in particular, Garcfa

Calderón (1980:127) found in the sample of Mexican magazines she analyzed that it appears under two aspects: "'change' through the purchase of objects, and 'change' of sexual habits." Thus, "with an apparently change-oriented rhetoric, they prevent any real alteration" (ibid). In their analysis of 18 magazines from five Latin American countries, Santa Cruz and Erazo (1980) found that transnational advertising constituted a very high proportion of their content. The model of the "ideal woman" that these researchers found, in coincidence with Gargurevich and García C., is white, beautiful and skinny, of high socioeconomic class, with dress, hairdo and make up according to the latest fashions (ibid:153). The most frequent theme in such magazines is "show business," and the overwhelming majority of individuals they write about are from the U.S., or part of the U.S. show industry (ibid:193-5). García Calderón likewise concluded that the "jet set and the high international bourgeoisie" recur in the magazines as life models, somehow ideal and unattainable at the same time (1980:106). Probably one of the most influential magazines in Latin America is *Selecciones del Reader's Digest*, with a circulation in Mexico alone of half a million monthly issues, and which is translated to Portuguese for Brazil. Ariel Dorfman's (1973) content analisis of *Selecciones* revealed that, when dealing with Third World problems, the diagnosis invariably was: lack of knowledge and technology, always

disregarding political and economic *relations* within and between countries. Thus, all social problems in the developing world are merely technical problems, and the solution is just an injection of knowledge and technology from abroad (ibid:33-7). Herbert Schiller (1976:6) quotes David Ogilvy, an advertising personality in the U.S., corroborating Dorfman's analysis of *Selecciones* as a propagandist for the "American way of life": "The magazine exports the best of American life....In my opinion, the digest is doing as much as the United States Information Agency [today I.C.A.] to win the battle for men's minds."

Comic books have also been subject to extensive analyses in Latin America (Masotta, 1967; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1972; Steimberg, 1974; Silva, 1974; Herner;1977;1979). The following quotation aptly summarizes the kind of conclusions arrived at in most of these analyses:

> There is ideology in the daily presentation of the American way of life as the best; there is ideology in the diffusion of racism, in the constant presentation of the black and yellow as inferior and malign, evil forces; there is ideology in the diffusion of the colonialist and neocolonialist feeling that makes of Tarzan and the Phantom the great gods of African underdevelopment, and which makes of the Latin American countries a no one's land, road stop for all kinds of gamblers and brigands, peoples sunk in tropical stupor and degraded by alcohol and "inevitable" misery; there is ideology in the presentation of children as real businessmen or merchants who transform everything into a commodity; there is ideology in all those CIA agents disguised as magicians (Mandrake), university professors

> (Kirby), boxers (Ben Bolt), space travelers (Flash Gordon), great white gurus (the Phantom) or simply as apes (Tarzan); there is ideology in comics, and it is a specifically imperialist ideology (Silva, 1974:123).

Of course, there is ideology in Ludovico Silva's remarks, but the reality they attempt to describe is considered by most Latin American scholars far from being false. Let us now quickly review some studies on television in Latin America.

Perhaps one indication of the social influence of television on young children can be found in a research finding of Mexico's National Institute of the Consumer (Inco, 1980:13): When asked to identify a group of TV characters and a group of national heroes, a sample of urban first graders could identify *almost all* (97.4%) of the television characters, and *almost none* (6.8%) of the national heroes presented. This is only "natural," since the children are expected to be exposed to national history later on in their formal education. However, this finding does illustrate the fact that children start recognizing "heroes" from TV even before they start going to school. This process has an important incidence in the political socialization of children (Acosta, 1970; Segovia, 1975).

Eduardo Santoro's (1969) already classic study on the formation of stereotypes in Venezuelan children is a good example of empirical evidence showing rather impressive and

disturbing effects of the "parallel school" on Latin American children. The researcher performed a content analysis of the most representative programs in Venezuelan television, finding--not surprisingly--that violence predominated in them (ibid:229; cfr. also Pasquali, 1967; Beltrán, 1976:9-10). Those that were found to show more violent content, namely, the adventure programs, were the preferred ones for the majority (53%) in a sample of 938 sixth grade children (Santoro, op cit:244). Furthermore, when the children were asked to make a drawing and to write a short story, both based on their television experience, it turned out that 63% of the drawings portrayed some kind of violent behavior (ibid:247). We can only briefly describe the main stereotypes found by Santoro: The stories written by the children take place almost exclusively in the United States; the heroes are from the U.S., and are white, single and rich. The "bad guys" are black and poor, and when the nationalities are mentioned they tend to be Venezuelan, German or Chinese. The names of the "good guys" are mostly English names, while the "bad guys'" names are either in English or in Spanish (ibid:249-62). These findings corresponded to the high percentage of U.S. programs shown on Venezuelan television (ibid; cfr. Silva, 1974:189). Mario Kaplún (cited by Flora, 1980:26) reported that U.S. programming made up 31% of television broadcast in Latin America, ranging from 93% in Panama to 21% in Argentina. It appears that the amount of

imported programming has been decreasing recently, although still 80% of imported programming in Latin America is from the U.S. (Antola and Rogers, 1982). Put in terms of "cultivation analysis," Venezuelan television is cultivating a de-nationalizing consciousness in its audiences, and most probably that is the case throughout the subcontinent, as we shall see below with a Mexican example.

Now, along with the de-nationalizing features of TV's "curriculum" and given its commercial nature, the general values that it appears to reflect are those appropriate for a consumer culture. Tapia (cited by Beltrán, 1976:15; and Flora, 1980:26) found that the TV cartoon "*Los Picapiedra*" (*The Flintstones*) project a powerful set of values around the inevitability of consumer capitalism. Santoro's (op cit:256) content analysis of TV commercials shows that the most frequent values presented are prestige and social status, physical beauty and health: "Beauty and prestige are presented in the form of competition, exalting an individualist mentality..." (ibid); consumption is the way to achieve those values. Salazar's analysis of imported telefilms in Venezuela finds as predominant values "money making, use of brute force, and recourse to astuteness and deception" (Beltran, 1976:9).

The findings are similar for Mexican adolescents. Montoya and

Rebeil (1981) found in a sample of students of the Telesecundaria (secondary school by television) that those who exposed themselves more to private commercial television tended to admire North American instead of Mexican actors. Likewise, heavy exposure was associated with "wishing to live in the United States," and with the opinion that the U.S. way of life should be expanded throughout the world; in both cases, exposure to police and fiction programs increased the association (ibid:150-161). The majority of these students think that police violence is either "always" or "sometimes necessary and just" (p.166). Recall the recognition of TV characters but not of national heroes by first graders; these students were able to identify Jacobo Sabludowsky and Raúl Velazco (two popular TV announcers), but few of them were able to identify four currently important politicians (p.182;cfr. also León Martínez, 1975:59-60). Thus, television seems to be a de-nationalizing influence from childhood to adolescence in Latin America, projecting violent images throughout the continent, and hindering, rather than aiding, the comprehension of our history and present reality. Such trends, as revealed in the available research, are almost certainly contrary to the educational policies of the governments in the region. Now let us review the available evidence on a particular genre of TV programs which is said to be one of the most popular and influential in the region: the soap operas, or *telenovelas*.

Several studies in the region have shown that, just like their U.S. counterparts, Latin American housewifes tend to believe that radio and TV soap operas are based on and reflect real life, and that the problems represented in them are similar to theirs (Rivera, 1968:84-7; Beltrán, 1976:11). The lower the education and income levels, the stronger this belief is (ibid,ibid). Montoya and Rebeil found the same among their adolescent subjects, but they also found that those who watch more *telenovelas* tend to believe that they reflect not only individual problems, but also the *national* problems (1981:135-7). Rivera (op cit:93) reports that *radio-telenovelas* are a principal conversation theme of the housewifes she interviewed, an instance of the "agenda setting function of the media." She also found that children of the underprivileged classes tend to watch the soap operas, use them as conversation themes, and imitate the behaviors of their characters (ibid:101-12). *Telenovelas'* plots are thought to reflect real life problems, and to provide examples and patterns of behavior to solve the audience's own problems (Rivera, 1968; Beltrán, 1976:12; Montoya and Rebeil, 1981:138).

One indicator of the penetration of *telenovelas* in Latin America is the price that is paid, for example, in Mexico for soap opera time (recall that TV time is sold in terms of the

potential audience to be reached--cost per thousand). Advertising time in *telenovelas* in Mexican television is sold at the "prime time" price, even though they are transmitted during other times (Menasse et al, 1976:226).

Luis Ramiro Beltrán (1976) has summarized a good deal of related literature on TV imagery in Latin America, and concluded from that a certain number of values recurs in the medium's messages. These would constitute, from our perspective, the axiological core of the curriculum of this powerful informal educator. Classified by type of psychological stimulation, those values are as follows:

POSITIVE STIMULATION	NEGATIVE STIMULATION
Exciting-Energizing	
Narcotic-analgesic	
Individualism	Conservatism
Elitism	Conformism
Racism	Self-Defeatism
Materialism	Providencialism
Aggressiveness	Romanticism
Adventurism	
Authoritarianism	

At the very least, this list can serve as a powerful set of images from which to derive hypotheses for further content analysis and cultivation and mainstreaming analysis. As a first approximation, they should also be the objects of political concern, for, although Beltrán's hypothesized relationship between the composite of images and a positive

and negative stimulation is not unidimensional and simple, this is nevertheless an illustration of how media images can be thought of as potential causes of *social* action, or "inaction." Most importantly, political concern emerges from the question, "What interests lie behind the stimulation or hindrance of such a potential social action--or inaction?"

It is usually assumed that, given the commercial function of TV and the media in general, media output is geared to entertain or "inform," or to persuade in the case of commercials, but not explicitly to *educate* in a more systematic way--in which case it would not be considered "informal" education any more. In what follows we shall describe a series of explicit efforts to use *telenovelas* for educational purposes and "social reinforcement." The political implications shall be dealt with in the conclusion.

Radio and Television have been extensively used in formal and non-formal education projects and campaigns; they have proven to be at least equally good teachers as live teachers in a classroom (Schramm, 1972; 1977). On the other hand, the use of commercial formats, especially those of advertising, has proven to be very effective in children's educational television, such as Sesame Street (Lesser, 1974). Hence, if every day experience and research evidence have shown us that regular commercial television formats are indeed very

effective transmitters and inculcators of values, world outlooks and behavior models, it is natural that some one would have already thought about, and actually tried, to use them with more systematic educational objectives.

There are in Mexico two national commercial TV networks, one owned by the government and the other privately owned. However, in reality, because the government network has close to null ratings (Menasse et al, 1976), and the private network's stations account for about 87% of the commercial TV stations in the country (CGCS, 1981:127n), the production of television-mediated culture is a monopoly industry. We shall analyze the development and present structure of Television in Mexico in Chapters 5 and 6.

In 1967 Televisa, the private network, which then was called Telesistema Mexicano, started producing "historic soap operas" (*telenovelas históricas*), dramatizing the lives of some national heroes and selected historical episodes. In the early seventies, the great television hit was the Peruvian soap opera *Simplemente María* ("Simply Mary"), which told the story of a young house keeper who learns to sew (and marries a rich man) and "achieves personal and professional success"(Televisa, 1981:17). According to Televisa's report, during the time the soap opera was broadcast, many young maids employed in Mexican households

started showing a desire to learn to sew, and "more than normal amounts of sewing machines were sold..."(ibid). The recognition of this process and their previous experience with "historic soap operas" prompted Televisa's decision-makers to begin producing "social reinforcement"(ibid), or educational *telenovelas*. A Vice-Presidency for Research and an Institute for Communication Research are in function today, dedicated mainly to the production and evaluation of such programs:

> Ever since, studies carried out by the Institute have been used to produce six soap operas designed to reinforce positive social values, close to one thousand game shows containing a social message and several campaigns promoting those same values through commercials. Currently, the Institute is working in the design of additional programs incorporating other formats such as newscasts and commentaries on miscelaneous events (ibid:1).

Thus, for Televisa this is a learning process: based on the evaluation of previous experiences, a program is produced and broadcast with clearly stated objectives in terms of cognitions, attitudes, values and behaviors that are to be influenced; then, results are evaluated using standard empirical methodologies, which leads to the next production, which is based on the accumulated previous experiences (Televisa, 1981; Covarrubias, 1980). The relatively sophisticated theoretical framework that is being developed and used as the conceptual context for their productions is an integration of communication theory, social learning

theory, and dramatic theory (ibid, ibid). There has been a similar attempt to use dramatic programming with educational objectives in Chile, although apparently with no great success (Fuenzalida Hernåndez, 1981:203-6). The evaluations of Televisa's educational soap operas also show only relative success in the achievement of the stated goals (Televisa:1981:32-54). However, this only demontstrates that the task is complex, although it can be fulfilled, even in relative terms. Recall that the process itself is one of learning and improving performance based on past experiences for Televisa.

Even though the particular explicitly stated goals of the "social reinforcement" soap operas that Televisa has produced can be considered praiseworthy, there is a major reason of concern. There is evidence that television is the most pervasive and influential medium in Mexico (Televisa, 1981; CGCS, 1981); and that TV is virtually monopolized in the country (Pérez Espino, 1979; Montoya, 1980; Sanchez Ruiz, 1981). Finally, it is widely known that the owners and controllers of Televisa are ideologically conservative to the extreme (Cole, 1972; Pierce, 1979; Granados Chapa, 1981; Espinosa, 1981). Through the continuous learning process that we have described before, Televisa is actually developing a potentially powerful "manipulation technology," the power to define, *consciously and systematically*, what is right or

wrong for the society at large:

> By advocating the position to give television a social use, we are assuming an axiological responsibility regarding the *eternal* concern of mankind to differentiate between good and bad, fair and unfair, right or wrong (Televisa, 1981:4; our emphasis)

Televisa's claim is that, so far, their source of inspiration (the source of the values they have attempted to inculcate and reinforce) has been the Mexican Constitution (ibid). But the issue is, in the first place, that a handful of persons who are not in broadcasting for philanthropic or altruistic reasons, but because it is a *profitable business*, are the ones who want to dictate (or "reinforce") which values should predominate in the Mexican social formation. And if the general thesis that we have been proposing here is true, namely, that regular commercial television is a powerful and pervasive educator, they have *already* been dictating at least some of the prevailing social values for some time now. Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution determines that the space over which the radio and television signals travel belongs to the nation, that is, to *all* of the people, yet only a few are able to send those signals. The social consequences of those television signals affect the many, yet the few are in control of what those social consequences should or could be. This is a serious contradiction that must be demonstrated in "scientific and academic" ways, but also addressed in a political fashion. This is the arena where

education and communication politics and policies converge and interpenetrate with social research on communication and education.

1.4. *Informal Education and the Media. Concluding Remarks*

In this final section, we shall indicate the general lines of convergence of the literature reviewed. The long term power of the media to teach and define many of the conceptions of reality that people have is generally supported by the available literature from at least two different research traditions, and from several countries at various levels of capitalist development. The media are indeed considered influential "social teachers," occupying a position of equal, if not greater relevance than the traditional school system in the transmision of knowledge, culture and ideology. The media are also influential transmitters of value-orientations towards individuals, social classes, institutions, races, nationalities, cultures, political and economic systems. Given the inherent characteristics and requirements of the predominantly *commercial* character of the media in capitalist social formations, the information provided has to be simplified and schematized, so the knowledge and value-orientations that the public receives (and is likely to accept and use), becomes a system of stereotypes, myths and

false--or at least incomplete--descriptions/definitions of their real being.

At the level of individual and social behavior, the media also are found to provide models of behavior that tend to be learned and imitated--with social class being an important intervening or contextual variable. This finding indirectly corroborates the general Marxian assertion that some social groups have the power to "direct" or at least "delimit" what other social groups shall know, value, and do, in a class society. When cummulative and long term consequences of media messages are studied, the patterns of information and value orientations are found to "cultivate" certain general cognitive and value orientations, which have consequences on how people shall act (as economic and political actors, for example).

One particular research finding that appears in several studies performed in Latin America concerns the cultivation of a "de-nationalizing" social consciousness, which includes the loss of cultural identity and a growing identification with the still hegemonic North American culture and reality. This finding may be a source of joy for the U.S. State Department and the editors of *Selecciones del Reader's Digest*, but it may not be so for Latin American governments and socially conscious citizens.

Finally, we have seen that in some cases, e.g., in Mexican television, the most popular media formats are being *consciously and systematically* geared to "reinforce" particular sets of "social values." Usually, the "conspiracy theory" of society is dismissed as simplistic and far fetched; however, one wonders--and worries about--how much of the media fare that an average citizen receives and, to a greater or lesser extent accepts and assimilates, is being purposefully constructed by a minority, *without the public's knowledge, acceptance and participation*, with the aim of "reinforcing" selected sets of behavioral and value orientations. There is no doubt about it regarding advertising. But with respect to other media messages, one wonders whether a good part of their long term observable consequences--some of which we have described throughout the chapter--have not been already planned ahead by some "central agency." Of course, we also think that a conspiracy theory that attempts to explain every social process or event as emerging from the conscious desire of a unified "ruling class" is simplistic and has been superseded by a more complex and historically accurate theory of the structures of capitalist exploitation and political domination. But, again, the former "suspicions" or, in more academic terms, research questions and hypotheses, have to be the point of departure of a research program that must be tightly related to an

informed political action.

CHAPTER 2

Mass Communication, Capital Accumulation and the State.

It is clear now that the commercial mass communication media, and especially television, can be actually considered powerful instruments of informal education, independently of the fact that they can also be used in a more systematic way within formal and nonformal educational projects. We have also seen that, in their functioning as informal educators, the commercial media work as ideological apparatuses, cultivating certain patterns of thought and ideas. These sets of ideas and thought patterns, which ultimately constitute the informal education media's "curriculum," are *delimited* by the patterns of ownership and control--and the interests they represent--of the media. They are determined as well by broader structural relationships of the media with the economy and polity of a particular social formation, which are not isolated from international relationships and "inter-dependencies." Because thought, ideas, values and attitudes are necessarily related to human action, from the literature review of chapter 1 we have also concluded that the media are potential forces of social change and *non-change*. An important assumption that we

derive from the previous chapter and which guides all this investigation is that the commercial mass media are in capitalist societies real and potential instruments of *reproduction* of the existing domination structures (in section 3.3 below we shall see that the media can actually be considered "domination resources"). We have argued before that, as social reproduction instruments, the mass media act not only as ideologico-cultural and political apparatuses, but also have concrete economic functions. In fact, until not long ago, social scientific analyses of the media centered *almost* exclusively around their ideologico-political effects and functioning; their direct and indirect contributions to capital accumulation and expanded reproduction were *almost* totally neglected (Arriaga, 1980:13-14), even in studies that attempted to contribute to a "political economy of mass communication" (Garnham, 1979). But if we want to unveil the intricate network of relationships that determine the commercial media's production and social functioning as informal educators, we should direct the historical analysis *also* towards the media's concrete economic functioning, and towards the relationships of the media with broader economic and political processes:

> The obvious starting point for a political economy of mass communications is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial

> organizations which produce and distribute commodities. (...) The media companies are locked into the wider economic situation, firstly through reciprocal investments and shareholdings and interlocking directorships with other large industrial concerns, and secondly through advertising. Advertising is the principal economic base of both the press and commercial television and hence both are directly vulnerable to adverse changes in general economic conditions (Murdock and Golding, 1973:205-206).

This chapter reviews some relevant literature that shall help us understand the relationships of the media with the process of capital accumulation. Because of the historical fact that in Mexico the State has been at the center of the process of capital accumulation and "dependent development," we shall include in this chapter a review of some currently influential conceptualizations on the role of the State in the process of capital accumulation in capitalist social formations. The particular type of dependent development followed by Mexico also calls for the inclusion of the current conceptualizations on the internationalization of capital, associated-dependent development, and the role of the media, advertising and the State in this process of transnationalization.

Because of its heuristic value, we shall begin with an abstract model constituted by some aspects of the Marxian theory of capital accumulation, the circulation of capital and realization problems. Then the theoretical review shall become successively more concrete.

2.1. *Capital Accumulation*

The process of capital accumulation is the most vital for a capitalist society, for capital accumulation not only means the reproduction of physical capital on an expanded scale, but also the expanded reproduction of capitalist relations of production--and therefore of capitalist society. We shall review in this subsection the basic concepts of the Marxian theory of capital accumulation that are useful for the explanation of the *economic* role that the commercial media fulfill through their advertising function, in an expanding capitalist economy.

Most economists agree on the concept of capital as a sum of value from which future returns are expected. The broadest definition of capital, as "self expanding value," already implies the process of capital's reproduction and valorization. This process is illustrated by Marx's "general formula of capital": M--C--M'. This represents a transformation process, where M = money-capital, C = commodity, and M' = money-capital increased by surplus-value (or M'=ΔM). "In other words --says Marx--, a sum of value is thrown into circulation to extract a larger sum out of it. The process which produces this larger sum is capitalist production. The process that realizes it is

circulation" (Marx, 1973-a:41). Marx's concept is inherently dynamic and processual: capital's formula includes both the process of production *and* circulation, and essential to it is capital's tendency towards its continuous expansion. Let us now see why in the Marxian framework the process of capital accumulation is at the same time a process of expanded reproduction of the capitalist relations of production and exchange.

Marx began his explanation of the process of capital accumulation in terms of a heuristic model which he called "simple reproduction." Simple reproduction would occur when, after a production period, all the surplus produced is consumed by the capitalist class and the rest of the social product goes to reproduce--not to increase--the means of production used up in the process *and* the labor power of the employed labor force. This is also called reproduction on a static scale because at the end of the process we would have exactly the same productive capacity as in the begining and so on in subsequent periods (Marx, 1975:566). But, actually, intercapitalist competition and working class struggles, both directed toward a larger share of the total social product, force each indivdual capitalist to attempt to expand productive capacity, which means that in reality he tends to devote part of his profits to new investments in more--or improved--means of production and to hire more

workers. The result is the actual process of capital accumulation or "reproduction on an extended scale" (Marx, 1975:579-611; 1974:489-521).

In order to clarify this further, let us divide the *value* of the total social product into one portion that goes to reproduce the means of production used up, represented by c or *constant capital*; another portion is directed to reproduce the labor power employed or *variable capital*, represented by *v*, and finally the *surplus-value* represented by *s*. We can, furthermore, consider the total product (c+v+s) as the total supply of commodities at the end of a given production period (e.g., one year) or

$$supply = c+v+s$$

in value terms. In order for reproduction to occur (simple or expanded), c and v are assumed to have a fixed demand (c+v), but in order for *expanded* reproduction to occur, at least part of s must be devoted to new investments in additional constant and variable capital, which is represented by I (where $I = \Delta c + \Delta v$). The rest of s goes to "unproductive expeditures" (which include capitalists' personal consumption) represented by U. We have, thus, total demand:

$$\text{Demand} = c+v+I+U.$$

The system shall expand itself on an expanded scale if

$$c+v+s = c+v+I+U, \text{ or simply } s = I+U.$$

If the process goes on indefinitely, the system grows, and therefore we have capitalist growth and accumulation. Two precisions should be made: On the one hand, Marx's analysis of simple and expanded reproduction was done using his "schemes of reproduction," where he divided the total product in terms of the output of two sectors of production: Department I, which produces means of production, and Department II which produces consumption goods--further disaggregation can be introduced for concrete analyses (Marx, 1974:489-521). Hence, the analysis of the equilibrium condition is actually much more complex (Tsuru, 1970; Harris, 1976). On the other hand, "unproductive expenditures" (U) include at a more concrete level of analysis other reproductive expenditures such as taxes to the State, funding of ideological apparatuses, etc., besides capitalists' personal consumption (Castells, 1980:47).

If we divide the terms of he last equation by total capital (c+v), we have:

$$s/(c+v) = I/(c+v) + U/(c+v).$$

In Marxian economics s/(c+v) is known as the rate of profit (the ratio of surplus value to total capital advanced). I/(c+v) is then the rate of accumulation (or rate of investment) and U/(c+v) the "rate of unproductive utilization of resources" (Wright, 1979:143). The rate of profit is considered the maximum *possible* rate of accumulation,

because if

$$U/(c+v) = 0,$$

then

$$s/(c+v) = I/(c+v).$$

Hence, accumulation involves an expansion of the means of production owned and controlled by the capitalist class (constant capital in value terms), as well as of the size of the working class (variable capital). With this in mind, we can agree with Erik Wright's definition of capital accumulation as "the reproduction of capitalist social relations on an ever expanding scale through the conversion of surplus value into new constant and variable capital" (ibid:113). Thus, capital accumulation is the key to the reproduction and expansion of capitalist society.

For the Marxian perspective the capitalist mode of production is based on antagonistic--or contradictory--social relations of production and its development is bound up with internal structural contradictions, which express themselves in business cycles and in periods of crisis and stagnation, whose historical resolution is crucial for the survival and reproduction of capitalism in subsequent stages of development (URPE, 1979; Wright, 1979). We need not enter into this problem here. Within the Marxist framework, capital is not only considered in its processual dimension as

"self-expanding value," but also and fundamentally in its relational dimension: Capital is a conflictive social relation, and not only a thing or sum of things (means of production, or "capital goods"):

> However, capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society, which is manifested in a thing and lends this thing a specific social character. Capital is not the sum of the material and produced means of production. Capital is rather the means of production transformed into capital, which in themselves are no more capital than gold or silver in itself is money. It is the means of production monopolized by a certain section of society, confronting living labour-power as products and living conditions rendered independent of this very labour-power, which are personified through this antithesis in capital (Marx, 1973-a:814-5).

The Circuit of Capital and Advertising.

Marx analyzed the process of capitalist production as a whole, as the unity of two complementary processes, namely production and circulation: "The total production process of capital includes both the circulation process proper and the actual production process. These form the two great sections of its movement, which appears as the totality of these two processes" (Marx, 1973-b:620). In order to analyze adequately the role that the mass media of communication play in the

process of capital accumulation through advertising, we have to elaborate further on the account given by Marx of the process of circulation. In volume I of *Capital*, in his explanation of the "general formula of capital" and supporting his account of the historical emergence of primitive accumulation, Marx contends that the "circulation of commodities is the starting point of capital":

> The production of commodities, their circulation and that more developed form of their circulation called commerce, these form the historical groundwork from which it rises. The modern history of capital dates from the creation in the 16th. century of a world-embracing commerce and a world-embracing market (Marx, 1975:146).

It is a common-place within Marxist scholarship that the positive aspect of the capitalist mode of production has been the unprecedented development of the productive forces, through the utilization of science and technology. It is also widely recognized that the "universal vocation" of capital, its structural tendency toward expanded reproduction and accumulation, has translated historically into a tendency towards the expansion of capitalism as a "world system" (Wallerstein, 1976; 1979; Pallois, 1975; 1977). The "logical" and historical necessity of capitalist geographical expansion was analyzed by Marx on the grounds that, as surplus value is created at one point, the creation of surplus value for which it can be exchanged needs to be created at another point: Thus, Marx indicated, "a precondition of production based on

capital is therefore *the production of a constantly widening shpere of circulation*" (1973-b:407). On this basis in the *Grundrisse* Marx explained historically the relations between the unprecedented development of the productive forces in the process of expansion of capitalism, and the equally unprecedented development of the means of communication and transportation (ibid:524-39). Marx even suggests at one point that this development of the means of communication and transportation "is likewise development of productive force" (ibid:534).

For the capitalist class it is of paramount importance to abreviate the circulation time of commodities, because "the time which generally passes before the comodity makes its transition into money; or the time during which it remains a *commodity*, [makes it] only a potential but not a real value. This is pure loss" (ibid:534-5). Marx explains the emergence and development of credit on the same lines, given the need of constant continuity of this process of creation and realization of value (ibid:535). Advertising and the rather sophisticated marketing apparatuses and techniques that we know today are basically a phenomenon of the present century and so Marx did not include them in his analysis of the process of capital accumulation (cfr. Smythe, 1981:24-5). However, we think that an adequate analytical framework for the explanation of the role of advertising in such a process

of capital accumulation can be established on the basis of the previous lines and of the account of the "circuit of capital" that follows.

The general formula of capital, M--C--M', was further elaborated by Marx in volume II of Capital (1933), within what he called the circuit of capital, or the "metamorphoses of capital." This process is represented by: M--C ... P ... C'--M'. "The dots indicating the points where the process of circulation was interrupted [by the production of new commodites], and C' and M' designating C and M increased by surplus value" (ibid:32). M is the sum of money-capital advanced by the capitalist in the purchase of two commodities: means of production and labor power (C). That is, money capital is transformed into productive capital, which is now put into "productive consumption", in the process of production (P) of new commodities (ibid:42). This is where surplus value is produced by the actualization of labor power: "The product is, therefore, not only a commodity, but a commodity pregnant with surplus-value" (ibid:45). This is C', whose function is now "that of all commodities, viz.: to transform itself into money, to be sold, to go through the circulation stage C--M" (ibid:48). Referring back to his analysis of simple reproduction in Vol. I of *Capital*, Marx points out "that C--M, the sale, is the most difficult part of this metamorphosis and that, under

ordinary conditions, it takes up the greatest part of its time of circulation" (ibid:143).

We have outlined here an important contradiction in the process of capitalist development. Circulation is found to be an important moment in the general process of production and reproduction of capital. However, the longer the time span that commodities spend in the process of circulation, the more it is considered "pure loss." That is, circulation is the negation of production (with which it forms a unity): "As long as capital remains frozen in the form of the finished product, it cannot be active as capital, it is *negated* capital" (Marx, 1973-b:546). Why is it negated capital?

> The use-values do not remain as bearers of perennial capital-value increasing by the addition of surplus-value, unless they are continually reproduced and replaced by new use-values of the same or of some other order. The sale of the use-values in the form of the finished commodities, their transfer to the productive or individual consumption by means of this sale, is the ever recurring requirement for their reproduction (Marx, 1933:145).

Accordingly, the *negation* of circulation time (i.e., circulation time = 0) would be the equivalent to the highest possible production of capital, because any reduction of the time it spends in circulation is an increase in the time in which it can be productive. This explains, as we have asserted before, the need for the development of the means of

communication and transportation, of credit, and of marketing and advertising (cfr. Lebowitz, 1976; Esteinou, 1980; de la Haye, 1980; Arriaga, 1980). With the development of the productive forces, of productivity, and the growth of capitalist production, the need to expand the sphere of circulation emerges, but this time not only spatially, but in the production of new social needs:

> On the other side, the production of *relative surplus value*, i.e., production of surplus value based on the increase and developmet of the productive forces, requires the production of new consumption; requires that the consuming circle within circulation expands as did the productive circle previously. Firstly quantitative expansion of existing consumption; secondly: creation of new needs by propagating existing ones in a wide circle; thirdly: production of *new* needs and discovery and creation of new use values (Marx, 1973-b:408).

In fact, in the paragraph following the former quotation Marx showed, based on the same line of reasoning, the need for expanding capitalist enterprises to invest in what we know nowadays as "research and development," marketing, and "product differentiation." Thus, not only advertising, but a whole marketing apparatus and other realization strategies become necessary with capitalist expansion. This has been theoretically analyzed by Baran and Sweezy (1966:112-41) as the "sales effort," given the tendency of economic surplus to rise, for the case of the development of monopoly capitalism in the United States. A historical analysis that illustrates the former is Stuart Ewen's (1976) study of the emergence of

the boom of advertising in the United States, along with the emergence of mass production, in the 1920s and 1930s. Actually, mass production techniques began to originate since the latter part of the 19th century and so did the use of print media as advertising vehicles (Braverman, 1974; Smythe, 1981; Janus, 1980). But the real boom of both mass production and the need for the promotion of mass consumption is symbolically said to begin with the establishment by Henry Ford of the line production system (Ewen, 1976:; Reekie, 1981:14-15). Ewen's analysis of the development of the advertising industry in the U.S. shows that a wholly new consumer culture had to be created by the 1920's, given the unprecedented development of productive capacity. This need implied an educational process through the advertising media:

> The mechanism of mass production could not function unless markets became more dynamic, growing horizontally (nationally), vertically (into social classes not previously among the consumers) and ideologically. Now men and women had to be habituated to the demands of the productive machinery (ibid:24).
>
> Widespread within the socially oriented literature of business in the twenties and thirties is a notion of educating people into an acceptance of the products and aesthetics of a mass-produced culture. Industrial development, then, became far more than a technological process, but also a process of organizing and controlling "long pent-up human impulses" (...) in such a way that these impulses might serve to provide social underpinnings to the industrial system (p.56)

This process brought about the development of advertising at a previously unknown scale (cfr. Janus, 1980:58-111) and the

conversion of the by the time new electronic medium, radio, to an advertising vehicle (Spalding, 1979:70-91; Barnouw, 1978:9-41). "Modern advertising must be seen as a direct response to the needs of mass industrial capitalism" (Ewen, 1976:31).

Thus, the theoretical--and historical--vantage point from which it is necessary to analyze the role of the commercial media in the process of capital accumulation is *the need, with the development of capitalist accumulation, to accelerate the circuit of capital in its realization phase*: "The first condition of accumulation is that the capitalist must have contrived to sell his commodities, and to reconvert into capital the greater part of the money so received" (Marx, 1975:564). The sales effort, of which mass advertising is an important element, especially for the case of consumption goods (those of Department II), must accelerate and minimize the turnover time of capital, so that surplus value can be invested in new productive capital, in order to produce more surplus value, so that the system grows and expands, with the circuit repeating itself over and over again. At least one dimension of the ideologico-cultural functions of the media is inherent to their role in the process of capital accumulation, namely, the creation and reproduction of a consumer culture, which implies the generalized acceptance and justification of capitalism.

At this point we should point out an important contradiction that is relevant to the case of Mexico, as the historical analysis shall suggest. Recall that, with the development of the productive forces, new social needs must be created, which means the creation of new needs for the working class as well:

> "To each capitalist, the total mass of all workers, with the exception of his own workers, appear not as workers but as consumers, as possessors of exchange values (wages), money, which they exchange for his commodity" (Marx, 1973-b:419).
>
> Contradiction in the capitalist mode of production: The labourers as buyers of commodites are important for the market. But as sellers of their own commodity--labour-power--capitalist society tends to keep them down to the minimum price (Marx, 1974:316n).

It is worthwhile to quote at length Karl Marx's description of the probable historical consequences of the contradiction between the need to keep wages down and the need to expand consumption as a result of capitalist expansion:

> The conditions of direct exploitation and those of realising it, are not identical. They diverge not only in place and time, but also logically. The first are only limited by the productive power of society, the latter by the proportional relation of the various branches of production and the consumer power of society. But this last-named is not determined either by the absolute productive power, or by the absolute consumer power, but *by the consumer power based on antagonistic conditions of distribuion*, which reduce the consumption of the bulk of society to a minimum varying within more or less narrow limits. It is furthermore restricted by the tendency to accumulate, the drive to expand capital and produce surplus-value on

> an extended scale. This is law for capitalist production, imposed by incessant revolutions in the methods of production themselves, by the depreciation of existing capital always bound up with them, by the general competitive struggle and the need to improve production and expand its scale merely as a means of self-preservation and under penalty of ruin. The market must, therefore, be continually extended, so that its interrelations and the conditions regulating them assume more and more the form of a natural law working independently of the producer, and become ever more uncontrollable. This internal contradiction seeks to resolve itself through expansion of the outlying field of production. *But the more productiveness develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest.* It is no contradiction at all on this self-contradictory basis that there should be an excess of capital simultaneously with a growing surplus of population. For while a combination of these two would, indeed, increase the mass of produced surplus-value, it would at the same time intensify the contradiction between the conditions under which this surplus-value is produced and those under which it is realised (Marx, 1975:244-5; emphasis added).

In the following section we shall see that advertising and the commercial media of communication have developed in Latin America on this contradictory basis: within a process of capital accumulation and of "modernization," expansion and diversification of the industrial productive plant, amidst "antagonistic conditions of distribution."

2.2. *Dependent Accumulation and the Media*

We reviewed in section 2.1 above some aspects of the "logic"

of accumulation that show the historical necessity of capitalism, given its internal dynamics toward expanded reproduction, to spread on a global scale, and of circulation and realization strategies and processes to emerge, such as the development of communications and transportation, of marketing and credit, etc. There are historical accounts that illustrate these processes as following from capital accumulation, the development of the productive forces and capitalist expansion (Braudel, 1979; Wallernstein, 1976; 1979; Amin, 1976; de la Haye, 1980; Smythe, 1981; Ewen, 1976; Janus, 1980). We cannot here go into an economic history of the expansion of capitalism and the formation of the "capitalist world-system." But it is important to describe some recent formulations on how Latin America, and Mexico in particular, have incorporated into the recent process of internationalization of capital, and their articulation to the new international division of labor. The expansion of the commercial mass media and of its advertising functioning in the subcontinent appear as part and parcel of this historcal movement. The "dependency" view-point, especially in its Latin American formulation, is appropriate to frame these historical developments.

The preoccupation about "dependence" and "imperialism" was already present in the Latin American social thought of the 19th century and the beginings of this century (González

Casanova, 1970; Cardoso, 1980:94). However, most of these conceptualizations had been rather loose and unconnected and not grounded on some kind of "scientific" claim (with the exception of some Marxist economists and historians during the 1930s and 1940s--cfr. Cardoso, cit.). During the 1950s and 1960s, a more articulate view of Latin America's relations to the world capitalist system began to emerge. A first important pronouncement was a 1949 study by Raul Prebisch, in which he showed with historical statistics that the expectations of the neo-classical international trade theory were unfounded: international trade and country-specialization were not leading, via "comparative advantages," to an equalization of the remuneration of factors of production (the equalization of incomes around the world), but rather to the deterioration of the terms of trade, in favor of the "core" countries (Cardoso, 1977; Hirschman, 1971:68). The "core-periphery" formulation began to be used as an analytic tool; political and organizational factors were introduced--among other variables--to explain the unequal exchange process, namely, organizational strength and oligopolistic practices on the part of core-country industrialists in order to protect their profit rates and the struggle of labor unions in order to maintain their income levels (Cardoso, 1977:12-14). After Prebisch's pioneerig publication a new type of analysis emerged, especially in the U.N. Economic Comission for Latin America (CEPAL), which he

directed. This approach was later called "structuralist." One current of "dependency" analysis was constituted by structuralist authors such as Oswaldo Sunkel and Celso Furtado. CEPAL and the structuralists were never radically critical of capitalism, but mainly of the inequalities they observed the international division of labor was producing. These analyses pointed at import-substituting industrialization and central eoconomic planning by the Latin American governments as the way out from their disadvantageous situation in the international arena. These authors did not discard the possibility of attaining the *same* levels of capitalst development of the industrialized countries. They only proposed a *different way* from that historically followed by the latter nations (Bambirra, 1978:31-33; Cardoso, 1980). Some governments of the region did heed CEPAL's policy advice. However, several historical factors, such as the Great Depression and especially World War II, which stalled the flow of exports of finished goods from industrialized countries to "underdeveloped" nations, had already "forced" upon some Latin American countries the process of import-substituting industrialization.

It was the observation of this process of industrialization of countries such as Brazil and Mexico, within a broader process of redefinition of the division of labor in the world

system, that led another group of scholars to devote their attention to what was called in the 1960s the *"new character of dependency"* (Dos Santos, 1969). Industrialization during the 1950s and early 1960s was not generating more autonomy from external economic forces, as the CEPAL "developmentalist" doctrine expected. The internal production of final consumption goods was creating the need to import new intermediate and capital goods, hence configuring a new pattern of technological dependence. The new financial needs brought about by import-substituting industrialization could not be met by internal savings, so direct and indirect foreign investment had to be promoted. Not only the new internal productive structures demanded foreign investments, but in the core countries a new economic actor was begining to achieve the status of "prime mover," the transnational corporations (Dos Santos, 1978). These new motors of capitalist expansion, which were the result of processes of concentration and centralization in the core countries, were eager to take advantage of the protective measures and other incentives to industrialization established by the State in the "newly industrializing countries," as well as of their relatively large internal markets, comprised by the middle classes and the local bourgeoisies (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979:157-159). The processes of urbanization and industrialization, on the other hand, were not generating a greater political participation

and democratization, or economic equality through income redistribution via "trickle down," as expected by the "modernization" theories (ibid:8-16).

The so-called "dependency approach," as elaborated mainly by Latin American sociologists, emerged then out of the observation of the historical processes that were occurring at the time, and as a critical reaction to the existing approaches in social science that could not account for those concrete historical processes as they were taking place in the region (Bambirra, 1978). Another, more "elegant" formulation which became very influencial by that time (late 1960s and early 1970s) especially because of its simplicity, was that of André Gunder Frank (1970), which expected a process of inexorable impoverishment of underdeveloped nations, as their articulation to the international capitalist system grew tighter. But Frank's "dependency theory" failed to describe (let alone explain) the industrialization and capital accumulation process that was actually taking place in several countries of the region.

Most authors within this general approach drew their analytic tools from the Marxian critique of political economy and the theory of imperialism. It was a *structural* and *historical* approach that analyzed Latin American development (or "underdevelopment") *not* departing from

isolated nation-states as units of analysis, but from their articulation to a broader, expanding economic system:

> When analyzing the process of constitution of a world economy that integrates the so-called national economies to a world market of commodities, capitals and even labor force, we see that the relationships that are produced in this market are unequal and combined (Dos Santos, 1978:310-311).

The unequal relationships established by different national social formations in the process of internationalization of capital thus became relations of dependence, which was defined as a *conditioning situation*:

> The relation of interdependence among two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and self-impel, while other countries (the dependent ones) can only do so as a reflex of that expansion, *which may act positively and/or negatively on their immediate development* (ibid:305, our emphasis).

The *conditioning situation* of dependence varies according to the internal configuration of economic and political forces and class struggles, and to the historical mode of articulation of national social formations to the international system. Thus, for instance Cardoso and Faletto (1979) showed that the nature of the capitalist development process of Latin American countries varied, depending--among other historical factors--on whether their articulation to the world economy had been in the form of *enclave*,

foreign-controlled primary-export economies, or as export-oriented economies controlled by *local bourgeoisies*. These situations of dependency (which still can be observed for example in Central America) were different from the one that defined the so-called "new nature of dependence," or "associated-dependent development" (Cardoso, 1973a; 1973b), through which foreign capital was contributing to the industrialization of some Latin American countries, but *not* for export, which could have constituted a new sort of "industrial enclave," but for consumption in their *internal markets*, and through several types of association with the local bourgeoisies and States (ibid:149-171). Theotonio Dos Santos (1978:310-320), elaborating an analysis similar to that of Cardoso and Faletto, proposed a classification of forms of dependence, based on 1) the historical phases of the world economy, 2) the type of economic and political relationships dominant in the capitalist centers and their ways of expanding outward, and 3) the type of economic and political relationships existing *within* the countries that were articulating to the international system in the dependent condition. The basic classification was:

> 1. Colonial, export-commercial dependence, in which commercial and financial capital, allied with the colonial State, dominated economic relations in the European and colonial economies, through the monopoly of trade. (...)
> 2. Financial-industrial dependence, which consolidates

> by the end of the 19th century, characterized by the rule of big capital in the hegemonic centers and its expansion abroad through investments in the production of raw-materials and agricultural products consumed in the hegemonic centers. (...)
> 3. Technological-industrial dependence; in the post-war period, was consolidated a new type of dependence characterized basically by the technological-industrial domination of transnational corporations which now invested in industries directed to the internal market within the underdeveloped countries (ibid:310).

More recently, Christian Palloix (1975; 1977) has produced a similar analysis, based on the abstract conceptualization of the internal, contradictory dynamics of capital's self-expansion and valorization performed by Marx in the *Grundrisse* and Vols. 2 and 3 of *Capital*. Thus, the movement of internationalization of capital has followed the internationalization of the "three circuits of social capital," namely, that of *commodity* capital (commercial capitalism and the colonial empires); internationalization of the circuit of *money* capital (financial expansion and formation of monopoly capitalism and imperialism); and expansion of the circuit of *productive* capital or the internationalization of capitalist industrial production in the present stage of development of capitalism. Describes Ruy Mauro Marini the present stage:

> The time of the simple center-periphery model, characterized by the exchange of manufactures by food and raw materials, has passed. We find now an economic reality in which industry assumes an ever more decisive role. This is true even when industrial capital widens and strengthens its interests in extractive and agricultural sectors; it is still more true when we

> consider the expansion and diversification of the manufacturing industry on a world scale. The result has been a rearrangement, a new hierarchization of capitalist countries in a pyramidal form and, therefore, the emergence of middle accumulation centers--that are also middle capitalist powers--, which has led us to talk about the emergence of a subimperialism (1977:25).

It is noteworthy, however, that two principal examples of "subimperialism," or "associated-dependent development," that is, the two principal "middle accumulation centers" in Latin America, Brazil and Mexico, are pointed out by World Bank figures as being among the nations with the *worst distribution of income* in the world (Bergsman, 1980:41). On the other hand, both Mexico and Brazil are currently the two countries with the largest external debt, of the order of over 80 billion dollars each, and are going through the worst economic crises in their history. The greater power that external finance capital is acquiring in those countries that have become "semiperipheral" social formations (Franklin, 1982), and the inequalities that capitalist development is generating, seem to support two basic hypotheses of the dependecy approach: a) that for Latin American nations it was "not probable, *ceteris paribus*, an autonomous development" (Cardoso, 1980:95); and b) that capitalist development, such as the one that was occurring in the region, was "contradictory, exploitative and inequality-generating" (Cardoso, 1972:21). Continues Cardoso:

> The beneficiaries of this "dependent development"

> are...different from those that the "development of underdevelopment" theory supposes. It is the State enterprises, multinational corporations and the local enterprises associated to both. These social agents constitute what I have called elsewhere the "tripod of associated-dependent development" (ibid:22).

We shall elaborate on the role of the State in the process of capital accumulation in section 2.3 below. It should be added that the forms of articulation of peripheral and semiperipheral countries to the international system are not reduced to *direct* investment by transnational corporations, but also through international trade, in-bond production and indirect investment through government and private borrowing abroad. Now, how do the media fit into the dependent development process?

The Media and the Internationalization of Capital

With the exception of Cuba and partially Nicaragua today, the mass media in Latin America, especially television, have followed the U.S. model of organization and functioning, as commercial enterprises, depending on advertising revenues for their financing, striving to attract wide audiences to sell to advertisers through the "cost-per-thousand" standard. The expansion of commercial television has followed very closely the post-World War II expansion of North American capital abroad. It is possible to say that transnational corporations

and commercial TV spread together throughout the Latin American subcontinent during the 1950s and 1960s (Janus, 1980). Even though some countries such as Chile when TV was first established (Fuenzalida Hernández, 1981) and Peru after the 1968 *coup d'etat* (Atwood and Mattos, 1982), have attempted alternative forms of organization of the media, their return to a commercial form has inexhorably followed afterwards.

In this section we examine some studies that have analyzed the commercial character of TV and the media in Latin America, as following from the process of internationalization of capital. In Chapter 1 we found evidence of the ideologico-cultural impact of the media on their Latin American audiences. Such a cultural impact has been conceptualized as being part of a broader process of "cultural imperialism/dependency" (Dagnino, 1973; Schiller, 1976; Salinas and Paldán, 1979). Some authors have more specifically written about "picture-tube imperalism" (Wells, 1972), or "media imperialism/dependency" (Boyd-Barret, 1977; Fejes, 1981). However, on the one hand, the concept itself of "culture" and of "cultural dependence" has been too loosely and broadly defined, so as to render it difficult to research (Sarti, 1981). There are interesting conceptual attempts to elaborate the notion of cultural dependence, and some solid evidence of the fact that there is a correlation between the

expansion of military power, of financial, commercial and productive capacity, and of the control of knowledge, information and ideological resources in the international arena (Schiller, 1971; Carnoy, 1980). But we still need a good theory of "cultural imperialism/dependency." We pointed out also in Chapter 1 that still much more research is needed in the Latin American context regarding the concrete modalities of the cultural impact of TV and the media, especially about the observed "de-nationalizing" effects.

The "media imperialism thesis" (Tunstall, 1977) has usually been based on the isolation of the media from the larger economic and political context and processes. For example, Wells (1972) emphasized *direct* ownership of Latin American TV networks by U.S. networks as an important factor explaining the development of commercial U.S.-type television in the region, and of U.S. "picture-tube imperialism." But this author's own data indicate that *direct* investment came about almost a decade after TV had been established in Latin America. On the other hand, such a direct investment has gradually been withdrawn.

Another type of support for the "media imperialism" thesis is found in the patterns of programming imports and exports which show a "one-way flow" (Varis, 1974). However, for instance Jeremy Tunstall wondered whether there was "one

media imperialist, or a dozen?" when noticing that "Mexico and Argentina have a tradition of exporting media to their neighbours; Egypt exports to the Arab world, while Indian films and records go to many countries in Africa and Asia" (1977:62). Recent research on television programming flows in America shows that Mexico and Brazil are heavy exporters within Latin America--where, however, still about 80% of total imported TV programming is from the U.S. (Antola and Rogers, 1982:3-4). Tunstall, though, indicated that those "countries that are strong exporters of media tend themselves to be unusually heavy importers of American media" (op cit:62). For instance, the Mexican Televisa corporation, which accounts for nearly all of Mexican TV programming exports, still imports about 50% of its total programming time, mostly from the U.S. (Antola and Rogers, 1982:5-6). Thus, it is at least problematic to ascertain whether or not a nation is a "media imperialist" departing only from the import-export flows. Even if we suppose that for example Brazil an Mexico are actually media "subimperialists" in the region, it would be fair to ask what difference has this fact made regarding more global patterns of economic dependence for both countries, and regarding the internal disparities in the distribution of wealth, power and cultural rewards. If television and the other commerial mass media in those countries have contributed, through their economic and ideologico-political functions, to the process of capital

accumulation and "associated-dependent development," then the media would have a part (as small as it can be) in the global causal process that has led to these nations' present situation of subordination to external economic forces and interests, and to a socially excluding, income-concentrating pattern of economic development (Cardoso, 1973a). Thus, the object of analysis should be not the media isolated from larger economic and political processes, but the media's articulation with those broader structures and processes. Or, as Arriaga (1980:13) put it, "imperialism, not 'cultural' imperialism, but imperialism *period*."

Another, more fruitful line of analysis on the role of the commercial media of informal education within the process of dependent capitalist development would focus on the historical processes that have shaped their functioning. On the one hand, there is evidence that the patterns of ownership and control in Latin America are very concentrated (Schenkel, 1974), and that those in control of the media are--in varied combinations--the same sectors that Cardoso called the "tripod" of dependent development, namely the State, a fraction of the local bourgeoisies and the transnational sector (Mattelart, 1976; 1977; Beltrán and Cardona, 1980; Montoya 1980; Sánchez Ruiz, 1981). A good approximation to the historical process that shaped the commercial and "transnationalized" nature of the Latin

American media (even when they are locally owned as is the case of Mexican and Brazilian television today) is the study by Janus (1980) in which she shows the correspondence of the process of internationalization of capital, especially through the expansion of U.S. trasnational manufacturing corporations, with the expansion of transnational advertising agencies, and their growing dominance in the Latin American markets. The spread of these two complementary economic actors corresponds to the process of Latin American industrialization, and the commercialization of the media is found to respond to the realization needs generated by the pattern of dependent capitalist development (cfr. also Fejes, 1980; U.N. Centre for Transnational Corporations, 1979):

> It is safe to say that the very form and contents of the mass media today reflect their development as advertising tools and any attempt to describe the character of modern media without stressing their commercial function is both unproductive and even misleading. Traditionally thought of as channels of entertainment, news, education and other forms of information, they must now be recognized first in their role as channels of advertising and consumer ideology (Janus, 1980:4-5).

Hence, from a structural viewpoint one should ask, knowing that the commercial media are important potential and real informal educators, not only *who* is the educator, but also *what for* is such informal education and *who benefits* from it, given the concrete historical processes that have led to their structural functioning within the

Latin American capitalist societies. It appears, from our reading of the literature, that the informal educators through commercial television are not only the direct media owners as in the case of the private and "public" commercial media (in Mexico the *State* runs also a commercial TV network); but also the direct sponsors of the medium, advertisers and advertising agencies which are predominantly transnational corporations and big local firms; and the State, both as an administrative-repressive institution in constant search for legitimacy and consent, and in its recent role as *producer* of commodities. These sectors are thus also the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the process. The global *what for*, is then the reproduction of the pattern of dependent capitalist development.

2.3. *On the Capitalist State*

We have highlighted the State as an important actor--and beneficiary--within the process of dependent development. Moreover, it has become increasingly evident that in contemporary capitalist social formations in general the State has become much more than the idealized guard of the "common good," separate from economic concerns and interests, that the traditional idealist and libertarian theories asserted it was (Carnoy, forthcoming; Offe, 1974; 1982). The

expansion of State activities, in particular its growing direct intervention within the economic processes, has led to a renewed interest about its nature and modes of functioning within capitalist societies (Miliband, 1977; Poulantzas, 1980; Therborn, 1980). In this section we shall specify a number of general traits of the capitalist State that are useful to form a framework to understand the concrete functioning of the Mexican State as it relates to the development of television in Mexico.

Power, Domination and the State

A discussion of the concept of the State cannot be separated from the notion of *power* and *domination* in society.
For the purposes of this chapter we consider power as the exercise of domination. That is, following Guillermo O'Donnell, we understand as power in its broadest sense "the actual or potential capacity to regularly impose one's will upon others, including but not necessarily against their will" (1978:1158). Thus, power or domination is an asymetric relationship between social subjects. The asymetry or inequality of such a relationship emerges out of the differential access to and control of "domination resources," whereby it is possible to "attain the adjustment of the actions and non-actions of the dominated to the--explicit,

tacit or assumed--will of the dominant" (ibid:1159). Now, at the individual level sheer physical strength, or knowledge, are potential domination resources which can be used to impose one's will upon others. But we are interested in power and domination at the societal level:

> Domination and conflict are inherent in class societies, and are based on specific concrete features of their mode of production. They are rooted in the process of extraction and appropriation of what is produced by human labour (Miliband, 1977:18).

Thus, in class societies the foremost "social differentiator" with respect to access to and control of domination resources is the class structure itself. That is, the class that is economically dominant tends to have greater access to domination resources. However, it should be noticed that *"relations of power do not exhaust class relations* and may go a certain way beyond them" (Poulantzas, 1980:43), as for instance in the case of gender and race domination. Nevertheless, we agree with Poulantzas in that "in class societies all power bears a class significance" (ibid).

According to O'Donnell (op cit:1159), the most important power resources in society are: a) the means of physical coercion; b) economic resources (ownership of means of production, etc.); c) information resources in the broad sense, including scientific and technological knowledge; and d) the means of ideological influence and control, "through

which the dominated assumes the asymetric relationship of which he is a part as just and natural, and therefore does not understand it or question it as domination" (ibid). From this list--and from the information in the previous chapter--we can infer that the mass media of communication and informal education can be considered real domination resources: as means of ideological influence and control, as information resources and as economic resources, if we agree that their role as advertising media is an important economic fuction. On the other hand, there seems to be consensus on the Weberian notion that in capitalist societies the *legitimate* monopoly of the means of physical coercion belongs to the State (ibid:1160; Poulantzas, 1980:80). That is, unlike for instance in feudal societies, one defining trait of capitalism is that those who own and control the means of production--the capitalist class--are deprived of the direct control of the means of repression.

Still, within the Marxist and neoMarxist literature the State is understood as the guarantor of the reproduction of the "capitalist relations of production, of the class articulation of society, of the systematic differentiation of access to power resources (or domination system)" (O'Donnell, 1978:1163). To clarify this we shall introduce an analytic distinction. At the highest level of abstraction, according to Cardoso (1979:38-39), the notion of the State refers to

the fundamental "pact of domination" that prevails within a social formation among social classes and fractions of classes: "the capitalist state is the 'expression' of the capitalist mode of class domination." However, this is a definition that hardly permits concrete historical analyses of the capitalist State. On the one hand, the State hardly exhausts *all* power and domination relations in society (Poulantzas, 1980:35). Furthermore, seen as a "pact of domination" without any qualification, the State appears either as a monolithic, one-way imposition, or as a cordial agreement or "social contract" between dominant and dominated classes, without any conflict or cleavages. Even though we shall see below that consent of the subordinate classes is a key component of the exercise of hegemony, it should be remarked that in a class society, which is based on the exploitation of one class by another, struggle over the social surplus product becomes a necessary condition. Thus, *politics* becomes a "specific articulation of class struggles" (Miliband, 1976:19). Or, to put it in Engels' words:

> In order that the antagonists, the classes with economically opposed interests, not be consumed...the necessity of a power is imposed which, apparently situated above society, must soften the conflict, maintaining it in the limits of 'order': that power, *coming from society* but situated above it and increasingly foreign, is the State (quoted by Hamilton, 1982:5).

Thus understood, the State is the specifically political component of the domination structure in a concrete social formation (O'Donnell, 1978:1158). State power, then, is a relation between opposing and unequal class forces, "expressed in the content of state policies (...) State power is exercised through the state apparatus, or more precisely, through a system of state apparatuses" (Therborn, 1980:34-35). Hence, we have two analytic aspects of the State, in words of Guillermo O'Donnell (1979:287): "First, its analytic reality as the political aspect of certain social relations of domination, and, second, its concrete objectification as a set of institutions and legal norms."

State Power, Class Power

Some clarifications are in order, which are relevant in relation to the concrete State we investigate in this dissertation (the Mexican State). Firstly, it has to be recalled that the State performs other functions in society, besides that of "social control" through its repressive apparatuses (police and military), especially as State activities and apparatuses expand beyond the specifically "political." It is also true that the State in a particular social formation also has to deal with, and is "determined" (i.e., its action is delimited) by international relations

among nation-states, or the international power structure and relationships (we shall address this issue below). However, what constitutes the principal defining characteristic of the State is the specifically "political," i.e., its relationships with the power and domination structure *within a given territory* (or nation-state).

A second issue that needs clarification pertains to whether the State has power and interests *of its own*. This issue arises out of an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, virtually all analysts of the capitalist State agree in that, in normal conditions, the State needs and *does* have some degree of autonomy from civil society, especially from the dominant class or class fractions. The degree of autonomy attributed to the State varies not only depending on what particular social formation the analyst is studying but also on the historical specificities of the conjuncture. Another factor that influences how much autonomy is attributed to the State is whether one studies long-term trends (e.g., the Mexican State since the 1910 revolution as in Leal, 1975), or significant conjunctures such as certain particularly "autonomous" administrations (the Mexican State under Cárdenas as in Hamilton, 1982), or specific policies (the "profit-sharing" decision in Mexico as in Purcell, 1975, or as proposed by Skocpol, 1982). The most probable outcome is that in the latter type of studies more variation and even

contradicting evidence among investigations shall be found, while the longer-term the analyses cover, the most probable that "limits to State autonomy" shall be found.

Postulating State autonomy (however relative) seems to contradict the observation by analysts within the Marxian perspective that the State reproduces the conditions of class exploitation and domination, and supports the process of capital accumulation (which in capitalist societies is one and the same with the previous item); in sum, that it serves the interests of the capitalist class. This apparent paradox is expressed by Poulantzas thus: "it can be said that the capitalist State best serves the interests of the capitalist class only when the members of this class do not participate directly in the State apparatus, that is to say when the ruling class is not the politically governing class" (1972:246). For instance by aiding to the reproduction of the labor force, giving certain material and "symbolic" or ideological concessions to the working class, the State serves the interests of the capitalist class *as a class*--maybe not the interests of individual capitalists who would rather give less concessions, wage increases, etc.--because otherwise phenomena of "superexploitation" and as a reaction violent uprisings increase their probabilities to emerge, which could endanger the general conditions for capital accumulation.

Now, we agree that the ultimate source of power of the capitalist State is *the structure of domination itself*, that is, the unequal distribution of opportunities of access to domination resources, based on the class structure. But since the State itself controls a basic power resource such as the means of coercion through its police and army apparatuses; and since, as in the Mexican case, the modern State also tends to control--in conjunction with the capitalist class--the other domination resources such as information, economic resources and some of the most important ideological apparatuses, it is difficult to deny that the State has power of its own. Ralph Miliband's (1976) analytic distinction between *class power* and *State power* is a rather useful one, which permits concrete investigations, rather than dogmatic assertions such as that the State does not have any power of its own (and therefore is a mere instrument of the ruling class), or that *all* ideological apparatuses are "State apparatuses" (e.g., the family, the church, the media, etc.). Furthermore, as State apparatuses and bureaucracies grow and diversify their activities, as they become more organizationlly integrated and centralized; as they acquire more power and possibilities to enhance it, it is difficult also to maintain that the State does not have any interests of its own. That is, even if the capitalist State may be considered an "expression of

class interests" by the sheer historical observation of the systematic bias towards favoring the interests of the capitalist class, "such an expression requires an *organization* which, since it cannot be other than a social network of people, exists in its own right and possesses interests of its own" (Cardoso, 1979:51). If the thesis that Latin American capitalist dependent development has been controlled by and has had as its beneficiaries the State, transnational capital and the fraction of national capital associated with them, then such a type of development has *also* been in the interests of the Latin American states (especialy of high-office bureaucracies and the leading State apparatuses).

Capital Accumulation, Legitimation and Hegemony

One important attribute of the contemporary capitalist State both in the central and in the peripheral social formations is its *increased* economic participation, especially in order to "create and sustain *conditions* of accumulation" (Offe, 1975:126). Some authors argue that the origin of the need for State intervention in the economy is the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which was enunciated by Marx in Vol. I of *Capital* (Hirsch, 1978:67-75; Poulantzas, 1980:173-179). Hence, indicates Poulantzas:

> State intervention in the economy should be essentially understood as the *introduction of countertendencies* to this tendency, in relation to the new coordinates whereby the average rate of profit is established in the present phase of monoply capitalism (ibid:173).

The problem is that there is an almost complete lack of *concrete* historical studies that show, on the one hand, that the "law of value" actually operates in the present stage of capitalism as Marx showed it operated (under a specific set of assumptions) in the competitive stage (cfr. Appelbaum, 1978; Wright, 1979:111-180). On the other hand, there is also scarcity of studies on the historically *concrete* countertendencies introduced by the State and their *actual* operation. Thus, whether or not that is the case we are too limited at the present moment to ascertain. For our particular purposes, given the actual, historically observable trend towards greater State intervention in the accumulation process, Claus Offe's argument--though perhaps less "elegant"--is a good point of departure:

> Its [the State's] power relationships, its very decision-making power *depends* (like every other social relationship in capitalist society) upon the presence and continuity of the accumulation process [which means the reproduction of capitalist society]. In the absence of accumulation, everything, and especially the power of the State, tends to desintegrate [sic] (1975:126).

State intervention in the process of expanded reproduction of capital occurs, according to Offe, through two main kinds of

activities: allocation and production. Allocation is a mode of activity based on *authority*: "resources and power that intrinsically *belong* to the State and are at the disposal of the State are allocated" (ibid:128). Hence, the State allocates concessions to exploit the natural resources that belong to the nation as well as rights and duties through the legal system and the State's regulatory acctions. Taxation, State demand for privately produced goods and services, tariffs, repression, subsidies, are other "things" that are allocated by the State. This mode of participaion can be traced back to even the "non-interventionist" liberal capitalist State. In addition, under certain conditions it has become necessary for the State to *produce*, for instance, physical inputs, infrastructure and even some types of strategic industrial goods:

> ... such productive State activity is initiated by the actual or anticipated sectoral or general absence of accumulation (or disturbances in the accumulation process). The rationale is to restore accumulation or to avoid or eliminate perceived threats to accumulation" (ibid:132).

From this participation of the State in the accumulation pocess, since its principal beneficiares are the private accumulating units, emerges a continuous and potentally growing "legitimacy deficit" for the State (Weiler, 1983:260-261). That is, there exists a contradiction between the State's claim to serve the interests of the whole fabric

of society and its actual favoring one particular class. Antonio Gramsci noted this contradiction, and explains how the State could continue regaining legitimacy:

> ...It is true that the State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favorable conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the "national" energies. In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups--equilibria *in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e., stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interest* (1971:182; our emphasis).

Hence, thanks to its relative autonomy from the economically dominant class, the capitalist State is able to foster the process of capital accumulation and at the same time legitimize itself and the existing social order (Hamilton, 1982:7). Actually, by responding--in a historically limited and changing way--to the demands and struggles of the subordinate classes, the State is able to maintain the conditions of accumulation *and* the social hegemony that it exerts in favor of the capitalist class. In Chapter 1 above we have described the main elements of the Gramscian theory of "hegemony" within the problematic of what has been called the "key problem of modern sociology," namely the coexistence of economic, cultural and political inequalities

in society and their acceptance by those "worst affected by them" (Golding, 1981:63). Here we shall only recall that hegemony within this context is conceptualized as:

> ...the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. (...) Between consent and force stands corruption/fraud (which is characteristic of certain situations when it is hard to exercise the hegemonic function, and when the use of force is too risky). This consists in procuring the demoralization and paralysis of the antagonist (or antagonists) by buying its leaders--either covertly, or, in the cases of imminent danger, openly--in order to sow disarray and confusion in his ranks (Gramsci, 1971:80n).

The exercise of hegemony, therefore, consists of the combined use of the several types of "domination resources" that we enumerated above. A "hegemonic bloc" is conformed by the classes, fractions of classes or groups that directly or indirectly control and are directly benefitted by the unequal economic, political and cultural situation-process. Ideology is essential for the exercise of hegemony, but also is the practice referred to above of giving concrete *concessions* to the subordinate classes, without ever touching the "essential," i.e., the radical transformation of the relations of production and exploitation. Thus, for example a populist, reformist regime, may not represent a State that serves the interests of the subordinate classes, if by introducing reforms it simply prevents those very subordinate classes from mass-mobilizing and organizing in order exert pressures for radical changes or still greater concessions.

Hence, "preemptive reforms" can be considered an important type of hegemonic strategy. A preemptive reform is defined as "a cooptative response by political elites to their fears of uncontrolled political mobilization by the less advantaged elements of society" (Coleman and Davis, 1983:3). These preemptive reforms, as hegemonic strategies, may be merely symbolic, permitting some organized factions or selective sectors of the subaltern classes to be heard, but without their voice having any real influence on the political decision-making process. Or they may be substantive, implying real material concessions, so as to pacify potentially disruptive groups within the subaltern classes (ibid). Let us review now some aspects of the State in peripheral social formations.

Dependent Development and the State

There is no doubt that today there exists a "world system," within which nation-states are linked by economic, political and ideologico-cultural ties (Wallerstein, 1979; Sunkel and Fuenzalida, 1979). These inter-national relationships are unequal, given the varied levels of economic development of the different social formations that are linked in a combined way within such a world system (Amin, 1974). Because unequal development defines the differential access of nation-states

to domination resources, we must assume that there exists today an international power structure, in which those who control the most sophisticated and powerful weapons and armies, financial, commercial and productive units, and the world-wide flow of knowledge, information and ideology, are the leading political forces. There is no doubt that control of one or more of these resources in the world arena is highly correlated with control of the others. The unequal power among nations, thus, must be considered the background, "conditioning situation" of the exercise of power within one social formation. When the State in a peripheral or semiperipheral social formation deals with the transnational forms of capital operating in its territory, it cannot forget that transnational corporations are still nationally based and supported by their native governments (Carnoy, 1980:14). That is the "power context" that underlies all such dealings and transactions.

All the traits that we have outlined above of the capitalist State are as well applicable to the "dependent State" (Carnoy, forthcoming, Chapter 7). The difference in the analysis of the State in peripheral societies lies in the need for the inclusion of the external limits to the exercise of hegemony on the part of both, the State and the local bourgeoisies (the same should be said about the State and the bourgeoisie in the central countries, but their situation of

power gives them a far greater "relative autonomy" from constraints found in the international arena, such as the stage of the class struggle at the world level). In addition, we have argued that, in the process of dependent development, there actually is a *convergence* of interests and benefits of the State and transnational capital and the leading fractions of national capital. Hence, the internal domination structures already reflect the international ones; they are "internalized":

> Of course, imperialist penetration is a result of external social forces (multinational enterprises, foreign technology, international financial systems, embassies, foreign states and armies, etc.). What we affirm simply means that the system of domination reappears as an "internal" force, through the social practices of local groups and classes which try to enforce foreign interests, not precisely because they are foreign, but because they may coincide with values and interests that these groups pretend are their own (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979:xvi)

Thus, the concrete forms of organization of the State, its policies over time, etc., in peripheral social formations are delimited by the parameters set by the international hegemonic structure and the forms through which this domination system has been internalized. The failure of the Chilean attempt to establish a democratically elected socialist regime within a situation of dependent *capitalist* development shows the extreme measures that the external powers in conjunction with transnational and national capital may take in order to restore conditions

favorable to (national and transnational) capital accumulation. For example, the "deepening" of dependent capitalist development in the most industrialized nations of Latin America is said to have shown a certain "elective affinity" with the implantation of some form of "bureaucratic-authoritarian" State (ranging from the highly bureaucratic and--relatively--mildly authoritarian Mexican State to the military dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina and Chile) (O'Donnell, 1978b:7-15). The defining characteristics of the bureaucratic-authoritarian State are stated by O'Donnell as follows:

> (a) higher governmental positions usually are occupied by persons who come to them after successful careers in complex and highly bureaucratized organizations--the armed forces, the public bureaucracy, and large private firms; (b) political exclusion, in that it aims at closing channels of political access to the popular sector and its allies so as to deactivate them politically, not only by means of repression but also through the imposition of vertical (corporatist) controls by the state on such organizations as labor unions; (c) economic exclusion, in that it reduces or postpones indefinitely the aspiration to economic participation of the popular sector; (d) depolitization, in the sense that it pretends to reduce social and political issues to "technical" problems to be resolved by means of interactions among the higher echelons of the above-mentioned organizations; and (e) it corresponds to a stage of important transformations in the mechanisms of capital accumulation of its society, changes that are, in turn, a part of the "deepening" process of a peripheral and dependent capitalism characterized by extensive industrialization (ibid:6).

In the next chapter, when we contextualize the research problem, we shall provide a brief description of the Mexican

State. The general conceptual framework presented in this chapter shall allow us to establish our working hypotheses on the relationships among television, capital accumulation, and the State in Mexico.

CHAPTER 3

Analytical Model

In this Chapter we state the research problem after a brief contextualization, and then the working hypotheses and analyses necessary to support them. The final section explains the methodological conceptions that guide this historical and structural investigation.

3.1. *Context of the Research problem*

We saw in Chapter 2 above that the institutional form of the mass media in Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, followed the commercial model of the United States. This process of diffusion of the North American model followed closely the incorporation of Latin America into the present stage of development of capitalism and international division of labor, the expansion of transnational corporations in the area and the occurrence, in some countries of the region such as Mexico, of a process of "associated-dependent development." The dynamic actors in this process have been transnational and national capital, associated with the

State. The results of this process of industrialization and modernization have not translated into generalized well-being of the population at large, equality and satisfaction of basic needs, etc., but into the concentration of income and of access to domination resources in the higher echelons of the population, and poverty for the majority. At the same time, the type of articulation of these Latin American countries to the world system has not brought about a greater autonomy from outside economic and political trends, forces and interests, but just the opposite (Dos Santos, 1978; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979). Along with this process of economic development, which has preceded and encompassed the development and expansion of the commercial media systems, "bureaucratic-authoritarian" regimes have proliferated in the most industrialized countries of the region (Malloy, 1977; Collier, 1979). This type of regime has been very instrumental in fostering capitalist dependent development (O'Donnell, 1978b).

In the case of Mexico, unlike most other Latin American countries with a similar path of economic growth, a bureaucratic-authoritarian State was consolidated since the 1920s. This regime was run by the bureaucratic-military faction that emerged victorious from the 1910 Revolution. By the late 1940s the military lost its hegemony within the Mexican State, which has since maintained a remarkable

framework of political stability, propitious for the dependent industrialization of the country (Córdova, 1972; Reyna, 1974; Leal, 1975; Levy and Székely, 1983). Notwithstanding the recent structural crises in 1976 and 1982, economic growth and industrialization with political stability are key descriptors of the Mexican political economy during most of this century (Levy and Székely, 1983). Given the inequalities in all orders that have resulted from the capitalist development path followed by Mexico, the process of capital accumulation with political stability has only been made possible by the existence of a strong, hegemonic State, characterized by an enormous concentration of power in the President and a corporatist structure that has managed to incorporate and coopt most organized social and political forces in the nation (Córdova, 1972; González Casanova, 1981). Even though there have been in Mexico's recent history political manifestations of discontent, ranging from relatively peaceful organized student, working class and peasant movements, to guerrilla uprisings in the 1970s, the State has managed to pacify them. It should be pointed out, however, that large-scale repression has been the Mexican State's last resort only. Rather, the strategies followed can be best characterized as "hegemonic" in the Gramscian sense (cfr. Chapters 1 and 2 above): a combination of force and ideology, negociation and cooptation; fragmentation of the opposition;

preemptive reforms through ideological and politico-economic concessions. In sum, a combinaion of "force and consent" has been the main source of the political stability and relative peace--in the context of Latin America--, that the Mexican Sate has maintained as a context for a continued process of capital accumulation (González Casanova, 1981).

An important fact in our contextualization is that the sustained process of capital accumulation in the last 40 to 50 years in Mexico has been based not only in the *political* support of the Mexican State, but in its *active participation* in such a process (Reynolds, 1977; FitzGerald, 1978; Levy and Székely, 1983). This participation has translated into a continuous expansion of the State's space of direct intervention to practically all aspects of Mexican life. Thus, the State is present today in various economic activities traditionally reserved to private enterprise, including the "culture industry." For example, the Mexican State runs the second largest *commercial* TV network in the country. This "interventionist" State has had to reduce its participation in some economic and cultural sectors at certain conjunctures, such as the beginning of the last two administrations (1976 and 1982), in the face of severe economic crises. However, its overall expansionism remains the historical constant. The political, ideological and economic strength of the State in Mexico point towards a

considerable "relative autonomy." But there are structural "limits to State autonomy" (Hamilton, 1982). Hence, the most important trait of the Mexican political system is, in Labastida's (1974:1) words,

> ...the State's capacity to impose its will over any class or social group, including the bourgeoisie, *as long as it does not undermine the very bases of capitalism*. This strength of the State originates from its semi-corporative character; from the combination of concrete ideological and political elements that shape what has been designated as national-populism; and from the great concentration of power and prestige that, within this scheme, has the president. The weight of the public sector in the economy should be added to the former traits (our emphasis).

Thus, the Mexican State possesses a great deal of autonomy, so far as its policies and actions are *reproductive* of the capitalist mode of production. A non-negligible limit to the Mexican State's relative autonomy is the country's geopolitical situation, being the southern neighbor of the most powerful capitalist nation in the world today, the United States.

The last contextualizing remark refers to the fact that the Mexican State is not a monolithic and homogeneous bloc. There have been, as there are today within the State personnel, various factions contending for hegemony over the State apparatusses. Hence, since its post-Revolutionary origins liberal and progressive factions have been inserted within the State; a nationalist, "anti-imperialist" and "social

welfare-oriented" thought has endured and has been represented by some of these factions (Cordera and Tello, 1981). However, it appears that the liberal and progressive factions have been losing ground in the hegemonic struggle within the State (Levy and Székely, 1983), and the overall development project pursued and fostered by the State has been that of dependent capitalist development, with the unequal and contradictory consequences mentioned above (Cordova, 1972; 1977; Gonzalez Casanova, 1981). The Alemán administration (1947-1952), which authorized the establishment of commercial television in Mexico, represented the consolidation of a trend that began in the previous administration (Manuel Avila Camacho's), from the populist and "quasi-socialist" policies of Lázaro Cardenas to an "elite-oriented" style of government. This style was characterized by the full support of the Mexican State for private national and foreign investment, and the postponement of concessions and reivindications for the working class and the peasantry (Villareal, 1977). Since then the Mexican State fully committed itself with a development model of economic growth, based on industrialization and political stability (Reyna, 1974; FitzGerald, 1978; Cordera, 1979; González Casanova, 1981; Levy and Székely, 1983).

3.2. *Research Problem*

The basic assumption from which we depart in stating the research problem is that television, as shown in Chapter 1, is an important agent of informal education. As such, TV has the potential and real power to influence the emergence and reproduction of the dominant social definitions of reality (in particular, social reality), explanations of how this reality works, value orientations and behavior models, etc. But in the Mexican social formation--as in many other capitalist societies--television has a commercial character, which is ultimately the source of the particular type of "curriculum" that this pervasive informal education vehicle transmits. In sum, television has expanded in Mexico as a preponderantly commercial enterprise, providing a valuable service to other capitalist enterprises through advertising, and this has determined the social functions that the medium fulfills. Thus, television, since it was established in 1950, has been part and parcel of the process of capitalist development that Mexico has undergone in the last decades. Since the TV signals travel through the space over the national territory, which is defined by Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution as a property of the nation, the State had the power to decide what concrete form of organization

the medium would acquire in the country. With the State's sanction, support *and* participation, television has developed and expanded in Mexico as a commercial enterprise and the pattern of ownership and control has been such that today a duopoly, constituted by the State and a private corporation, control the medium in the country.

In this investigation we set out to explain, from a historical and structural perspective, what accounts for the commercial character and social functioning in Mexico of the influential and pervasive informal education medium that is television. We are interested in both the *origin* of commercial television and in its *continued* commercial character. As a way to relate commercial television with the process of capitalist development in the country, we are interested in pinpointing what social groups or classes have had control of and benefitted from the development of TV, and how these groups or classes are related to the groups or classes that have controlled, and benefitted from the development process in Mexico. Finally, the rol of the State is a central factor to be included in the historical analysis. This research is thus an attempt to contribute to the explanation of the long term articulation of national and transnational capital, the capitalist State, and the media, in the process of dependent accumulation. From the perspective of the informal-educational functioning of TV, we

want to investigate who have been the direct educators, who have directly or indirectly benefitted from the informal-educational workings of commercial television, and *what for* has been ultimately the informal education massively disseminated by commercial television.

By the time TV was established in Mexico, there were at least two models of organization of the medium in the world: 1) the commercial, advertising-based model that had evolved in the United States on the basis of the previous experience of radio broadcasting; and 2) the Western-European model, institutionally linked to the State--though with varying degrees of autonomy--and whose source of revenues was not advertising, but both a small fee paid by the viewers and State subsidy. It is widely known that the latter type of TV organization tends to produce predominantly informational, cultural and educational programs, while in the former the dominant kind of programming is entertainment.

The two alternatives were considered by the Mexican State. In 1947, President Miguel Alemán appointed a high level commission, led by a well known intellectual, to survey the existing television systems in the U.S. and Europe. There are certain historical elements that made probable the decision in favor of the European system: a) the antecedent that in 1924, barely one year after the first commercial radio

station was established, the government launched the station of the Secretariat of Public Education; b) during the Cárdenas administration (1936-1940), official radio stations proliferated in Mexico, so the State had some experience in educational broadcasting, and therefore the State personnel was probably aware of the cultural, educational and politico-ideological potentialities of the new medium; c) the expansionist tendency in general of the Mexican State; and d) the report of the commission appointed by Miguel Alemán actually favored the European, BBC-type model of television. However, television in Mexico finally followed the institutional model of the U.S., having Miguel Alemán put the medium in the hands of private capital.

The research here reported has tried to explain the origin of commercial television at two levels of generality. First, in terms of the concrete decision-making process that led to the adoption of the particular institutional form that TV has today in Mexico. But the historical reconstruction of this conjunctural episode would not have been sufficiently explanatory, unless it is related to broader, structural determinations: "The concrete is concrete because it is the summing up of many determinations, thus the unity of the manifold" (Marx, 1976:31).

Hence, besides the fact that, for instance, it was a close

friend of President Alemán who received the first government concession to exploit commercially a TV station, we have searched for elements of "historical necessity" in the historical context that surrounded--and preceded--the concrete decision. The elements of such a historical context shall be spelled out in the following section.

The continuation and expansion of commercial television, and the role of the State in this process, are addressed through the analysis of several controversial episodes, such as the promulgation of the 1960 Federal Law of Radio and Television, the establishment in 1969 of a new tax on radio and TV broadcasting, the entrance of the State itself into commercial TV in 1972, the 1973 law which regulates radio and television contents, and the "right to information" public debates in 1980. The outcome of these episodes, namely, the gradual strengthening of the private TV broadcasters with the support of the State, shall be analyzed in the same way: attempting to describe the concrete episode, providing as well a historical contextualization to explain the event from a structural perspective.

3.3. *Hypotheses and Analyses Necessary*

The most general theoretical *and* methodological assumption from which this investigation departs, and which gives it a "historical and structural" character, is that: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1977:15). This general assumption is considered at the level of the "hard core" of a scientific research program (Lakatos, 1980), that is, as a fundamental assumption that cannot be fully tested by *one* particular investigation. It shall be clear below that we have attempted to explain the commercial character and functioning of television in Mexico, and its relationships with the State and with capitalist development, not only in terms of concrete decisions and actions of individual actors, but in terms of such decisions and actions as determined (i.e., delimited) by previous history and coexisting structures.

3.3.1. The principal hypothesis in this research postulates that the commercial character of television in Mexico is explained by the needs of capital accumulation, mediated by the intervention of the State. This can be illustrated as follows:

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---------------          ---------------          --------------
|Needs of      |         |Mediation of|         |Commercial  |
|(National and|         | the State  |         |Character   |
|Transnat'l)   |=======> |(Allocation,|======> |   and      |
|Capital       |         |Production) |         |Functioning|
|Accumulation |         |            |         |  of TV     |
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This hypothesis can be concretized in several ways, at various levels of generality. We shall concretize it first in relation to the origin of commercial television in Mexico: on the one hand, regarding the decision of President Alemán to allow the establishment of the U.S.-type model of television; on the other hand, in relation to the historical context that preceded and surrounded such a decision.

3.3.2. For the first aspect, the decision-making process itself, it is convenient to use an input-output model (Therborn, 1980; Almond and Powell, 1978). The inputs received and transformed by the state are twofold: demands (for allocation, for regulation, for information, for participation) and supports (material supports, compliance, and symbolic supports--respect, attention, etc.). The transformation or conversion process, in which supports and demands are "balanced" against political strength (power resources as defined in Chapter 2), leads to concrete State decisions and actions (as well as "non-decisions" and "non-actions"), assumed to correspond to the demands. The

process of "balancing" supports and demands is one of conflict, bargaining, negotiation and compromise, within the State apparatus, and between the State and social groups and forces, ultimately determined by political power (or acces to and control of power resources). From this framework we can establish further concrete propositions.

1) Individuals from national economic groups (given the existing legal restriction that only Mexican citizens could operate broadcasting stations), probably backed by foreign economic groups, were the main purveyors of demands and supports to the State regarding the establishment of television. Correspondingly, working class organizations did not have any participation in the bargaining and decision-making process that led to the adoption of the commercial model of TV. It is hypothesized, thus, that there was no other model of organization of television, alternative to the commercial model, being proposed to the State by any group, class or individual. The directly participating groups and individuals can be identified as: a) the individuals and groups who first applied for government concessions to operate and exploit TV stations; b) the Chamber of Radio Broadcasting.

2) Complementarily to the former proposition, the State is expected to have sought the direct participation of the

mentioned groups and individuals, for example, providing technical advice, in the decision-making process.

The analyses needed to support these propositions are historiographic in nature. The decision-making process that led to the establishment of television in Mexico is to be reconstructed by consulting historical sources: archives and publications of the Chamber of Radio and Television; archives and publications of the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation and other related private and public institutions. Interviews with relevant personnel from the TV industry and the above-mentioned institutions are also a source of knowledge about the concrete event (although President Miguel Alemán and the members of the commission that he appointed to study the TV systems abroad have already passed away). Other important sources of information are newspapers, magazines, as well as the existing studies about the history of television, the media, advertising and about the Alemán period in general.

3.3.3. But we hypothesize that the explanation of the concrete event under consideration, the decision making process that led to the adoption of the commercial model of TV in Mexico, has further historical and structural determinations. This hierarchy of historical-structural determinations, when spelled out, shall help us explain as

well the *continuation*, up to the present, of the commercial character of this communication and informal education medium. The historical conditions that we hypothesize made the establishment of the advertising-based, U.S. model of commercial television the most probable, are:

1) The historical inheritance of commercial radio broadcasting. Radio had a 27 year history of commercial functioning, and was already fully developed as an advertising vehicle in Mexico. Some of the television poineers, such as Emilio Azcárraga and Guillermo González Camarena--who received the second and third concessions to operate TV stations, respectively--began their activities in radio broadcasting since the 1930s. The development of commercial radio broadcasting in Mexico followed the structure that was established first in the United States, owing to economic and cultural influences from the latter country. Furthermore, the most important radio networks from the U.S., NBC and CBS, participated directly in the establishment and expansion of the most important Mexican radio networks during the 1930s and 1940s.

2) Mexico was in the "take off" stage of dependent industrialization. The import-substitution industrialization process, especially in the production of consumption goods, was well on its way by the late 1940s. It is the sector that

produces consumption goods (Department II, in Marxian terminology), in particular its subsector that produces "final goods," which needs to resort to the use of mass advertising in its marketing strategies, in order to realize through the sale the value of its commodities. This made television a prospectively profitable advertising vehicle, which it had already proven to be in the United States. The industrialization process, furthermore, was being aided by a growing inflow of direct and indirect foreign investment.

3) The advertising business itself was also developing in Mexico, with the influence of the most advanced and sophisticated advertising industry in the world, that of the United States. The North American advertising agencies began establishing their Mexican branches since the 1940s.

4) The U.S. cultural industry was already influential in Mexico, through its participation in radio and magazines and the flow of North American music and films.

5) From a more general perspective, Mexico's northern neighbor, the United States, had emerged from World War II as the most powerful capitalist nation in the world. By the late 1940s the North American influence throughout the capitalist world was not only military and economic, but also political and cultural. It is safe to assume that, if the United States

was exerting this manifold influence all over the world, such was also the case in relation to the Mexican social formation.

All these factors are posited as the historical-structural context that may have determined the concrete outcome of the Alemán administration's decision, which made television a *commercial* medium of informal education.

The analysis needed, as the one for the former set of propositions, is of a historiographic character. The type of data needed to support the hypotheses is manifold. It ranges from the inquiry into official private and public archives, records and publications as well as sources of statistical data, to interviews with relevant personnel within and outside the television industry, and consultation of different kinds of publications such as newspapers and magazines. But most importantly, given the impossibility of one researcher generating *all* the information needed to support these hypotheses, an important source of information for the contextual aspects of this investigation is the reading of as much as possible of the available relevant literature about the economic and political developments that have historically surrounded and shaped the expansion of television in Mexico. This makes the present investigation a *collective* endeavor and achievement.

3.3.4. We also wish to explain historically the *continuation* of the commercial character of television, its role in the process of capital accumulation, and the State's mediation/participation in this process. In the first place, we contend that the *continuation*, even though in changing ways, of the historical conditions postulated in 3.3.3 above, has determined in its turn the continued process of expansion and consolidation of commercial television in Mexico. These shall be presented in the same order as in section 3.3.3, with relevant modifications.

1) Instead of the historical inheritance of commercial radio, here we posit the existence itself of the commercial model of television after 1950, and the medium's successful performance as an advertising vehicle, as a main determinant of its consolidation and continuity.

2) The process of industrialization also continued. Furthermore, during and immediately after the Alemán administration, Mexico entered into a "second stage" of the import-substitution process, beginning to produce internally durable consumer goods such as automobiles and home appliances, which also need to make an extensive use of mass advertising techniques and media. Direct and indirect foreign investment continued to be a dynamic element in the

uninterrupted process of industrialization.

3) The advertising industry continued expanding in Mexico. The U.S. transnational advertising agencies continued establishing branches in Mexico and eventually became the dominant ones in the Mexican advertising scene.

4) The U.S. cultural industry also continued to be influential in Mexico, now with the addition of substantial imports of North American TV programs to the overall flow of media messages from the United States into Mexico.

5) The United States continued to be the most powerful capitalist nation in the world. The economic, cultural and political influence of the United States in the world has been increasingly challenged by the "re-emerging" economic powers of Europe and Japan. However, Mexico's geo-political situation as southern neighbor of the U.S. has translated into a greater but unequal economic, political and cultural articulation and integration of both countries.

The considerations at the end of section 3.3.3 regarding the type of data needed to perform the historical analysis apply as well in this section.

3.3.5. The participation of the Mexican State in the

establishment, consolidation and expansion of commercial television is thus seen in this investigation as responding to the immediate and contextual factors that we have postulated in the previous sections. The concrete ways through which the State has related to television are: a) As juridical regulator; b) as allocator of concessions, frequencies, infrastructure; c) as a source of news and messages; d) as a sponsor (advertiser) of the private commercial media, and e) as owner and operator of commercial and non-commercial television stations and networks. Items a) through d) belong to the allocative function of the State and e) belongs to the productive function.

We postulate here that these forms of State-television relationships, and their historical concretizations in laws, policies and direct intervention, have constituted over time the way the State has supported the consolidation and strengthening of the predominantly commercial character of Television in Mexico.

To illustrate this assertion historically, we have selected several salient episodes in the history of TV broadcasting in Mexico, which have represented controversial issues. The outcome of each of such events could have been either the strengthening or the weakening of both the commercial character of television and of the power of the private

groups that have come to control the medium in Mexico. All these events have been preceded and/or accompanied by debates, negotiations and/or struggles, of varying intensities, in relation to the propriety of the commercial character of television as an information, cultural transmission and informal education vehicle, *vis-à-vis* its wide social influence. The State's mediation and/or intervention in all of these events, we contend, has strengthened the commercial character of television and the power of the medium's owners. These episodes are: a) the promulgation of the 1960 Federal Law of Radio and Television; b) the struggle in 1969 about a new tax that would have allowed the State to participate in the ownership of the existing private radio and TV stations. The taxation modality that was finally implemented was in the form of payment of the tax by the broadcasters through their putting 12.5% of broadcasting time at the disposal of the State; c) the entry in 1972 of the State itself into *commercial* television; d) the establishment in 1973 of the law regulating radio and television contents; and e) the "right to information" issue and debate that occurred from 1977 to 1982.

Again, we hypothesize that all these events constitute instances of both the consolidation of the commercial model of TV and of the gradually greater power of private capital, with the support and/or mediation of the State. The same

range of information sources as for the previous hypotheses shall be used to substantiate the last set of propositions.

Commercial television has undergone a process of expansion in Mexico, extending its reach, influence and social significance. At the same time, TV has experienced a process of concentration and centralization of ownership and control. Hence, we postulate a growing contradiction between the expanding social reach, influence and significance of television, and the shrinking scope of its patterns of control and appropriation. This contradiction is a correlate of the main contradiction in a capitalist society where production's nature, reach and significance is increasingly socialized, but the social product is privately appropriated.

3.4. *Methodological Considerations*

This research has followed a historical-structural methodology, which emanates from a revival of the Marxian critique of political economy (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979:ix-xiv). The method is understood here as a set of basic principles and patterns of reasoning, through which the scientist links theory, concepts and the data of experience, and not merely as a set of techniques (Suppe, 1977:684;

Blaug, 1982:xi). A neoMarxian approach has been selected to guide this research *not* because the researcher considers it a kind of algorithm to produce truths, but because it is the most fruitful framework he knows about, useful to ask *significant questions* about social relations and social change. The method is thus considered also a framework because "if methodology presupposes method, the former being the explicit expression of the latter, method presupposes theory--ontological, axiological, epistemological" (Marković, 1979:5). That is, the method, as philosophers of science have recently begun to realize, is not an abstract, universal procedure detached from historically bound fundamental conceptions and assumptions (Laudan, 1979; Lakatos, 1980). The method is tightly and deeply intertwined with other elements of the "disciplinary matrix" (symbolic generalizations, ontological and heuristic models, *values*, exemplar problem solutions, etc., in Kuhn's (1970) conception), through which a community of scientists, following a common "paradigm" attempt to "force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education" (ibid:5).

This research has not made use of formally sophisticated measurement or analysis techniques. We have undertaken here a historical investigation, postulating relationships among variables, factors, events and structures. Given the

complexity of such relationships, but especially given the number and complexity of the said variables, factors, events and structures, it would have been impossible to operationalize them in the traditional way, leaving no doubts as to their valid and reliable observability. Furthermore, if the definition of our research problem and hypotheses had been subject to the availability of valid and reliable measures of our variables, etc., we might as well have undertaken another research. We would have suffered a "methodological inhibition," of the type denounced by C. Wright Mills (1974:69) in the 1950s. Against such a methodological inhibition, we postulate that a research problem does not have to wait until there are refined techniques and measures available to tackle it (Kuhn, 1977:178-224). Actually, "unfettered thought is the most essential of research methods" (Andresky, 1973:109). Hence, the only real proof that we can offer about our efforts to test empirically as rigorously as possible our working hypotheses is the concrete result, presented in the historical chapters below.

3.4.1. In what follows we describe the "logic of discovery" that has informed this research, that is, the set of patterns of reasoning and fundamental underlying assumptions that constitute the historical-structural and dialectical method. It consists of three basic assumptions: historicity,

structuralism, and contradiction.

1) *Historicity.* "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1977:15). Historicism does not mean, as Popper (1960) argued, the tendency to "prophetize," that is, to predict the long-term future. Rather, "historicism is, above all, a tendency to interpret all of nature, society and man in constant motion and change. ... A genetic explanation is the inevitable consequence of historicism" (Schaff, 1976:153). But an important complementary dimension of historicism is pointed out by Wright (1979:13), when he asserts that "to analyze a problem historically is to study contradictions and change, not simply to uncover 'origins'." Finally, a dialectical historicist view considers all forms of social organization and modes of production as transitory, in constant motion and change. Therefore, historicism is an important source of the critical nature of a dialectical approach to social science, and represents not only a look at the past and present, but also at the possibilities for the future:

> To the Marxist ... the specific historical (i.e., transitory) character of capitalism is a major premise. It is by virtue of this fact that the Marxist is able, so to speak, to stand outside the system and criticize

> it as a whole. Moreover, since human action is itself responsible for the changes which the system is undergoing and will undergo, a crtitical attitude is not only intelectually possible, it is also morally significant--as, for instance, a critical attitude toward the solar system, whatever its shortcomings, would not be--and, last but not least, practically important (Sweezy, 1970:22).

2) *Structuralism*. The "circumstances" that every one of us has inherited from the past configure sets of social *relations*, more or less rigidly embodied in institutions that, in their mutual interconnections, constitute social structures (economic, political, ideologico-cultural). These structures *determine* (i.e., set limits to) individual behavior and social interaction, to a greater or lesser extent. Structures are thus necessarily interrelated and interdependent, and form a social totality. Therefore, a concrete social phenomenon--e.g., the establishment of commercial television in Mexico--will be more fully explained, in its rich complexity, viewed in its articulation with those broader structures.

3. *Contradiction*. Mikhailo Marković has stated this assumption in a rather clear way:

> ...if we want to alter society consciously and relatively freely and to make history ourselves rather that abandon it to blind, impersonal, uncontrolled technical, economic, and political forces, we must make an effort to discover:
> 1) which opposing forces are in conflict;
> 2) which forces promote development, liberation, and human self-realization, and which forces block and

> impede the realization of the optimal possibilities of development (Marković, 1979:36)

The fundamental contradiction in capitalist society is that between the increasingly social nature of production and the private appropriation of the social surplus (Marx, 1973: 749). This contradiction between social production and private appropriation produces antagonisms and struggles between social classes, as well as secular crises. Therefore, a Marxian approach is in constant search for the elimination of social contradictions. This is thus the source of the political commitment and values that inform the method:

> A dialectical approach to a problem of cognition or of immediate practical activity means, in the final analysis, an approach from the standpoint of human liberation. It means understanding the problem as essentially a contradiction between human self-realization and the conditions of existence which arrest or limit that possibility (Marković, 1979:22).

CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING. THE INITIAL PARTICIPATION OF THE STATE, AND THE BEGInNINGS OF MODERN ADVERTISING IN MEXICO.

First Radio Stations and Beginnings of Advertising.

Broadcasting was born in Mexico when the Revolutionary government was in the first stages of national reconstruction. The historical reality of the nation had dictated that a priority for those first administrations would have to be to achieve political cohesion, and then to foster economic development. However, two other important tasks that the political economy--and geo-politics--of the country had imposed upon the Revolutionary group were, first, to gain international recognition and confidence (especially from the United States); and second, to aid in the reconstitution of an entrepeneurial group, which would emerge from the traditional Porfirian bourgeoisie and from the "Revolutionary family" itself, to launch the economic recovery.

The years 1922 and 1923, when radio broadcasting was being

born in Mexico, were years of deep recession and political unrest in the country (Meyer, 1977; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1924:31). Some of the more important investments that promoted commercial broadcasting in Mexico originated from the traditional bourgeoisie, in most cases associated with foreign capital (Fernández Christlieb, 1976: 237). On the other hand, notwithstanding the initial distrust of the United States government and capitalist class (especially with respect to Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, which subordinated private property to the public interest), and the initial refusal of the U.S. to recognize the government of the Revolution, the decades of the 1920s and 1930s witnessed an increased flow of exports, as well as of direct and indirect foreign investment from the U.S. to Mexico (Chase, 1931; Turlington, 1940; Ramírez Rancaño, 1977). Among the exports into Mexico we find radio transmission apparatuses and receiving sets (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1931). North American capital thus began displacing European capital from the Mexican economic scene, a movement that also occurred in broadcasting's development. As in the economy and polity of the country, to a great extent the general structural pattern that has evolved in the mass media system in Mexico originated in these formative years.

The first experimental radio broadcasts occurred in 1921, in Mexico City and Monterrey. For the broadcasters themselves,

the founding father of radio broadcasting is Constantino de Tárnava, an engineer from Monterrey, who was educated in the United States (Alisky, 1954a:513). De Tárnava's family had business connections with the financial groups that later gave rise to the famous and powerful Monterrey Group and the Azcárraga-Milmo family, which today controls the biggest media empire in the Spanish speaking world (Fernandez C., 1976:241-245; Vellinga, 1979:57-60). De Tárnava also had business connections with the French company that established the second commercial radio station in Mexico. Since there are reports of radio broadcast experiments before those of Tárnava (CIRT,n/d:2; Fernández C., 1976: 238), his election as the "official" founder of broadcasting may have resulted in large part from his illustrious family background.

After two years of experimental broadcasting, particularly in Mexico City and in the north of Mexico, the first commercial stations were founded in 1923 in Mexico City. The initial one, CYL, was established by Raul Azcárraga--who had recently opened La Casa del Radio, a receiver retail store--and the newspaper El Universal, using Western Electric (ITT) equipment (Arriaga, 1980:222). The second station was owned by the *El Buen Tono* cigarette company, with the call letters CYB. It is interesting to note that the French company that financed El Buen Tono had tight and important

business connections with the de Tárnava family, the Moctezuma brewery--heart and origin of the Monterrey group--, and with the Patricio Milmo banking organization. One of its principal stockholders (Laura Milmo) would soon become related to radio by marrying Raul Azcárraga's brother, Emilio (Fernandez C., 1976:241-242).

At this point let us briefly recall that the country was beginning a "new stage" of capitalist development, which meant an increasingly close relationship with the United States, and full reincorporation into the capitalist world system, in which the U.S. was beginning to occupy the hegemonic position. This was the "limiting" context: thus, the range of possible forms that the mass media would acquire in Mexico --in organizational, financial and technological terms, and regarding their probable social uses, as well as the possible types of contents conveyed by them--, all have to be seen as historico-structurally influenced and limited by the broader historical context.

In 1923, when the pioneers of the broadcasting business in Mexico were launching their stations, there were already 576 stations in operation in the U.S. (Head, 1976:117). Of those stations, 39 percent were owned by communications manufacturers and dealers; publishers and educational institutions owned 12 percent each, and 5 percent were owned

by department stores (ibid:113). The big communications corporations were already in existence, and were beginning to expand beyond U.S. borders (Aliski, 1954a:513-535; Barnouw, 1981). The *Commerce Yearbook, 1923* of the U.S. Department of Commerce (pp. 285-287) reports an unprecedented growth in the manufacturing of "electrical machinery, apparatus and supplies" (from a dollar value of production of less than ten million dollars in 1921 to sixty million dollars in 1923); exports are reported growing accordingly. In 1922 and 1923, the big U.S. communications corporations were establishing radio stations and radio sales agencies all over Latin America (Alisky, 1954a:515). By 1922, radio sets were already being exported into Mexico with the sales inducement that prospective customers could listen to concerts from the United States (ibid; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1923b).

Most of the pioneer stations in Mexico were founded, as in the United States, by radio sales agencies, with the purpose of selling receivers to the public. Other radio pioneers were newspaper owners, either by themselves or as partners of radio sales agencies. Aside from the novelty of the medium, the original motivation to establish a radio station was its direct commercial use,which was not at first to sell advertising time, but to advertise the products and services of the owner company. There are no available accurate statistics, but the emerging structure of ownership and

operation of the new mass communication medium became very similar to that in the United States during that time: communications manufacturers and dealers, and publishers, accounting for the greatest proportion of radio stations, followed by department stores and various types of individual owners. The difference between both countries' systems would emerge with the participation of the State in broadcasting.

By 1925, when General Electric established a station in Mexico City, there were 13 radio stations in the country. The U.S. Department of Commerce (1931:27) reports that it was in 1926 when radio sets began to be exported into Mexico "in quantity..., and the yearly influx of such equipment has shown a rapid rise." Another report of the same source indicates that about 90 per cent of the 25,000 or so receivers in use in 1926 in Mexico were manufactured in the U.S. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1927:20). The value of that year's exports of radio receivers, accesories and components from the United States to Mexico amounted to $150,000.00 (83 percent of the total for "radio and wireless apparatus" exports to Mexico, of which in the previous two years transmission equipment had been the predominant portion) (ibid). Although in the beginnings of broadcasting in Mexico, German and English equipment competed with North American hardware to furnish the radio stations' needs, by the late 1920s U.S. predominance was almost total (U.S. Department of

Commerce, 1923b;1927;1931).

Owing to the cultural and economic influence of the United States and its expanding communications industry, the parameters were set for the type of broadcasting system that would evolve in Mexico. The use of radio as a medium for advertising the products of the owner company "naturally" became the predominant initial form, as would later on come to be the use of radio for the sale of advertising time (and still later on, for the actual sale of potential audiences, as the advertising industry and the modern marketing apparatus developed). No documentation is available on the development of advertising and advertising agencies in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s; however, three principal factors can be posited as explaining the generalization of the use of radio as an advertising medium: (1) the original use--as an advertising and public relations vehicle of the owner companies--had already given radio the character of an advertising-publicity medium; (2) in the United States both the realization needs of the expanding mass production apparatus, and the particular needs of the owners of radio stations and emerging networks (both "needs" translated into *profitability*) led radio managers and owners to begin selling programs and time to advertisers (tentatively around 1923, and fully institutionally by 1928; cfr. Barnouw, 1978:9-41; Spalding, 1979:70-79); (3) Mexican entrepeneurs

foresaw the possibility of profiting from radio, given (a) the "demonstration effect", of this possibility being actualized in the U.S.; (b) the direct influence of North American exporters themselves, who needed an appropriate marketing apparatus for the realization of their commodities (cfr. U.S. Department of Commerce, 1931); and (c) in 1929 CYB (later denominated XEB) earned the first profits from the sale of advertising (Arriaga, 1980:224), fostering the interest of other entrepeneurs (like Emilio Azcárraga) in investing in radio.

Advertising through the press, flying sheets and other print media had been going on since the 19th century in Mexico (Novo,1967), and even then some forms of advertising agencies existed (ibid; Bernal Sahagún, 1974:97:99). It was not until the 1920s, however, that with the emergence of neon gas advertisements, radio and new newspapers, advertising agencies that followed the pattern of those in the Unites States were founded: for example, 25 ad agencies especially dedicated to neon gas advertisements emerged in that decade (CGCS). But it was in the following two decades that commercial radio and the advertising business had a real boom. We shall review this "golden age of radio" after we describe the participation of the State in radio in these formative years.

4.2. *Initial Participation of the State in Broadcasting.*

The institutional relationships of the present Mexican State with the mass media began to take form in the 1920s with the emergence of broadcasting and the gradual--although not devoid of violence--consolidation of the State itself, led by one of the Revolutionary factions. Such State-media relationships of which one or another has predominated at different points in time, are: (a) as juridical regulator; (b) as allocator of franchises, permits, frequencies, infrastructure, etc.; (c) as owner and operator of commercial and non-commercial mass media; (d) as a source of news and messages, and (e) as sponsor (advertiser) of the private commercial media (cfr. Granados Chapa, 1982).

We shall analyze how these state-media relations (in particular the first three) originated and evolved into a certain structural pattern. The concrete operation of these State-media relationships is seen as a reflection of the principal contradiction that has historically evolved within the Mexican mass media system, namely, that between the social, public character and consequences of mass communication, and its private control. We shall suggest later on in this work that the latter contradiction is a correlate of the main contradiction inherent to the

historical role of a State such as the Mexican State, which formally subordinates private property to the public interest (Art. 27, Mexican Constitution), but historically has implemented a development project based on private property and private interests. This contradiction is inherent in a government system that, after the Revolution was won, gave itself the task of "conciliating" and "integrating" into its national project the interests of not just one social class--as was the explicit case in the Porfirian era--, but of the whole fabric of society; instead, the development project has benefitted only a samll number of class fractions and groups (Hamilton, 1982; González Casanova, 1981).

We have seen that two of the most important forces that influenced the implementation of the commercial scheme of broadcasting were the expansion of the communications industry in the U.S., and the cultural influence of the U.S. on some sectors of the renascent Mexican bourgeoisie. But what was the role of the State in this process? At the outset recall again that the leaders of the Revolutionary fraction that took power in the 1920s were facing a deep recession, demands from peasants and working class groups to begin receiving the benefits of the revolution they had fought for, and a fragmented and contradictory power structure in which regional *caudillos* and *caciques* were striving for a larger share of power. Finally, but equally important, Mexico

was negotiating its formal recognition from the two superpowers, England and the United States, both of which had sizable investments in mining and oil in the country. This critical situation suggests that the initial attention of Presidents Obregón and Calles would not be focused on an adequate assessment of the potentialities and alternative uses of radio broadcasting, but rather on more urgent and immediate strategic political and economic issues. Thus, our hypothesis is that the State was merely reacting to the flow of events at this conjuncture, even though we shall see that the government realized very early the cultural, ideologico-political and educational potentialities of broadcasting. It is also worth noticing that in the United States, where the pattern of broadcasting that was later on adopted in Mexico was evolving, there was no real pre-definition of what such a pattern would be, given the novelty of the medium. We contend that the Mexican State's early policies and legislation based themselves on the 1917 Constitution and "revolutionary ideology", but in a reactive and adaptive way, rather than incorporating broadcasting into a predefined national plan. The latter hypothesis may sound trivial, but we judge it important in order to conceptualize in a realistic manner the emergence of broadcasting as a process in which the economic dynamics and flow of events in this case set the historical parameters, the field of possibilities that would delimit State action towards the

course of historical events itself. All occurred within an international and national context of interests and contradictions seeking their historical resolution in real-life social classes, groups and actors.

Both the State and private economic groups were interested in the establishment and development of an adequate communications infrastructure (transportation, "radio-telephone" and "radio-telegraph", etc.) to foster the nation's economic recovery (Velázquez Estrada, 1981:83-84). Thus, individuals working in electrical communications both for the State and privately became the radio pioneers. In fact, the first radio station to transmit music with some periodicity in early 1923 was J-H, of the Ministry of War and the Navy, as one of the experiments of an army radio technician, José de la Herrán (Alisky, 1954a:517). But this coincidental event hardly makes the State the real originator of broadcasting, for we have seen in the previous section how the sustained introduction and development of radio followed concrete commercial interests and dynamics.

Early in 1923, when the proliferation of radio was almost a reality, President Alvaro Obregón requested the Central Mexican League of Radio (LMCR, a confederation of radio amateurs which became the historical antecedent of the Chamber of Radio and Television) to elaborate a project of

regulation for radio, which they submitted in May, 1923. Clearly, neither Obregón nor his staff were prepared to deal with the novelty of the medium. This event also illustrates the emergence of a practice of the Mexican state that became institutionalized with Cárdenas some years later: that of establishing links of "consultation and advise" with organized private groups--which in their turn shall become pressure groups--regarding some important political decisions (Arriola, 1977; Purcell, 1975). The actual regulation, made public in September, 1923, was based in its technical aspects on the LMCR's proposal. It was devoted to "electrical communications" in general and, as to radio, it did not contain any real definition of the social functions it could fulfill or of what was socially desirable to broadcast: "...the government was hardly aware of the possibilities of broadcasting and regulatory norms were almost nonexistent....Thus almost all initial decisions pertaining to programming content and the operations of radio stations were made by private enterprises" (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:16).

The first test of the newly formed "pressure group", the LMCR, was its disaproval of some items in the 1923 regulation regarding the fees that the owner of a radio station would have to pay to the government; in a few weeks, these items were modified to the LMCR's satisfaction (Velázquez E.,

1981:91-93).

Very soon after commercial radio was launched, the State began to establish its own radio stations, and to grant concessions to operate stations to organized political groups organically linked to the State itself. The government of the northern state of Chihuahua launched its station in December, 1923, with transmissions in Spanish and English, with the aim of promoting commercial links with and investments from the United States (ibid:97-99). In 1924, the official candidate to the presidency of the republic, general Plutarco Elías Calles, used private station CYL (of Raúl Azcárraga and the newspaper *El Universal*) to send political speeches. That same year, two of the political parties that supported Calles' candidacy opened their own radio stations: the Civic Progressive Party on April, 1924, and the Liberal Advanced Party in June (ibid). On the other hand, the station of the newspaper *El Mundo*, owned by noted intellectual Martín Luis Guzman, who supported the contending fraction led by De la Huerta, was closed that year by the government (ibid). The political implications and uses of radio were rather clear for the political machinery.

But the most important official radio station of that decade was CZE, of the Ministry of Education, which was inaugurated only one year after the first commercial stations, on

November 30, 1924, the same day that Calles took power. CZE's main objectives were to support the efforts in rural education that had been launched by the secretary of Education under Obregón, renowned intellectual José Vasconcelos. These efforts were continued by Vasconcelos' successor, Manuel Puig y Casauranc, which strengthening the role that educational radio would perform in the beginnings of broadcasting in Mexico. Thus, both the politico-ideological and educational potentialities of broadcasting were forseen and even actualized by the early revolutionary governments (Alisky, 1954a; Velázquez E., 1981; Fernandez C., 1976). Other official or political stations were opened soon after by the CROM (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation) in 1924; by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Work in 1927 and by the Ministry of War and the Navy, and another by the Socialist Party in Mérida, Yucatán. Most of these stations either disappeared or passed to a secondary plane with the advent in 1930 of the newly founded official party's station, XEFO (Fernandez C., 1976:240).

The First Legistations and Regulations

In 1924 Mexico hosted the first meeting of the Inter-American Commission of Electrical Communications. In the final convention, radio was considered as a service of an official

nature, and all electrical communications were declared to be open to all (CICE, 1926). The only country that failed to sign the final convention was the United States, arguing that considering electrical communications as a public service and official in nature was contrary to its Constitution (which, curiously, is the same type of argument with which the U.S. opposes today the "Third World"'s proposals for a new international information order).

In April, 1926, President Calles made public the Law of Electrical Communications, which had been influenced by the 1924 Inter-American Convention and the previous regulation, and which had been discussed since late 1925 in the Lower Chamber (Scharfeld, 1931:197-199; Velazquez E., 1981:93-95). Consisting in general terms of directives of a technical or administrative character, there are, however, a couple of innovations and important definitions that this Law provided: First, it established that only Mexican citizens could receive authorization to own a radio station, a restriction which applied as well to operators. Second, along with this law, an amendment was made to Article 27 of the Constitution, adding the space through which the air waves travel to the national patrimony, over which the Nation has the originary right of property. And third, as part of the regulations of this law, the broadcasting of any matter of political or religious nature was prohibited (Scharfeld, 1931:202;

Velazquez E., 1981). But most important, even though the State strengthened the federal government's direct control over broadcasting through this law, it left the commercial development of radio completely open, regulating only secondary aspects of advertising, such as the maximum duration of a commercial break (two minutes), etc. We shall find a similar type of regulatory action by the State in many historical instances, especially with respect to broadcasting: The door is left open both for a social development, controlled by the State, and at the same time for a private, commercial development, regulated by the State. The flow of events, we shall see, favored the latter.

As to the restriction on the nationality of those receiving permits to establish a radio station, in point of fact Article 25 of the Law establishes that such permits shall be given to Mexican citizens or to *societies constituted according to Mexican laws* (Velazquez E.,1981:94-95). This ambiguity later on permitted the establishment and expansion of the Mexican subsidiary networks of NBC and CBS. A U.S. observer wrote in *The Journal of Radio Law* in 1931:

> Despite these provisions of the Mexican law, it appears that many Americans have been granted permits and concessions. Either there has been non compliance with the law or it is being evaded by the device of "dummy applicants" and the formation of Mexican corporations (Scharfeld, 1931:200).

In the next section we shall illustrate the use of such procedures, which incidentally, by permitting the expansion of the North American radio networks, fostered in an unprecedented way the commercial expansion of radio broadcasting.

In 1929, President Calles founded the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), the first step towards the successful corporatist structure of the Mexican State, consolidated by Lázaro Cárdenas. The new official party joined together, institutionally and under the hegemony of the "center"--the President--, all the fractions and individuals contending for power. On December 30, 1930, President Pascual Ortiz Rubio inaugurated station XEFO, of the PNR, of which Cárdenas was already President. Notwithstanding the existing prohibition on the use of broadcasting for political purposes, the objectives of the party's station were to disseminate the party's doctrine, to report continually about its accomplishments, to communicate the government's projects and efforts, and to sensitize the proletarian masses to art and literature (Fernandez C., 1976:240). Furthermore, in 1935, when news was spreading about the new electronic medium, television, the party announced its plans to establish a TV station (CIRT,n/d:17). XEFO was the leading information medium during Lázaro Cárdenas' presidential campaign.

During the 1930s, the station of the official party, along with the station of the Ministry of Education, became the bulwarks of the State's broadcasts, especially under Cárdenas' presidency. In 1931, a further elaboration on the 1926 Law of Electrical Communications was issued, which mainly updated technically the former, and changed its name to the Law of General Ways of Communication (CIRT,n/d:15). Lázaro Cárdenas added in 1936 a further regulation, which was actually a mere classification of types of radio stations, with some other technical and administrative additions. Given the nationalist ideology, rhetoric and policies of the Cárdenas regime, one important provision was included in this 1936 regulation: Every program must consist of at least 25 per cent of "typically Mexican music" (Barbour, 1940:96). This may have been one of the factors that explain the fact that, during the 1930s and 40s, Mexican music predominated in commercial radio broadcasts. The 1940 Law of General Ways of Communication, which remained in effect until 1960, did not make any substantial change to the previous regulation (Emery, 1969:17-19).

Thus, in the first legislative action of the State towards broadcasting, we realize that, even though it can be shown that the State was aware of the cultural and educational potentialities of the medium, regulation of its contents and social use was almost nonexistent (De Noriega and Leach,

1979:18-19). Thus, the medium was never defined as having any social or educational commitment. Private broadcasters were left free to develop their adaptation of the North American comercial model of radio.

The State also had a role in the expansion of radio receiving sets throughout the population. It is noteworthy that, besides the sales promotion efforts of the radio manufacturers and dealers, the government and the breweries were the principal distributors of receiving sets in the country, during the first decade of radio:

> The Department of Education has placed more than 700 sets in Mexican schools in the last year, and the Department of Industry has furnished receivers for workmen's centers. The breweries are placing good equipment in the saloons which dispense their beer. In the outlying districts the cantinas always entertain a crowd listening to political talks, educational propaganda, music, and, incidentally, advertising, many of the listeners can not read or write (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1931:27).

The breweries are still active in broadcasting today. They are one of the principal advertisers in radio and TV. The government still is allied with the private sector in extending the reach of commercial broadcasting via satellite and its own TV networks, as we shall show in the next chapter.

The Cárdenas Administration and Radio Broadcasting

The roots of Mexico's relatively strong, interventionist post-revolutionary State can be traced back to the 1917 Constitution, but ist structures and institutions effectively emerged during the Calles and especially the Cárdenas regimes (Meyer, 1977). The latter's administration has been called "populist" and "socialist", but the historical fact is that, notwithstanding the progressive and nationalist policies pursued and implemented by Cárdenas in relation to workers and peasants, the oil nationalization, etc., the historical outcome was a powerful hegemonic apparatus, consolidated by the combination of populism and a form of corporativism. This form of capitalist State is at the heart of Mexico's dependent capitalist development in the last four decades. An extremely unequal distribution of wealth and resources is the most distinctive trait of this type of capitalist development:

> Seen in its historical movement, the Cárdenas government shows a State that organizes, articulates and dynamizes the relations of production, the productive forces, and public and private capital accumulation. Under that government the capitalist social formation of the country matures its basic relations and structures (Ianni, 1977:27; cfr also Córdova, 1977; Medina, 1977; Contreras, 1977).

The comparison and relation of the intervention of the State in the economy at large under the Cárdenas regime and its participation and intervention in radio broadcasting is of particular importance, because it illustrates the historical beginning and consolidation of Mexico's "mixed economy" and its structural reflection in the media system. During the Cárdenas administration (1934-1940) there occurred an unprecedented expansion of official radio stations and state broadcasts, along with an equally unprecedented expansion of private stations, and their control by a handful of networks. The commercial stations outnumbered the official ones. This is explained by the fact that private radio was less centralized than government broadcasting, and therefore the investment effort was also more scattered, although we shall see that this investment by the private sector was relatively centralized in the hands of a few Mexican entrepeneurs allied with foreign networks.

According to one historian of Mexican broadcasting, as many as 14 governmental stations (both long and short wave) were functioning at one point in the 1930s, which "dedicated themselves to intensifying nationalistic aspects of the Revolution":

> In 1938, governmental operation of stations reached its peak. The federal executive branch's Autonomous Press and Publicity Department operated XEDP and shortwave counterpart XEXA; the Secretariat of Foreign Relations,

> XECR; the Federal Department of Public Health, XEXS; the government's own political party, *Partido Revolutionario Mexicano*, XEFO and shortwave duplicator XEUZ; the state government of Veracruz, XEXB and XEXD; the Monterrey mayor's office, XEXP; the San Luis Potosí city council, XEXE; and the Secretariat of Education XEXM and shortwave duplicator XER (Alisky, 1954a:523).

However, because of rising production costs and other factors, by 1939 the government stations were reduced to eight (ibid:523).

The "socialist education" reform implemented by Cárdenas found in radio an important ally. It was used in an ambitious program which included agricultural lessons, lectures on labor laws and regulations, on the problems of the country, as well as concerts, book reviews, etc. (Esparza Oteo, 1980:17-18). We have seen before that the State distributed scores of receiving sets among the rural and urban population, many of them within the educational programs. With the end of the Cárdenas regime, the radio-educational efforts of the State began to wane, until their almost complete disappearance during Miguel Alemán's administration, who submitted even XEFO (the party's station) to private hands (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:18; Alisky, 1954a:522).

Notwithstanding Cárdenas' collectivist and populist rhetoric, and a trend toward greater State participation in

the economy at large, there actually was a concurrent trend towards the strengthening of the capitalist class, which was also reflected in broadcasting: First, through the Law of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, promulgated by Cárdenas in 1936, which required merchants and industrialists of every economic branch to integrate their respective chambers; and second, through economic incentives to national capitalists, so they were motivated to "modernize" the productive forces and relations of production (Hamilton, 1982). The promulgation of the Law of Chambers led to the founding in 1937 of the Mexican Association of Commercial Radio Stations (AMERC), wich became in 1942 the National Chamber of Radio Broadcasting (CIRT,n/d:22; Cremoux, 1974; Fernandez Christlieb, 1976). That there existed in the Cárdenas period a space for private capital accumulation is shown in that:

> ...it was also in this period when there emerged tycoons such as Emilio Azcárraga in radio communications and industry, Rómulo O'Farrill and Gastón Azcárraga in the automobile assembly industry [both of which entered later into the communications business], Harry Steele and Antonio Ruiz Galindo in the manufacture of office equipment, and Eloy Vallina in the financial-industrial system of the Banco Comercial Mexicano (Contreras, 1977:23).

Several important financial-industrial groups planted the seeds of their future expansion in Mexico by that time, some of their personnel having participated in the boards of directors of the State's emerging financial institutions such

as *El Banco de México* and *Nacional Financiera* (Hamilton, 1982:287-306). Economic groups that later participated in the ownership of the electronic media fluorished in Monterrey and Puebla. The Monterrey Group, of the Garza Sada family, which had begun to construct their empire during the Porfirian era, today constitutes the single most powerful economic group in Mexico. The other group, less institutionally integrated than the former but also economically important, was the Puebla group, led by former U.S. consul William Jenkins. Jenkins started a fortune in 1920 with his half of the ransom of his own kidnapping (Time, Dec.26, 1960:25), and then expanded it through loans to bankrupt *hacendados*, impoverished by the Revolution, who were forced to surrender their lands to Jenkins (Ronfeldt, 1973:8-25). With Jenkins' financial support, some vast fortunes emerged in Puebla, including that of Manuel Espinoza Iglesias in banking, that of Rómulo O'Farrill in automobiles, newspapers, radio and later on Television, and that of Gabriel Alarcón Chargoy in movie theatres, newspapers, and now in television also (ibid; Hamilton, 1982; Fernandez C., 1976;1979). Part of the "Puebla group" was also the Avila Camacho family (two governors of Puebla and one president of the republic).

Thus, along with the structural reforms of the Cárdenas era there was actually a movement of creation and strengthening

of an entrepeneurial class, which, associated with foreign capital, developed the "modern" sectors of the economy in branches such as "radio, electronics, cinematography, car assembly, and office equipment" (Ianni, 1977:73). What was actually going on is that "gradually, the commercial, industrial and financial bourgeoisies understand that the government is really reformulating the rules of the game, but without destroying either private property or the possibilities for capital accumulation" (ibid; cfr. Hamilton, 1982: 142-183).

With the coming of the "national unity" policies of the following two administrations (Segovia, 1977; Solis, 1977: Medina, 1977), for which, paradoxically Cárdenas' "class struggle" rhetoric and populist policies had prepared the ground, the State's participation in radio was virtually eliminated. It was not until the 1960s and 70s, when the State would be "in search of the lost time" (Granados Chapa, 1976), and would attempt to participate again fully in the electronic media. The State's intervention in the economy was maintained, although its emphasis shifted towards setting the conditions for private accumulation through a process of import substituting industrialization. Now the priority would be not redistribution, but the creation of wealth, even if concentrated in a few hands, to be redistributed later.

Having summarily reviewed the initial participation of the State in broadcasting, let us now see how private broadcasting proliferated during the 1930s and 40s, preparing the historico-structural coordinates for the emergence of the commercial system of television.

4.3. *Beginnings of the Azcárraga Empire; Proliferation of the NBC and CBS networks in Mexico; Consolidation of Commercial Broadcasting and Advertising.*

There is consensus among historians, students and practicioners of the Mexican mass media that Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta is the one person who contributed most to the consolidation, promotion and expansion of the evolving pattern of commercial radio--and later on, television--in Mexico since the inauguration in September 18, 1930, of XEW.

Born in 1895, in the northern city of Tampico, Tamaulipas, Azcárraga, the son of a customs official, received college education in the same institution where the "official" founder of Mexican broadcasting, Constantino de Tárnava, studied, St. Edwards College in Austin, Texas (Television Age, July 1, 1960:24). Studying in the United States was usually a privilege that very few of the Porfirian and

post-Porfirian oligarchy and high middle classes enjoyed, but it was a widespread custom among the privileged classes in the northern states of Mexico, due to its proximity and cultural influence.

An ambitious and intelligent businessman, Azcárraga began his business career selling shoes in Veracruz, and before World War I he went to Chicago, the "shoe capitol of the world" of that time, to study the manufacturing and distribution techniques in use:

> This was the dawn of the electronics age, and Don Emilio began to feel there was a greater future in electronics than shoes. In 1922, he returned to Mexico with the exclusive Mexican distributorship for the Victor Talking Machine (Television Age, july 1, 1960:24).

Such was Azcárraga's first link with radio in general, and with RCA in particular. It is unclear whether Azcárraga had any direct participation in his brother Raul's radio sales agency (*La Casa del Radio*) or in his pioneer radio station, CYL, but most probably these were important sources of learning about the commercial potentialities of the medium in Mexico for the young entrepeneur. In 1926, Azcárraga married Laura Milmo (Lajoie, 1972:14), heir to the Patricio Milmo banking organization, which increased his fortune a bit and linked him directly to the Northern traditional economic groups of Mexico (Fernandez Christlieb, 1976:241-242). During the second half of the 1920s, however, Azcárraga remained

an employee of RCA, as manager of The Mexico Music Co., the principal outlet in Mexico of the corporation's products.

In 1930 the Mexican government changed its policy of granting annual permits for the operation of radio stations, and one of the first long-term, stable concessions was granted to Emilio Azcárraga (Fernandez, 1963:33). On September 18, 1930, radio station XEW, "The Voice of Latin America From Mexico", was inaugurated by the minister of Public Education, Aarón Sáenz. The original draft of the invitation leaflets for the inauguration of the radio station read: "XEW, The Voice of Latin America From Mexico. Broadcasting station of the Mexico Music Co.,S.A. ...". The latter part was changed in the final version to: "broadcasting station of Cadena Radio-difusora Mexicana, S.A. [Mexican Broadcasting Network]" (Mejía Cole, 1971:159). But there is no doubt of RCA's substantial participation in XEW. According to Fátima Fernández Christlieb's (1976:244) investigation, in the Public Registry of Property of Mexico City it appears that 87.5%, or 3,500 of the 4,000 shares that constituted the stock of XEW, belonged to The Mexico Music Co., that is, to Radio Corporation of America. It is clear, then, that what would evolve as the biggest media empire in the Spanish speaking world began as a foreign investment venture of an important U.S. transnational corporation, in alliance with a national entrepeneur with ambition and foresight. Obviously,

XEW was immediately affiliated to NBC, the radio division of RCA:

> The next step was the creation of networks. Azcárraga and NBC began to affiliate other stations of the interior to their XEW transmitter. By 1938 NBC had 14 affiliates. XEQ, inaugurated that same year [by Azcárraga], and affiliated to Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), expanded to 17 stations by 1945 (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:17).

Now, let us recall that since the 1926 Law of Electrical Communications, the ownership of a broadcasting station by a foreigner was prohibited. This regulation was ignored both by the private individuals and institutions involved *and* by the government itself. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the proliferation of the NBC network during the latter part of the 30s occurred in the midst of the nationalistic fervor and rhetoric of the Cárdenas administration. One could atribute these two issues to, for example, particular cases of corruption; or one could frame them within a pattern of incongruity and contradiction of the Mexican State's actions. The fact is that the pattern of "associated dependent development", which is based on the alliance of foreign capital with a fraction of the national bourgeoisie and the increasing collaboration of the State, and which has been the predominant trait of Mexico's national development process since the 1940s and 50s, actually began to take shape in all sectors of the economy--including broadcasting--with the configuration of a strong hegemonic apparatus in the

Cárdenas era.

XEW became the most powerful and influential station ever in Mexico. In less than ten years, XEW increased its power from the original 5,000 watts to 200,000 watts (Barbour, 1940:98). Besides its considerable power (at the time, U.S. radio stations were not allowed to have more than 50,000 watts of power--Alisky, 1954b:70), its network of repeater stations extended XEW's reach far beyond the Mexican borders (ibid; Barbour, 1940:99). A sign of XEW's influence in Mexico is the fact that in 1941, on June 1, President Avila Camacho declared war against the Axis powers through this station's microphones (CIRT, n/d:21). Incidentally, Mexico's alliance with the U.S. in World War II is considered by some analysts as the turning point from the independent and nationalist policies of Cárdenas to a new period of closeness which continues today (Meyer, 1980:122).

In 1941, Emilio Azcárraga founded Radio Programas de México (RPM), an organization which consisted of two radio networks: The "Blue Network", headed by station XEQ and which formed part of CBS' Network of the Americas, and the "Tricolor Network", part of NBC's Panamerican Network, headed by XEW. RPM also established links with 42 stations of Central and South America (Mejía Cole, 1971:164). By the following year, 1942, RPM already had 60 stations affiliated

with its two networks, nearly half of those existing in the country (Enciclopedia de México, 1977:45). In 1947, the number of stations of the two networks was 84. Of the Latin American radio networks affiliated to CBS and NBC, Azcárraga's were those with the largest number of affiliated stations, especially XEW's Tricolor network, which accounted for 33% of NBC's *Cadena Panamericana* (*Radio Annual*, 1947: 952-957). By 1945 there were in the country, besides the RPM networks, the *Radio Mil* network, linked to the Mutual Broadcasting System of U.S.; the XEB network, of French capital, which at one point had 20 affiliated stations, but by 1945 had only 7; and the Brittish Broadcasting Corporation, which provided program transcripts and news programs to 23 stations in the country (Mejía Cole, 1971: 164). However, by far the most influential voices in radio broadcasting were those heard from the Azcárraga stations (Barbour, 1940:98-99).

When the National Chamber of Radio Broadcasting was founded in 1941, Emilio Azcárraga was elected its first president. As honorary president the Chamber elected general Maximino Avila Camacho, minister of Communications and Public Works and brother of the then president of the republic (CIRT, n/d:20). After that, Azcárraga's direct and indirect influence over and control of the Chamber would make it a rather powerful pressure group for the broadcasting industry

and for Azcárraga's particular interests (Cremoux, 1974:12-15).

Two aspects of Azcárraga's performance as entrepeneur should be highlighted. First, the fact that XEW increased its power from 5,000 to 200,000 watts in a relatively short period of time shows that Azcárraga knew very well how to influence the State's function as allocator, most probably through informal connections with high government officials. This practice is very important to bear in mind, in order to understand in part the way the State has supported the development of the monopolistic media empire constructed around Azcárraga's radio and television stations. The *how* of the connections with government officials must be, at this point, merely hypothezised, because there is no "hard" evidence available. It is widely known that in Mexico it is a traditional practice for members of the "private sector" to obtain concessions, goods, services, etc., pertaining to the allocative function of the State, through friendship links, payoffs, and other similar means. The fact is that, while most Mexican stations remained with a power of 500 to 5,000 watts, XEW was the only one in this period to have a six digit power figure (Barbour, 1940:98; Alisky, 1954b:70-71).

The second aspect of Azcárraga's performance to be noted

refers to the diversification of his "partnership" with the foreign networks. This shows the entrepeneur's keen foresight; the whole organization was never run by just one foreign partner, and eventually he gained control of it. But it also illustrates that the pattern of "associated-dependent development" need not be unidimensional or mechanically deterministic: as in the rest of the economy, such a pattern is actualized by the uneven and changing association of national and transnational capital, and the State.

Emilio Azcárraga soon diversified his interests, and in 1945, in association with RKO Pictures, he built the Churubusco film studios, and opened several movie theaters in Mexico City. Later, besides television and print media, Azcárraga also invested in hotels in Acapulco and Mexico City, and in an auto assembly plant (with Chrysler), as well as in TV stations in the U.S. (Television Age, July,1960:24-57).

Thus, Azcárraga was one of many Mexican entrepeneurs who took advantage of the favorable conditions for private capital accumulation that were gradually being established by the Mexican State since Cárdenas. With his association with foreign capitals, Azcárraga' investments were part of the process of internationalization of the Mexican economy that has been occurring since then. Having at one point in the

fourties done business with almost one hundred stations (ibid), Azcárraga began divesting from radio by the end of that decade, in order to begin preparations for the advent of television (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:17).

Programming: Beginings of the National/Transnational Culture Dialectic.

It must be remarked here that the 1930s and 40s are considered the "golden age" of Mexican music and Mexican radio. And XEW was in particular a principal promoter of Mexican musicians, singers and songwriters. Paradoxically, we shall see that, as the pattern of associated dependent development evolved in the country, foreign *direct* investment would become less apparent in the electronic media (which is not the case in, for example, print media), while cultural foreign presence would become more evident, in a process of cultural transnationalization, particularly through imported films, music, and TV programs. It is evident, though, that in order to fulfill effectively its advertising function, radio had to transmit the type of programming that attracted wide audiences, and in the 1930s and 40s Mexican music was deemed the "appropriate" type of programming. On the other hand, unlike the dubbing of TV

programs and use of Spanish captions in films, by that time it was equally or more expensive to "re-produce" Spanish versions of the U.S. networks' radio programs. Given the still incipient process of cultural transnationalization, such programs would not have been guaranteed to attract the Mexican audiences for radio's national and transnational advertisers.

However incipient, the process of cultural transnationalization, which cannot be divorced analytically from the process of economic transnationalization, was noticed in the early 30s by U.S. sociologist Stuart Chase (1931):

> A bilion dollars [in direct investment] is dangerous anywhere, but it is not so threatening as once it was. A greater danger to my mind lies in the invasion of gadgets, ideas and habit patterns (p.270).
> Today we are exporting words, habits, technical methods, and our peculiar type of modern goods to the urban areas of Mexico (p.262).

Advertising through radio and the press was a very important instrument for the expansion of U.S. made "modernity" in the country, as one report of the U.S. Department of Commerce (1931:27-28) attests:

> The radio audience in Mexico now learns of the qualities of an American radio; that an American incecticide will free their kitchens of roaches; that the Centro Mercantil has the best bargains in ladies' hats; that a talking machine hour is sponsored by the Mexico Music Co.; that Aguila or Buen Tono cigarrettes are as good as

> any imported brand; that a well known light six is the car of their dreams; and many other statements which by repetition can not fail to build up a preference in the minds of costumers.

Chase (1931:263) made a breakdown of the advertisements in "the two leading daily papers of Mexico City for a Sunday in December, 1930", which we present in table form:

Table 4-1

Display Advertising -- Inches & percents
(December, 1930)

U.S. products	Mexican products	European products	Total
2,509 (60%)	1,056 (25%)	631 (15%)	4,196 (100%)

Source: Stuart Chase (1931: 263).

The development of the productive forces in the United States in the 1920s and 30s, which resulted in technical advances in mass production, was creating realization problems in that country, so mass markets had to be sought and opened both internally and abroad (Ewen, 1976). Thus, radio advertising--and advertising in general--began actually fulfilling its role of "producer of consumption" in Mexico as a vehicle for the realization of the circuit of capital of the United States' manufacturing sector. Figure 4-1 shows the evolution of trade between Mexico and the United States

FIGURE 4-1

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS (1975): HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES--COLONIAL TIMES TO 1970

during those years. Except for 1938, when the oil nationalization took place, and 1942 due to World War II, the graphic shows that Mexico was actually a good market for U.S. exports (after Cuba, the second Latin American market), as several reports of the United States Department of Commerce attest (1930;1938;1944).

During the 1930s and early 40s, due to the Great Depression, the Mexican oil nationalization and World War II, the transnational presence in advertising must have fluctuated, as in the other sectors of the economy. But, as in most of the latter, the North American presence did remain and gradually expanded. Thus, in 1941 the first U.S. advertising agency, Grant Advertising, opened offices in Mexico City and Monterrey. Grant was followed by D'Arcy in 1942, Walter Thompson in 1943, and McCann-Erickson in 1947 (Coen Anitúa, 1971:235-254). The U.S. agencies were in Mexico to stay, and to dominate the market, as we shall show later. In 1940, the Reader's Digest started circulating in its "Mexican" format, and in 1947 the oldest and still most important marketing research agency, International Research Associates (INRA), opened its Mexican branch (Coen, 1971:327).

All these sources of economic and ideologico-cultural influence were actually part of the general process of "modernization" and of associated dependent capital

accumulation which began after the Cárdenas administration and is still going on today. From 1932 to 1942, the number of commercial radio stations grew at an average annual rate of 13.09 per cent (see table 4-2).

Table 4-2

Radio Stations, Mexico 1923-1950

Year	Total	Commercial	Cultural
1923	6	4	2
1925	13	11	2
1930	19	17	2
1935	73	65	8
1940	124	113	11
1945	170	162	8
1950	206	198	8

Source: Nacional Financiera (1979): *La Economía Mexicana en Cifras* (p.426, table 8.14).

For example, of the 72 commercial stations in the country in 1938, 14, or nearly one fifth, constituted the XEW-NBC network. That same year, Emilio Azcárraga established the first CBS station, whose network would also grow steadily. By 1946, investment in the broadcasting industry was calculated to amount around to 17.5 million pesos, which was an increase of 600% since 1936 (CIRT, n/d:24).

Broadcasting and Capitalist Development.

During this process of development of commercial radio and the advertising industry, both heavily influenced by their U.S. counterparts, the historical-structural basis for the process of dependent accumulation had been laid in the country. Relevant to the role of commercial broadcasting and advertising for the realization of the value of commodities in the market, we should add that during the Cárdenas years there occurred a relative widening of the internal market: the monetary policies of the Cárdenas regime, along with the massive land redistribution and populist policies toward labor, brought about a relative redistribution of income (although only for the benefit of the "organized masses") and aggregate demand was positively affected (Urquidi, 1970:236; Cordera, 1979:107; Meyer, 1977b:24; Medina, 1977: 84-86). Thus, along with consumption credit and some government consumption subsidies, the advertising media actually played a role in the "production of consumption" that the process of capitalist accumulation requires. The process of import-substituting industrialization, fostered in the war years, would fluorish during the Alemán administration, heavily influenced by a growing flow of direct and indirect foreign investment, a great majority of which was of U.S. origin (Aguilera Gómez, 1975; Green, 1980). The production

capacity of the Mexican social formation was increasing, and so the realization needs of the circuit of capital would determine that advertising, and therefore the commercial mass media, were relatively important constitutive factors of the global process of economic development. But also they would show themselves as an expression of the contradiction between the growing capacity to produce and the shrinking relative capacity to consume of the Mexican social formation.

CHAPTER 5

TELEVISION, THE STATE AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

5.1. The Historico-Structural Context to the Emergence of Television in Mexico.

Television emerged in Mexico as a commercial enterprise, following the model that had already evolved in the United States, which in both countries had an important precedent in the development of radio broadcasting. We have just seen in the previous chapter that the U.S. commercial system of radio broadcasting was transferred to Mexico through several types of economic and cultural influences. By that time, there were not yet in the world alternative institutional models of organization and social functioning of the medium. Economic dynamics mainly led to the development of the model adopted both in the United States and Mexico.

On the other hand, when the actual possibility of the establishment of television in Mexico was considered by the Alemán administration in the late 1940s, an alternative model of broadcasting had evolved, especially in Europe. The main features of this alternative mode of organization of

broadcasting were: (a) its not being commercial, that is, concretely its non-dependence upon advertising revenues for its financing; and (b) its relationships to the State apparatus, either of direct dependence, or formal independence combined with institutional integration to the State, like the British Broadcasting Corporation. The BBC established the first regular television service in the world, and soon acquired a worldwide prestige for its sobriety in programming practices (Head, 1976:160). If we recall the Mexican State's early participation in radio, this mode of organization seems congruent with the State's previous experience, even though policies and rhetoric had significantly shifted after the Cárdenas administration.

Since the early 1930s there was in Mexico a technical precedent to the birth of television, set by engineer and inventor Guillermo González Camarena, who by 1934 constructed his first TV camera with discarded parts and improvised materials (Esquivel Puerto, 1970:159) At about the same time, RCA already had an important television research program, with over 40 engineers headed by V. Zworykin (Head, 1976:160-161). Nevertheless, González Camarena was not very far behind his U.S. counterparts, and by the end of the 1930s he invented a system of color television, which he patented both in Mexico and the United States in 1940 (ibid; *Enciclopedia de México*,

1971:457-458). However, the lack of adequate economic and institutional support from either the government or a private corporation, soon made González Camarena's inventions anachronic in comparison with the technological developments achieved by the powerful U.S. corporations (Esquivel Puerto, 1970:157). González Camarena worked as a technician in the Radio Department of the Education Ministry from 1932 to 1939. After that he worked for Emilio Azcárraga until his death in 1965, with a brief interruption in 1952, when he launched the third TV station in Mexico (ibid; *Enciclopedia de México*, 1971:457-458).

In the early 1930s, the official party (PNR) installed in Mexico City an experimental system of television, and announced its intentions to establish its own TV station (CIRT, n/d:17; *Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:45-46). Between 1940 and 1945, another effort in the city of Morelia to develop a television system aborted, due to "lack of official regulations" on the issue (CIRT, n/d:27). Thus, the known pioneering efforts regarding television in the country were rather scattered and isolated, and not really followed up by their initiators, except by Guillermo González Camarena. On the other hand, we see that the State (through its party) was also present among such pioneering efforts--or at least, intentions--to launch television in Mexico.

For anyone who is knowledgeable about the recent history of Mexico, it may seem rather obvious that the television model which was finally implemented with president Miguel Alemán's authorization was a commercial, advertising based, U.S.-type system. However, on the one hand it is the task of social science to explain the apparently "obvious". On the other hand, the fact remains that in 1947 Alemán ordered a commission, which was formed by writer Salvador Novo and Guillermo González Camarena, to study the two best known forms of organization of TV in the world--the North American and the British--in order to help him decide what form Mexico should adopt. In explaining decision we shall contextualize historically the birth of television in Mexico in the next three sections. We shall describe then the first stages of the emergence of the TV structure, its tendencies towards monopolization, and the participation of the State in such developments. Finally, we shall depict the powerful media corporation which today controls almost monopolistically the Mexican TV scene, its origin and present multi-media penetration power. Throughout this and the next chapters, we address the participation of television in the process of capital accumulation in Mexico, through its advertising function.

5.1.1. *The Post-World War II Process of Internationalization of Capital; U.S. Global Hegemony; New International Division of Labor.*

The Second World War and its historical aftermath is an important conjuncture at the global level, in terms of the reaccomodation of the international political and economic forces and tendencies that took place. At a national level, it is important in terms of the historical processes that, in interaction with international forces, occurred in some social formations such as Mexico. When Mexico entered the war as an ally of the United States (however rather "symbolic" Mexico's participation may have been), its international situation and policies made an important turn: From the nationalism of the Cárdenas regime and the tensions generated by the oil expropriation and similar policies and actions, to a position of tighter "cooperation" and alignment with the United States, and full integration into the world capitalist system: "Once the war was over, Mexico discovered itself more immersed in the zone of North American influence" (Meyer, 1980:122).

This section offers a brief analysis of the international

forces and tendencies that set the global context for the emergence of television in Mexico. The following section shows how such tendencies crystalized in the Mexican conjuncture around 1950.

The three main features which the world capitalist system acquired after the Second World War are summarized in our section heading: (a) The widening and intensification of the process of internationalization of capital; (b) the coming of the U.S. as the hegemonic power--in military, economic and political terms; (c) the emergence of a new international division of labor, with a different form of articulation of several types of national social formations to the world system of capitalism. The three aspects are tightly related, so we shall deal with them "interactively".

By the end of the war, the most important industrial powers of Europe and Japan, found their productive base destroyed, and only the United States "emerged richer and more powerful in 1945 than in 1941" (Mack et al,1979:3). Thus, during at least a quarter of a century after the war, the global patterns of capital accumulation were characterized by their increasing internationalization, and by the leading role of North American capital (Ayala et al,1979:22). Due to the war effort, the United States had an impressive economic and technological development. By 1945 the U.S. accounted for 59%

of the world gold reserves, a proportion that would increase to 72% in 1948; the U.S. was the only country, at the time, to possess the atomic bomb (ibid; Marini,1977:21). Thus, its military, financial and productive superiority allowed the United States to lead the reaccomodation of the world capitalist system, based on the ideology of "economic libertarianism" (Ayala et al, 1979:22-27). The Bretton Woods conference of 1944--even before the war was over-- and the establishment of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (both traditionally U.S. dominated) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) are considered important expressions of North American global capitalist hegemony, and an actualization of such "libertarian" ideology (Marini:21-23). The emergence of the USSR as "the other" superpower and the Soviet bloc as an alternative to capitalism generated the "Cold War," and was the political basis for the massive transfer of economic aid to Europe under the Marshall plan. The Cold War atmosphere is also the context of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, or Hemispheric Defense Treaty, signed in 1947 by all the American republics in Rio de Janeiro, and the formation in 1948 of the Organization of American States (Ianni, 1974:23-32). Both events are considered as representative of the consolidation, at that time, of the U.S. political dominance over the Western Hemisphere (ibid;

González Casanova, 1978:25).

The massive flow of capital to Europe and Japan was not only in the form of Marshall Plan aid from the United States, but also took the form of direct and indirect private investment by North American corporations, aggressively encouraged by their government (Dos Santos,1978). The post-World War II conjuncture was thus a time of crystalization of the tendencies towards concentration and centralization of capital in the emergence of the transnational corporation as the basic cell of the capitalist world system (ibid; Fajnzylber and Martínez, 1976; Sunkel and Fuenzalida, 1979). The direction of the flows of foreign investment throughout the world also showed a changing pattern, from extractive activities and agriculture to manufacturing: "The period of British hegemony had been that of the creation and consolidation of the world market; the period of North American hegemony would be that of imperialist integration of the systems of production" (Marini, 1977:22). The process of internationalization of capital is seen, thus, at two levels of historical generality: At a more particular level, there is the "direct investment of corporations in their overseas branches and subsidiaries... but also the associated flows of short-term, long-term and equity capital stimulated by the multinational corporation and in turn stimulating the further growth of international banking..."(Hymer, quoted by

Pallois,1975:64n). At a more general level of analysis, the process of internationalization of capital means that "the circuit of social capital operates increasingly at world level, in the case of money-capital, productive capital and commodity-capital alike" (Pallois, 1975:65).

Thus, the capitalist mode of production, after the World War II, continued its expansion and consequently the integration of new social formations, productive sectors and social groups, this time not only through the market (expansion of the circuit of commodity-capital), nor principally through the "export of capital" as was the case in Lenin's times (cfr. Lenin,1977; Cardoso, 1973). The new configuration of the world capitalist system after the war implied the internationalization of the productive process itself, through the industrialization of some peripheral countries and further new flows of foreign direct investment into the manufacturing sectors of those peripheral social formations (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Dos Santos, 1978; Marini, 1977). The process of internationalization of the three circuits of capital (financial, commercial and industrial), as crystalized by the middle of this century, had two important consequences: first, the near universalization of the capitalist relations of production (Pallois, 1977:14-16); and second, a new international division of labor.

Some countries such as Mexico, which during the Great Depression and especially the Second World War experienced an "easy and forced" process of industrialization, articulated differently to the new global politico-economic hierarchy:"The time of the simple center-periphery model, characterized by the exchange of manufactures for food and raw materials, was left behind" (Marini, 1977:25). Countries like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile, having increased their manufacturing plants and capacities, became "medium centers of accumulation" (ibid), or "semiperipheral" countries (Wallernstein, 1979:95-118). Such national social formations would come to fulfill important mediating roles in the global processes of capital accumulation and valorization (cfr. Dos Santos, 1978; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Marini, 1981). With some differences among them, such new "semiperipheral" social formations were largely characterized by: (a) their possessing relatively large internal markets (composed mainly by the middle class and the bourgeoisie); (b) such internal markets already being in a process of internationalization, given previous patterns of consumption; and (c) being characterized after the war by explicitly protective policies of the State, therefore (d) constituting attractive spots for foreign investment, which thus configured a pattern of "associated" industrial production of consumer goods, and later of some intermediate and capital goods. The main difference of these "semiperipheral"

countries and the so called "central" social formations was that the former did not simultaneously and organically develop the sector producing consumption goods (Department II in Marxian terminology) *and* the sector producing the means of production (Department I). Therefore, "import substitution" literally constituted a substitution of the import of consumer goods from the central countries for the import of capital goods, leading to a situation of technological dependence. Most of these social formations, on the other hand, continued to fulfill traditional "peripheral" roles, exporting raw materials and supplying a cheap labor force (Dos Santos,1978; Minian, 1979; Vuskovic, 1979).

5.1.1.2. *Global U.S. Media Dominance.*

During the war, the development of commercial television was stalled in the United States for strategic reasons. By 1945, the North American government again began to authorize commercial stations, but it was not until 1948 that the number of stations increased from 17 to 41. The number of cities served went from 8 to 23. It was also in 1948 when important advertisers began experimenting with TV, and large scale network programming began (Head, 1976:161-163). It was clear also by that time that the big radio networks, subsidiaries of large corporations, would also be the dominant powers in North American television (Barnouw,

1981:27-96).

Alan Wells (1972) has argued that the transfer of the commercial model of TV from the United States to Latin America came about through the direct involvement of the North American networks. However, such direct--and actually rather timid--involvement only came about by the late 1950s, as Wells himself has documented (ibid:102-106). We argue in this dissertation that the transfer of the commercial pattern of TV must be understood, at least in the case of Mexico, as responding to more indirect and global influences, such as the economic dynamics of the postwar process of associated and dependent capitalist development.

When the World War II was over, the United States emerged as the hegemonic social formation not only in military, economic and political terms:

> American media leadership had been steadily growing for over 100 years, but at the end of the Second World War did it emerge on a scale which few could any longer fail to notice. It was closely connected with the status of the United States as the dominant military power, but the American media ran beyond--for instance, even into Eastern Europe, despite Soviet military control there.
>
> The decade of greatest American dominance ran from 1943 to 1953....1953 marks a shift from direct to more indirect American media influence in the world (Tunstall, 1977:137).

What Jeremy Tunstall calls "American media" in the above quotation refers actually to the worldwide presence of U.S.

made *messages*, especially Hollywood films and information produced by U.S. news agencies. The expression also refers to the technological and organizational supremacy and influence of the North American media corporations. The same author has substantiated very clearly how such U.S. informational or "media" dominance was just a corollary of a trend that had begun during World War I, in the form of the U.S. government's explicit efforts to gain the lead over all other countries (especially Germany, but also Great Britain) in all aspects of the international information flows. For example, it is widely documented that the support of the U.S. Navy was to a great extent "responsible for a train of events leading to [the creation of] RCA and its present position as a multinational telecomunications- electronics- television- radio- records colossus" (ibid:139; cfr.Barnouw, 1979; Schiller, 1971).

Even the so called "golden era" of the Mexican film industry (around war time) has been explained by Mexico's leading film historian in terms of the strategic war needs of the allied powers:

> The industry was consolidated during the Second World War, from 1941 to 1945, when the war situation advised the North Americans to support the only film system, from the Spanish speaking world, which would eventually favor the allies' efforts (García Riera, 1976:173).

The decade of 1940-50 was characterized by an important and

massive cultural and informational control and manipulation, and a one-way flow of news, from the United States to Latin America. For example, by 1945 the Office of Latin American Affairs, headed by Nelson Rockefeller, estimated that more than three quarters of the world news that reached Latin America were controlled and monitored by the Rockefeller Office and the State Department (Tunstall, 1977:140):

> With a staff of some 1200 in the United States, including mobilized journalists, advertising experts and public opinion analysts, and some $140 million in government funds (expended over five years), the Rockefeller office mounted a propaganda effort virtually unprecedented in the annals of American history....(Jay Epstein, quoted by Tunstall, op cit).

Another form of support for the flow of North American messages to Latin America was through tax exemptions, that Rockefeller negotiated with the Treasury Department for U.S. companies advertising their products in Latin America: "This tax exempt advertising eventually constituted more than 40 per cent of all radio and newspaper revenues in Latin America (ibid). The emergence of the Spanish language version of the *Reader's Digest*, in 1940 in Mexico, also responded to the "encouragement" of the Rockefeller Office (ibid:140-141).

It is important to emphasize that the "libertarian" ideology developed by the hegemonic superpower, and which saw its politico-economic consolidation in Bretton Woods and the creation of GATT, had its strategic complement in the

"free-flow of information" doctrine. For example, in a U.S. State Department broadcast in January 1946, the Assistant Secretary of State William Benton (co-founder of the Benton & Bowles transnational advertising agency) stated the U.S. government's position on the international flow of information:

> The State Department plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers *to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures, and other media of communications throughout the world....* Freedom of the press--and freedom of information generally-- is an integral part of our foreign policy (Quoted by Schiller, 1976:29; our emphasis).

Herbert Schiller (ibid:24-45) has described how this post-war policy had actually been gestating since the early forties, through the intersection of interests of the media managers and the U.S. government. It was in international *fora*, such as the then newly created UNESCO, where U.S. ideology would demonstrate its hegemony during nearly thirty years (Tunstall, 1977:208-214).

One of the first tests to the international acceptance of the "free-flow doctrine" was the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace, held in Mexico City in early 1945. "Predictably--asserts Schiller--, the Conference adopted a strong resolution on 'free access to information' that was 'based substantially on a United States proposal'" (op

cit:32). The overwhelming cultural hegemony of the United States would show up in the following years, in the gradually changing tastes of Latin Americans, for example, from *cha-cha-cha* and *boleros* to rock'n roll. Actually, one result of this gradual transition can be found in the contrast between XEW's nationalist programming of the 1930s and 1940s, and today's XEW-FM, which not only broadcasts the most up to date U.S. rock hits, but also announces everything in the English language. Writes Carlos Monsivais reflecting on this cultural transition:

> The "denationalization" of this popular culture is a consequence of the economic denationalization and the expropriation of the visible stimuli, which is concretized in the "national identity's" inefficacy....How should one attach oneself to the old conventions, if even in *lumpen* sectors rock or disco music is listened to without understanding the words in English, but assuming devotely that such music not only is modern, but that it is also modernizing? (1981:42)

The "modernization" process meant, therefore, not only the spread of North American values and culture, but also of North American economic and political interests throughout the world.

The above discussion has been a general outline of the main post-World War II events and trends, that formed a global context for the emergence of the Alemán administration and policies in México, as well as for the advent of television in this country. The most important element within this

context is the United States' dominance and influence in economic, military, political, and cultural-ideological-informational terms. This was the time when the U.S. was exporting not only capital, but also the "American way of life" in an unprecedented way. Commercial television was already an important part of such a way of life.

5.1.2. *The Alemán Regime and the "First Industrial Accumulation".*

It is known that World War II was a key moment in the history of México and some other Latin American countries. The productive apparatuses of the United States and the other countries at war were devoted to war production, and thus most of the manufactures that were exported to Latin America were unavailable. This situation "forced" some countries to begin an import substituting industrialization process, especially of those sectors producing light consumer goods (Meyer, 1977b; Dos Santos, 1978). This is why this stage is called "easy and forced" import substitution (Cordero, 1977:26; Villareal, 1977). At the same time, Mexico was providing the U.S. with some raw materials, and some manufactured and intermediate goods that its war economy

demanded (Meyer, 1977b: 122). This generated a momentary surplus of dollars which, however, would have to be saved until after the war, to import capital and intermediate goods required by the further industrialization of the country. In 1943 Mexico's balance of payments in current account registered its highest superavit in the country's history, U.S.$109.8 million (Nacional Financiera, 1981: 329). The manufacturing sector grew at an average annual rate of 10.2% from 1940 to 1945. The following five years the growth rate was only 5.9%--still very high with international standards--, and in the decade of the fifties the it was 7.3% (Meyer, 1977b: 125).

The Avila Camacho administration (1940-1946) began a process of "rectifying" the policies of Lázaro Cárdenas--although with basic elements of continuity, for example in the corporatist structure of the State, and even of some of its key personnel. This process of "rectification" culminated with the coming to power of Miguel Alemán Valdez in 1946. The elements of the transition can be summarized as follows: (1) Cárdenas' economic program, though providing the conditions for industrialization, emphasized the development of traditional agriculture on a collectivistic basis, and seems to have had a prospective image of a predominantly agrarian Mexico (Villareal, 1977:70). Avila Camacho, and especially Alemán, stressed the development of a modern,

export-oriented capitalist agriculture, as the basis of what would actually become the priority in economic policy: Industrialization and modernization (ibid). (2) Another important explicit shift took place in the participation of the social classes and forces in the politico-economic process: Cárdenas' discourse explicitly stated that the State would lean towards the weak (the working class and the peasantry) in matters of class conflict. Since his first days in Office, Cárdenas had postulated the "supremacy of the cooperative system" (quoted by Wilkie, 1970:73). Besides Cárdenas' vast program of land redistribution and agrarian reform, another indicator of his emphasis on redistribution was the high proportion of State expenditures devoted to welfare and social programs (Cordera, 1979:114; Wilkie, 1970). In the following two administrations, economic policy was oriented towards "assuring the emerging industry with substantial profits, and to creating a market where the prices of the factors labor and capital made those profits possible" (Gollás and Garcfa Rocha, 1976:411). The right to strike, for example, was severely restricted by Alemán. Thus, the number of strikes and strikers was kept very low during his period, "even though the pressure of falling real wages was tremendous" (Wilkie, 1970:185).

It was also in the Alemán period when the organized labor movement was "mopped up" from the remainings of the Cardenist

left, and, in tune with the Cold War and McCarthyism, "communists" were persecuted on all fronts (Cordera, 1979:118; Camacho, 1980:50-53; Córdova, 1979:24). Alemán himself sums up his "mixed economy" program:

> The State must guarantee the liberty of entrepeneurs to open centers of production and to multiply the industries of the country, sure that their investments shall be safe from the contingencies of injustice. National economic development must normally be based in the spirit of equity that animates factors indispensable for its realization.
>
> The State must offer the most ample liberty to private investment, recognizing that general economic development is primordially the field of private enterprise. *Those enterprises indispensable for the national economy which private initiative does not undertake shall be developed by the State, which shall make the necessary investments and create the means for their function and development* (Miguel Alemán, quoted by Wilkie, 1970:84-85; our emphasis).

The shift under Alemán was from a strong, *leading* State to a still strong, but only *supportive* State. The principal aspects of this economic policy, which had at its center the self-conscious process of import substitution industrialization, were: (a) the restriction to only limited increases in real wages; (b) the massive construction by the State of large infrastructure projects (roads, railroads, irrigation, etc.); (c) the use of subsidies to keep down the prices of energy and basic inputs; (d) indiscriminate protection to producers inside the country from external competition; (e) credit and fiscal policies favorable to the manufacturing sector, realized through the State's own

financial apparatus; (f) the use of subsidies for the import of capital and intermediate goods (Gollás and García Rocha, 1976: 411).

The "trickle down" theory of economic growth was underlying the State policies when, as Lorenzo Meyer points out:

> ...with the coming to power of the young group of civilians led by Alemán, the *leit motif* would be to promote first the creation of wealth...to be distributed later on, according to the demands of social justice. No one said exactly when the moment to stress justice would have come (1977b:124-125).

It is commonplace now that the growth and industrialization objectives were actually achieved. We have indicated above that the manufacturing sector grew at a very high rate, as did the economy in general: during the decade of the 1940s the Gross Domestic Product grew at an average rate of 5.3 percent per year, which in the 1950s became 6.2 percent. However, such a "first industrial accumulation" stage, based originally on the import substitution of non durable, light consumer goods, was already in a process of "exhaustion", owing principally to the limited dimensions of the internal market (Cordero, 1977; Villareal, 1977; Boltvinik and Hernández Laos, 1981). Even though the process of oligopolization of the Mexican economy was under way, the accumulation process in the late 1940s and early 1950s was led by a fraction of the national bourgeoisie, especially

through small and middle-sized industrial enterprises (Cordera, 1979; Arriola, 1977). A new type of dependent situation from abroad was defined by the need to import intermediate and capital goods, and by the new financial needs generated by the accumulation process itself (Ortiz Mena and Urquidi, 1953).

Direct foreign investment thus had a relatively small role during this so called "first industrial accumulation" (Ayala et al, 1979), because the objectives of the transnational corporations' investments were situated in Europe and elsewhere, during the years immediately following the World War. However, given the propitious conditions that were emerging in Mexico, especially for the development of the manufacturing sector, foreign investment did grow, from $449 million in 1940 to $728 million in 1952: "Much of the increase was due to the open-door policy toward foreign investment adopted by the Alemán administration" (Newfarmer and Mueller, 1975:48). Such was to be the direction of the process of denationalization, throughout the following two decades, of the most dynamic sectors of the economy, especially in manufacturing (ibid; Aguilera G., 1975).

Alemán's pro-business position is widely known and documented, as is his sympathy toward foreign and particularly U.S. investments in Mexico (Wilkie, 1970: 84-89;

Tarracena, 1979). As to his global political stance, an indirect indicator of Alemán's pro-United States position may be found in the fact that, notwithstanding Mexico's tradition of "independence" in foreign policy matters, this country and the Dominican Republic were the very first to ratify the Rio Treaty of Hemispheric Defense--even before the U.S., which was its promoter--, barely a month after such a treaty was signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1947 (Tarracena, 1979:57-59). We have mentioned before that the Rio Treaty, promoted by the United States in the peak of the Cold War atmosphere, is considered a landmark of Latin American subordination to the North American interests and policies of the times (Ianni, 1974: 23-32). On the other hand, in the early 1970s a debate arose about Miguel Alemán's political and nationalist integrity, when a set of documents from the U.S. State Department were made public after they lost their 25 year secrecy status. In several *memoranda* from the then U.S. ambassador in Mexico to the Secretary of State, it was suggested that it was just a matter of time before Alemán returned the Mexican oil industry to private hands, and in particular to foreign investors (Tarracena, 1979: 155-191). History shows it did not happen. Prompted by the debate, his integrity being jeopardized, Alemán wrote a lengthy book on the oil question, in which he defended his actions on the matter, and showed that the historical outcome was not the one that would have come out, had he had the

intentions imputed to him (Alemán, 1977). However, the study of history shows that intentions and actual actions are not necessarily correlated. But let us learn more about Miguel Alemán, the politician and businessman.

Profile of Miguel Alemán

Miguel Alemán Valdez's presidency, the circumstance, and Alemán, the individual, are important to be described in some detail for two reasons: First, it was with his authorization that television was implemented in Mexico with the characteristics it now has, as a commercial enterprise. On the other hand, we shall see below that Miguel Alemán the businessman and his son Miguel Alemán Velazco, have had direct links with the different groups that today form one of the biggest media empires in the world, Televisa. Thus, it is relevant to provide a brief profile of Alemán's private occupations and links that are related to the development of private television in Mexico.

Miguel Alemán Valdez was born in Sayula, Veracruz, in 1905. His father, Miguel Alemán, was a storekeeper who entered the Revolution and in the struggle became a general. In the period 1927-28 Alemán's father served as Federal Deputy, and was killed in 1929, when he opposed the reelection of general Alvaro Obregón (Camp, 1975:12). Having graduated as

a lawyer from the National University in 1928, and after a short interim of private legal practice, Alemán found that his father's revolutionary past opened the doors to a successful political career. Among the posts that Alemán held before being President of Mexico are: Magistrate of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice of the Federal District, Federal Senator for his native state of Veracruz, and Governor of Veracruz during the Cárdenas administration (Lajoie, 1976:6). During the political interplay before the designation of Cárdenas' successor, Alemán was one of the leaders of the political faction that struggled to prevent Cárdenas from nominating his mentor, general Francisco J. Múgica, as presidential candidate of the official party (Contreras, 1977:15; Hamilton, 1982: 258). After a long and overt struggle of political forces (which is unusual within the traditional "discipline" of the "Revolutionary family"), Alemán's candidate, general Manuel Avila Camacho, obtained the party's nomination. Alemán was appointed coordinator of Avila Camacho's campaign (ibid). Given his close cooperation and enthusiasm during the pre-nomination and the presidential campaign, Avila Camacho appointed Alemán his Secretary of Government (*Secretario de Gobernación*). Later on, Avila Camacho would nominate Alemán as candidate for the presidency of the Republic. As secretary of *Gobernación*, Alemán showed an early interest in tourism, having founded the Department of Tourism under his

jurisdiction (Enciclopedia de México, 1966:134-135).

We have summarily described in the previous section the main lines of Alemán's policies as president, which were clearly oriented towards the interests of the capitalist class. After his presidential term, Miguel Alemán became the leader of the political group called Revolutionary Front of Civic Affirmation (FRAC), which represents the conservative wing of the official party (of which he changed the name from Party of the Mexican Revolution --PRM-- to Institutional Revolutionary Party --PRI, its present name) (Alisky, 1969:6). After several years of private practice as "investment banker and corporate lawyer" (ibid), Alemán returned to public life in 1964 as director general of the National Council of Tourism of the federal government, a post he kept until his death in May, 1983.

So much for Alemán the politician. Besides his successful political career, Alemán was a very successful businessman, and it is known that he ended his presidency as one of the richest men in Mexico:

> After the end of his presidential period, Alemán extended his participation as member of the grand bourgeoisie, associating with other capitalists like Carlos Trouyet, Eloy Vallina, Gastón Azcárraga, Rómulo O'Farrill, Gabriel Alarcón, et caetera. At the same time that he consolidated his position as grand bourgeois, this personage did not give up his tight links with the political apparatus.... Alemán is the

> prototype of the government official who, through identification with some grand bourgeois groups which search to influence the State, incorporates organically to them (Concheiro et al, 1979: 188).

The most overt sign of Alemán's interest in tourism as a business is his well-known participation, right after his presidential term, as stockholder of the Hilton hotels (Aguilar, 1972:138). Miguel Alemán and Emilio Azcárraga had several joint ventures in this industry, including some of the most important hotels in Mexico City and Acapulco, and as stockholders of American Airlines (Concheiro et al, 1979:188; Mattelart, 1976:130-131).

On the other hand, through his close cooperation during the 1940s with Manuel Avila Camacho, Miguel Alemán also had contact with the members of the "Puebla group" (which we have described before). Some of the most important individuals within this economic group are Maximino Avila Camacho (Governor of Puebla during the Cárdenas administration and Secretary of Communications in his brother's presidential term), William O. Jenkins, Manuel Espinoza Iglesias, Gabriel Alarcón Chargoy, and Rómulo O'Farrill. The latter two, we shall see, are today among the big tycoons of the cultural industry in Mexico. Because of their importance to the establishment and development of television in Mexico, we shall provide in the sext section a brief profile of the O'Farrill family. It is of interest here only to point out

that several authors have suggested the existence of business links between Miguel Alemán Valdez and Rómulo O'Farril Sr. This and similar contentions are difficult to substantiate empirically in Mexico, especially because of the way a *sociedad anónima* (stock company) can be legally constituted. The law requires that a *sociedad anónima* have at least five stockholders, whose names are registered in the official records. However, in reality often a few stockholders may hold most or all of the shares, while others have only nominal amounts. The latter are called *prestanombres* ("name-lenders") or *hombres de paja* ("straw men"), who are included in the *sociedad anónima* only to fulfill the requirement of the five stockholders minimum. It is also possible that a person will not even appear in the records, but is actually in possession of all the stock (cfr. Business International, 1971:62; Cole, 1972:154-155). Richard Cole wrote in the early 70s that:

> Rumors have circulated...that former President Miguel Alemán "has money in" *Novedades*, an O'Farrill newspaper. It is noteworthy that the O'Farrills acquired *Publicaciones Herreras*, which publishes *Novedades* and other newspapers, in 1948; the family established Mexico's first television station in 1950 and in 1952 acquired a national radio station, XEX--all during the 1946-52 Alemán administration. Alemán's son, Miguel Alemán Velazco, is news director of Telesistema, of which the O'Farrills control a half interest (ibid: 155).

We shall provide more detail about the O'Farrills and their relationships to the Alemáns in the following section. What

is beyond doubt is that both families have long been linked by tight friendship ties since Alemán's presidential term.

Another important economic group to which Alemán has links is the Pagliai group. Led by Italian-born industrialist Bruno Pagliai, this group has been active in Mexico since the mid 1940s. Between 1941 end 1961, Pagliai established four important metallurgic companies in Alemán's native state of Veracruz (Alonso, 1976: 226; Concheiro et al, 1979:182). Although mostly working within mining and metallurgy, the Pagliai group's interests are diversified among more than 20 companies, which include *Organización Editorial Novaro*, in association with Time Inc., publisher of, among other things, the Spanish translations of the Walt Disney comics. Miguel Alemán Sr. and Jr. and Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. are stockholders of several of the Pagliai companies. One of them, *Aluminio S.A.* (of which 44.3 percent interest belongs to Aluminium Company of America), holds a monopoly on the production of aluminium in Mexico (ibid: 185).

In their research on the most important economic groups of Mexico, Concheiro and colleagues (1979) have characterized several fractions of the "grand bourgeoisie" according to explicit political ideology and actions, as well as to their interactions and relationships of several types with the State. These authors have found that the Monterrey and Puebla

groups are relatively independent of and even sometimes antagonistic towards the State (ibid: 101-131). On the other hand, they situate the "Alemán-Pagliai-Azcárraga group" within a different fraction, whose main characteristic is its organic fusion with some State personnel, and whose attitude towards the State in general is of cooperation--as long as State policies continue to be *structurally* favorable to them as a class (ibid: 133-203). Thus the authors conclude:

> Miguel Alemán is the personification of the general interests of a bourgeois fraction which emerged with the concrete policies of the Alemán administration itself. This fraction, throughout thirty years, has been interested in the continuity of a State economic policy just like the one applied during the second half of the 1940s (ibid:182).

Later on in this dissertation we shall see how the most powerful media corporation in Mexico actually came to be a condensation of the interests and capitals of some of the most powerful fractions of the Mexican "grand bourgeoisie."

5.1.4. *Beginnings of the O'Farril Empire.*

Along with Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, another individual who has been instrumental in the development of the culture industry in Mexico is Rómulo O'Farrill Silva, who established the first television station in the country.

O'Farrill Silva was born in the city of Puebla in 1897. His first business, at age 18, was a small auto repair shop, which in 1936 became *Automotriz O'Farrill*, one of the first automobile assembly plants in the country. In the interim, O'Farrill was sales representative of several makes of U.S. automobiles (Ford, Gardner, Dodge, Paige, and Graham-Paige), until he began assembling and distributing Packard Autos as well as Mack and Federal Trucks (*Mexican American Review*, June, 1950: 17). O'Farrill's wealth seems to have begun--as most of the Puebla group's greatest personal fortunes--with the financial support of former U.S. Consul William O. Jenkins, who "may have been the richest man in Mexico, ranking ahead of even Miguel Alemán" (Erlandson, 1963:243). We have described in Chapter 4 the peculiar origin of Jenkins' fortune, and his ties with other Mexican capitalists. In 1928, O'Farrill was elected mayor of the city of Puebla, but he did not pursue a political career further.

During the 1940s, O'Farrill dedicated himself to expanding his automobile business, having been an influential promoter of the construction of roads all over Mexico. His activities as founder and leader of the Mexican Highway Association and principal promoter of the Pan American Highway system throughout Mexico, Central and South America, are usually presented as "philanthropic gestures" (e.g. *Enciclopedia de*

México, 1975: 562). However, the magazine of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, for example, has shown how important the Pan American Highway--and road construction in general--was for the incipient automobile industry itself (*Mexican American Review*, June, 1950: 14-17). This magazine even suggested a causal relationship between the expansion of the roads and highways in Mexico and the expansion of the number of trucks, busses and cars in the country (ibid). Furthermore, the inauguration of the Pan American Highway was reported as a major reason why European car makers were eager at the time to enter the Mexican market (ibid: 21). So, rather than acting as a philanthropist, O'Farrill Silva was simply acting as a smart businessman.

In 1948, Rómulo O'Farrill decided to diversify his interests in a completely new field: he bought a publishing house, *Publicaciones Herrerías*, from a close friend of president Miguel Alemán, sportsman and tycoon Jorge Pasquel (Cole, 1972:112). The leading publication of the company was the influential Mexico City daily *Novedades*. The newspaper had been bought originally in 1946 from the Herrerías family with the explicit purpose of supporting the presidential campaign of Miguel Alemán, according to the Secretary of the Treasury under Alemán (interviewed by Erlandson, 1963: 244). When O'Farrill took over in 1948, he was backed financially again by William Jenkins. As late as

the early 1960s, however, even the staff members of the company believed that Miguel Alemán held the controlling interest (ibid: 243-244). But this contention was consistently denied by the co-directors of the business, Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. and Ramón Beteta (who was Treasury Secretary of Alemán, and principal mastermind of his economic policies) (ibid).

In 1950, O'Farrill bought the *Mexico City Herald*, an English language morning tabloid, and renamed it *The News*, "Latin America's finest English-language newspaper" (Cole, 1972: 113; Erlandson, 1963: 243). In 1957, *Publicaciones Herrerías* established *Diario de la Tarde*, an evening paper, and went on creating subsidiaries, affiliating and merging with other publishing companies from Mexico and abroad, publishing books and magazines of all kinds. The present significance of the O'Farrill publishing empire, and its relations with television, other media, and various economic groups shall be described by the end of this chapter. But here is an indication of the impressive growth of this publishing empire: The seventeen magazines published by the O'Farrill companies had in 1980 an average monthly circulation of almost thirteen and a half million issues, and their newspaper chain (seven newspapers in five Mexican cities) had an average circulation of over 300 thousand daily issues (Sánchez Ruiz, 1981:27-29).

We have pointed out before that the O'Farrills belong to the Puebla group, an important economic group which Concheiro et al (1979) have found closely identifies politically with the Monterrey group. Both groups are considered members of the most conservative fraction of the grand bourgeoisie (ibid). During the presidential term of Manuel Avila Camacho, Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. married the president's daughter, Hilda, in 1942. This marriage brought the O'Farrills still closer to the conservative faction of the State personnel, and to other members of the Puebla group, as is the Avila Camacho family itself (Maximino Avila Camacho, along with William Jenkins and a former employee of the latter, Manuel Espinoza Iglesias, controlled for a long time one of the most important banking organizations in Mexico, Sistema Bancos de Comercio--Hamilton, 1982:257, 294-296).

Rómulo O'Farrill Naude, the only son of O'Farrill Silva, entered his father's business early, where he always occupied top executive positions until O'Farrill Sr.'s death in 1981. After O'Farrill Sr.'s death, Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. took charge as president and director general of *Novedades*, and Miguel Alemán Jr. was named vice-president and sub-director. In 1950 the O'Farrills opened XHTV, Channel 4, the first television station in Latin America, and in 1952 they acquired radio station XEX. This station and Emilio

Azcárraga's XEW and XEQ have long been considered the "big three" in the country (Alisky, 1954b:70-71). XEX's power was soon upgraded to 250,000 watts, and traditionally has been considered the station with the most "complete" news services (Cole, 1972:34). By 1972, XEX had seven repeater stations in the provinces, but currently it operates without relays (MPM, June-August, 1980).

Besides the companies in which the O'Farrills have had controlling interest, Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. has been on the boards of directors of the following companies: *Banco de Puebla, S.A., RCA Victor Mexicana, S.A., Productora e Importadora de Papel, S.A., Distribuidora Mack, S.A., Aerovías Guest, Sears Roebuck de México, S.A., Impresora y Editora Mexicana, S.A., Grupo Industrial Desc, Volkswagen de Puebla, S.A. Servicios Aéreos de América, S.A., Financiera Internacional, S.A., Banco Hipotecario, Fiduciario y de Ahorro, S.A.* and *Industrial Minera de México, S.A.* (Lajoie, 1972:162; Concheiro et al, 1979: 185; Pérez Espino, 1979: 1444). This list shows the diversification of the O'Farrills' holdings and interests (from mining to commerce, banking and manufacturing). O'Farrill's links with other national and transnational economic groups are clear here also.

Let us now describe the process whereby "Mexico" decided what

type of television system it needed.

5.2. *The Alternatives (BBC-type, or U.S.-type of TV System) and Decision.*

From the previous contextualization we can infer that the "most probable" model of TV system to be adopted in Mexico was the one already prevalent in the United States. The principal elements of the contextualization above are the military, economico-political and ideologico-cultural hegemony of the U.S. after World War II; to this global dominance one should add the close proximity of Mexico and the U.S., and the economic, political and cultural influence of the latter country on the former. Finally, the Alemán administration itself, with its clear and open class character and its alignment with and subordination to the United States policies.

A clear indication of Miguel Alemán's lack of interest in the continuation of the State's strong participation in the mass media (which had actually begun to diminish during the Avila Camacho administration) is the fact that in 1948, by Presidential decree, the radio station of the government party was "handed over to the private sector" (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:18). This decision was in line with the new

character of the Mexican State's interventionism, which we have termed above "supportive", rather than "leading" as with Cárdenas. Just as in the United States, the previous experience with radio-broadcasting in Mexico set the organizational and operational parameters, to be followed by the new medium. As in the United States also, the groups that developed television in Mexico were often those who had expanded radio before, thus capitalizing on their rich experience.

We mentioned at the begining of this chapter that by this time (between 1945 and 1950) there was elsewhere an alternative model of organization and functioning of broadcasting: the BBC in England, linked institutionally to the State, but formally independent of it, and whose source of income was not the sale of time (or commercials, programs, or potential audiences), but a small monthly fee paid by the direct viewers. By the end of the Second World War the BBC enjoyed widespread prestige in the world (Tunstall, 1977:133 and passim), and its model was being followed not only by England's colonies and former colonies, but also by some other European industrialized countries (ibid). As pointed out before, Miguel Alemán in 1947 ordered a study commission to be formed to analyze the two alternative models, so he could decide from their recommendations which one to follow in Mexico.

An organic intellectual of the commercial media, the vice-President for research of Televisa, has asserted that the real options were "the model of free competition that emerged in the cultural context of the United States and the European model followed by Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, Franco" (Sabido, 1979:3). However, the latter was not necessarily the typical European model, as we have already seen. On the other hand, all evidence, including a brief history of Mexican broadcasting written by two Televisa employees (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:20), indicates this was not the dilemma as posited by the State itself. Nevertheless, even if the alternative model being contemplated was not the "totalitarian" system, it is not clear, given what we know about Miguel Alemán's ideology and political practice, as well as about his government's historical circumstance, why such a disjunction emerged in the first place. It is important to recall that there was not, at that time, any group or individual presenting a *concrete alternative project* to the State, other than the individuals and organizations that were applying for concessions to open and exploit commercial television stations. We were not able, through our research, to find any indication of conflict, struggle, or real negotiation around the establishment of television in the country.

It is therefore difficult to pinpoint *why* the disjunction between the two television models emerged. This researcher did not have access to relevant documents and actors (the members of the commission appointed by President Alemán, for example, have passed away, and Alemán himself was not available to be interviewed when we were in Mexico collecting our data, and he recently died as well). Therefore, we shall only be able to explore some hypotheses regarding the reasons for the emergence of such a disjunction. But the center of the analysis is the decision itself, and the apparent dilemma shall have to be taken for granted.

5.2.1. *The Commission and the Study.*

We have learned before that as early as 1940 there were applications for government permits to establish TV stations in Mexico (CIRT,n/d: 27). On the other hand, the 1948-1949 Memoir of the then Ministry of Communications and Public Works (SCOP) points out that:

> Because of the growth that television is experiencing in most parts of the world, as well as of the *considerable number of applications* for the establishment of this modern diffusion medium in this capital city and in other parts of the republic, a study of the technical norms already adopted in other countries was performed.... The conclusions derived from the study served as the basis for the elaboration of the regulation that shall rule the activities of television in our country (In CIRT, n/d:26; our emphasis).

We also know that, after 1945, the Azcárraga-NBC-CBS radio networks "expanded more slowly because their management's major efforts were directed toward the introduction and development of television" (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:17). Furthermore, in 1946 General Fernando Ramirez, director of Telecommunications of the Secretariat of Communications and Public Works, officially inaugurated Guillermo González Camarena's experimental TV station, XEGC. One of the only two receiving sets of the new station was located in Emilio Azcárraga's XEW (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1971: 458; 1977:46). González Camarena was an employee of Azcárraga, and we shall learn below that this relationship of subordination was only suspended for a very brief period of time, and was then continued. After XEGC's inauguration, the sales manager of Azcárraga's XEQ declared optimistically to the press that, by the following year (1947), TV sets would be available to the public, and a regular television service would then be possible (CIRT, n/d:25). That XEGC was inaugurated by a high ranking government official shows clearly that the station was functioning with the government's authorization--which was actually required. By 1947 González Camarena, O'Farrill and Azcárraga had filed applications for franchises to open TV stations with regular commercial service (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:46; De Noriega and Leach, 1979: 20).

Given the "considerable number of applications" for government concessions to open and exploit TV stations, a decision had been required at least since the early forties. Though not a "vital" decision for the country, it was important enough that the President himself faced it. But Alemán deferred it. The alternatives were considered and the commission was appointed in early 1947.

Writer Salvador Novo, head of the Theatre Department of the National Institute for the Fine Arts (INBA), was appointed to the commission, following presidential orders, by the Institute's director, Carlos Chávez (Novo, 1967:520). The other member of the commission was engineer and inventor Guillermo González Camarena, who would be in charge of analyzing for the Secretariat of Communications the technical norms in use in the television systems that the commission was to study. The objective of the commission's analysis, according to the *Chronography* of the Chamber of Radio and Television, was:

> ...to provide the Mexican government with an illustrated criterion as to which of the two distinct forms of organization and functioning of television--the North American or the British--would serve better the objectives of public benefit that should norm the government's action and its attitude towards the technical developments of the social communication instruments (CIRT, nd:29).

Our best sources of information indicate that Salvador Novo was the person in charge of writing the final report to the President (ibid; Novo, 1967:43).

Regarding Miguel Alemán's reasons to follow this course of action, we stated before that because of the lack of sufficient direct evidence we shall only posit three conjectures, without further elaboration:

a) A first possibility is that Alemán did not have a clear understanding of the nature and implications of the electronic mass media, and in particular of television. Thus, the commission would "provide an illustrated criterion." In part, Alemán's lack of a clear definition of the medium is reflected in the configuration of the commission itself. The individual members were a technician and a theater author. Institutionally, one can say González Camarena was representing the broadcasting industry, in its most apparent aspect--the technical; similarly, Novo could be said to have represented the "officially supported high culture" (INBA). However, other dimensions of broadcasting were not directly "represented" in the commission, such as the commercial or the educational.

b) Another possibility is that, given Alemán's ideological preferences--outlined above--, he was already sympathetic to

the commercial, U.S. model, but nevertheless still had some doubts as to the feasibility and/or desirability of its implementation in the Mexican context.

c) The third possibility is that, given Alemán's ideological position and the fact that some of his friends (e.g., the O'Farrills) wanted to enter the business (ruling out for the moment the contention that Alemán actually entered *at the beginning* in partnership with the O'Farrills), the President had already decided to authorize the commercial use of television, but posited the alternative between both models and all that followed for legitimation purposes.

Of course, we do not rule out some mixture of the three former propositions, and we shall see that the latter two seem more supported by the events themselves. But we shall not speculate further. The historical outcome is known: "The government opted for leaving it [TV] in the hands of the private initiative or enterprise" (Novo, 1967:520). Actually, Salvador Novo had recommended in his report the adoption of the BBC type of television system. Just after his visit to the BBC studios in London, Novo wrote in his travel memoirs:

> The information I have obtained completely changes the apriori criteria that we had about the British monopoly of the air for television and radio, and I shall expound it in detail in my report to President Alemán

(ibid:43).

In the text of the report, Novo indicated that:

> The responsibility of the Monopoly is not towards any soap advertisers. It is towards society and the Government. By being radio and television in its hands, the [radio or TV] receiver stops being a mixed agent of sales and diversion and becomes an instrument of solace apt for the best contents.
>
> The Monopoly may disregard the urgency that afflicts commercial radio for many reasons: because it knows that what it offers cannot be bought with money; because what it offers--in music, in drama or in scientific or artistic knowledge--does not become outdated; and because it does not suffer the spur of a sponsor interested in getting rid of its merchandise (*Proceso*, No. 339, March 2, 1983:49)

"The BBC--indicated another section of the report--furnishes us with the example of how the superior interests of the audience and the State can be conciliated ...with the material interests of profesional talent" (ibid). The President, however, did not heed the "illustrated criterion" of the commissioners, and decided for the alternative model. The report and recommendations of the commission were not useful for legitimation purposes. That is why the report was never made public, and was virtually unavailable for more than thirty years, until recently when a researcher discovered it in the storage room of the Institute of the Fine Arts and made it available to an opinion magazine (ibid:48). But that the action of Alemán *could* have had legitimation purposes can be inferred from the account of the

events that we just described, given in a history of broadcasting in Mexico, written by two Televisa employees (before the report was made public):

> Investigation led the commissioners to feel that, lacking adequate resources and in the absence of a suitable infrastructure, it would be folly to launch an extensive full-scale government television operation. The Commission also believed that the population simply was neither interested in nor prepared for the kind of educative, worthy programming by the BBC and other European organizations (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:20).

This reference is included here because the making of the book was sponsored, from within the Televisa organization, by the vice-presidency in the charge of Alemań's son, who even wrote the preface. Thus, this interpretation of the text of the report clearly suggests legitimation purposes.

We did not find any testimony left by González Camarena, but most probably if he had been the person in charge of writing the report, he would have supported the commercial development of television. Recall that González Camarena was an interested party, being an Azcárraga employee, a representative of the industry in the commission, and himself an applicant for a TV concession--which he eventually received.

On October 7, 1949, Rómulo O'Farrill's company *Televisión de México, S.A.*, received the first

authorization to exploit commercially a TV station in Mexico. XHTV, Channel 4, began regular transmissions on September 1, 1950, broadcasting the Annual Address to the Nation of President Miguel Alemán (CIRT, n/d:30). The station, which had begun experimental transmissions two months before, was officially inaugurated on August 31 by the Secretary of Communications and Transportation, Agustín García López, representing President Alemán (*Excelsior*, September 1, 1950: 4). In a pagewide advertisement in newspaper *Excelsior* (ibid: 11), RCA joyfully exclaimed: "This day begins a new era in the history of the Mexican home ...". The first agency to place advertisements with the new TV channel was Grant Advertising, and the first advertisers were Goodrich-Euzkadi tires and Omega watches (Mejía Cole, 1971: 169).

Interestingly, just before the O'Farrill TV station began its broadcasts, the import duties on television sets and parts were reduced "by a Presidential decree signed on July, 1950, published in the *Diario Oficial* on August 4, and effective August 7" (*Foreign Commerce Weekly*, Vol. XL, No.10, Sept. 4, 1950:26). Miguel Alemán clearly had a particular interest in the development of the television industry in Mexico.

5.3. *The Process of Monopolization of TV*

Mexico was the first country in Latin America, and sixth in the world, to establish commercial television (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:20; Cole, 1972:144). Because of problems related to technical specifications in the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) stopped processing license applications to operate TV stations in the United States from late 1949 to 1952. This delayed the increase in TV stations, whose maximum authorized number remained at 108. Meanwhile, the number of TV sets in use grew from a quarter of a million to over 15 million during that period (Head, 1976: 164). In 1950, when TV was born in Mexico, there were over ten and a half million TV sets in use in the United States, and about 1,300 in Mexico (UNESCO, 1963: 80-82). That year Mexican imports of television sets from the United States amounted to over 3.5 million dollars, and the following year they almost doubled (Arriaga, 1980: appendix E). In 1950 and 1951, Mexico's total imports from the United States accounted for 20% of the latter country's exports to Latin America. Of the total imports, 48.6% in 1950 and 49.98% in 1951 constisted of electrical machinery and apparatuses (*Business Information Service*, June 1952:1-5). Thus, by 1952 there were already at least 22 different brands of TV receivers in the market.

The most salient of them were Emerson, Zenith, Olympic, RCA, General Electric, Philips, Admiral, Motorola, Philco, Stromberg-Carlson and Majestic (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:47). The technological mix was prepared, and the Mexican market was ready for the expansion of the TV industry.

5.3.1. *The "First Competition"*.

Emilio Azcárraga's XEW-TV, Channel 2, was launched on March 21, 1951, with the remote control broadcast of a baseball game (CIRT, n/d:32). In 1943, Azcárraga had begun the construction of a huge building in downtown Mexico City, which would house his radio empire. The construction of *Radiópolis*, however, was suspended for several years when TV appeared in the United States. Instead of *Radiópolis*, *Televicentro* was inaugurated along with Channel 2 (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:46). Most of Azcárraga's administrative, artistic and technical radio staff was incorporated into the new TV station; for instance, Guillermo González Camarena became the head of Channel 2's technical staff. Both the O'Farrill and Azcárraga stations' equipment was purchased from RCA (*RCA Annual Report*, 1951:27). Reception was rated as equal to that in the United States about a year and a half before, so probably the equipment was not totally up to date (*Foreign Commerce*

Weekly, vol. XLI, No. 2, Oct. 9, 1950:30).

On May 10, 1952, Guillermo González Camarena officially inaugurated his station, XHGC, Channel 5, by broadcasting a Mother's Day festival (CIRT, n/d:33). Most of Channel 5's equipment had been built by González Camarena himself, although the remote control hardware used on the inauguration of the station was borrowed from Channel 2. The studios of González Camarena's station were located in the building of Azcárraga's XEQ radio station (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:47). Intense competition for the advertising market began, although it was mostly between the O'Farrill and Azcárraga stations, because "Channel 5 hardly sustained itself from the few advertisers who took the risk of sponsoring some of its humble programs, which had to compete with the all star shows of Channels 4 and 2" (Esquivel Puerto, 1970:151). Nevertheless, the three stations faced the same programming problems due to the lack of experience and scarce talent, and thus much of their transmission time had to be filled with both Mexican and U.S. movies (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:21). Channel 2 had the lead in the competition, however, because of its owner's long experience in radio broadcasting. During the 1930s and 1940s, Emilio Azcárraga signed up the best artistic and technical personnel in Mexico for his radio stations. Also, Azcárraga's knowledge of the broadcasting market provided

his Channel with a leading edge over O'Farrill's.

In 1952 another O'Farrill station began transmissions in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. The following year five TV stations were reported in operation, and 29 under construction. The concessions of 18 of them corresponded to Rómulo O'Farrill (or to his company, *Televisión de México, S.A.*) and seven to Emilio Azcárraga (*Radio Annual-Television Yearbook*, 1953:918). Thus we can see that other entrepeneurs or companies were not interested in applying for concessions to operate TV stations, or that the mechanism to grant such concessions was actually biased in favor of both Azcárraga and especially the president's friend, Rómulo O'Farrill. The monopolistic tendency has been the mark of Mexican television since its inception.

Very soon the new Mexican television stations were affiliated to the North American networks; hence, RCA's *Annual Report* for 1952 indicates that "NBC's television service beyond the continental borders was extended through affiliation with CMQ-TV, Havana; XEW-TV, Mexico City;..." (RCA, 1953:31). CBS's *Annual Report to the Stockholders* (1953:n/p) asserted that: "By the end of 1952 the CBS television network included 74 stations in the United States, Mexico and the territorial United States..." The latter report does not indicate which was the affiliated station,

but most probably it was Channel 5, because O'Farrill's Channel 4 would later affiliate with the American Broadcasting Company (*International Television Almanac*, 1966:735;1968:746).

5.3.2. *"The Stabilizing Development" Strategy; The Formation of Telesistema Mexicano*

The government granted several concessions in 1951 and 1952, to operate television stations in the provinces (most of which we have seen were granted to Azcárraga and O'Farrill). But beginning operations was actually very slow, because it was still not economically feasible to produce local programming, and the network scheme was not yet implemented. Thus, for three years the real competition was centralized in Mexico City, among the three Channels, 5, 4 and 2. Even though the process of industrialization was well under way, and in those years more U.S. and Mexican advertising agencies opened in Mexico, the market seemed to be offering "limited posibilities" for profitability to the incipient TV industry (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:21). In early 1954, González Camarena's Channel 5 moved to *Televicentro*, "now, with brand new, resplendent equipment" (Esquivel P., 1970:154). Even though González Camarena remained the official concessionaire of the station,

most probably--we shall see why below--Emilio Azcárraga bought all of its stock. There were actually only two competitors now.

Because of the intense competition and other factors indicated before, programming continued to be of very low quality, and even the new president, Adolfo Ruiz Cortínes, reportedly was unsatisfied with the performance of the television channels (Cremoux, 1974:88-89):

> "Before the deficiencies of the competition system --indicates the vice-president of research of Televisa-- president Adolfo Ruiz Cortínes decided to call a meeting with the three concessionaires of the channels. On that occasion emerged the presidential authorization to create only one enterprise entrusted with the operation of commercial television in Mexico" (Sabido, 1981:7).

In December of 1954, Emilio Azcárraga and Rómulo O'Farrill declared to the press: "Experience has taught us not to fight between ourselves. The losses we have suffered have been very high. There was no way out other than understanding each other and agreeing, or otherwise to accumulate more losses" (CIRT, n/d:34). *Telesistema Mexicano, S. A.*, the new television monopoly, was created on March 23, 1955 (ibid.). Efraín Pérez Espino's (1979:1448) research in the Public Registry of Property shows that, of *Telesistema*'s total stock of ten million pesos, both Emilio Azcárraga and Rómulo O'Farrill held 40% each;

the rest was divided among Emilio Azcárraga Jr., Rómulo O'Farrill Jr., Fernando Díez Barroso and Ernesto Barrientos, with 5% each. However, most analysts think that the Azcárragas actually held the controlling interest, because their position within the organization has traditionally been on top (ibid; Cole, 1972:154-155; Erlandson, 1963:463). Thus, Azcárraga Sr. was president of the company, O'Farrill Sr. vice-president, and their sons held the positions of managers. Guillermo González Camarena remained in the organization, but never again occupied a top level position. As to Ernesto Barrientos Reyes and Fernando Díez Barroso, the former was an employee of Azcárraga's confidence since the XEW times, and the latter was Azcárraga's son-in-law. Probably the shares held by these two individuals were really only nominal shares, controlled by Azcárraga (we have pointed out above the difficulty of identifying the *real* stockholders in the *sociedad anónima* system).

There were firm plans for the expansion of the new corporation, which lasted as a monopoly for 13 years. In 1955 *Teleprogramas de México* was established, an affiliate of *Telesistema Mexicano* which would produce and export TV programs (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:22). In late 1954 both Azcárraga and O'Farrill made public their plans for "the expansion of Mexican TV" (CIRT, n/d:34), and signed an

agreement with an ITT subsidiary to install a relay station near Mexico City, that would reach several states from coast to coast. In subsequent years more repeater stations were established--most of which relayed Channel 2's signals--, new ones opened in the provinces, and the few independents were affiliated to *Telesistema*, through its network *Televisoras de Provincia* (Cole, 1971:146). By 1963, when it was estimated that there were already a million TV sets in the country, 28 television channels were working regularly, of which 22 were directly controlled by *Telesistema* (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:48).

One of the first instances of "social criticism" of television emerged in the mid-1950s, when the Mexican Catholic Legion of Decency campaigned for "morality" in TV shows. In response, the "TV stations immediately pledged themselves to hold strictly to clean shows" (International Television Almanac, 1956). By 1955 the principal advertisers in Mexican TV were reportedly "beer, cigarette, automobile and cosmetics companies" (ibid). The Mexican correspondent of the *International Television Almanac* (1961: 733) wrote in 1961:

> A television set has become in Mexico an article of prime necessity. The urge of every Mexican home to get a TV set is so great that numerous poor families, living in houses not much better than huts pride themselves on a television set that is being painfully paid on the installment plan, peso by peso. Sometimes neighbors

> contribute to meet the monthly payments, as they gladly pay an entrance fee of 25 or 30 centavos (2 or 2.5 cents) to watch their favorite program. Those homes may lack good water services, a heater, a good gas range or a washing machine, but those matter less than a TV set.

Very similar observations were made by Oscar Lewis (1959:13, 63, 82-83, 135) in his case study of the "culture of poverty" in five Mexican families. It is worth quoting at length Lewis' perception of the "modernization" process in which television was having a role by the mid 1950s:

> Large scale advertising came in with recent U.S. investments and has a decidedly U.S. flavor. The major television programs are sponsored by foreign-controlled companies like Nestles, General Motors, Procter and Gamble, and Colgate. Only the use of the Spanish language and Mexican artists distinguishes the commercials from those in the United States. On the Quaker Oats program one hears the Mexican lightweight idol Ratón (The Mouse) Macías recommend Quaker Oats as the cereal of champions. Some commercials do not even trouble to translate phrases and have spread linguistic forms or *pochismos*. Thus beauty products are announced as "Touch and Glow," "Bright and Clear," etc. American department stores retail practices, such as self-service, attractive open display of goods, standarized and guaranteed articles, and fixed prices, have been made more popular in the past ten years by stores like Woolworth's and Sears Roebuck and Co. Self-service supermarkets, complete with packaged foods, many with American brands, are opening in the better-to-do neighborhoods of Mexico City and in some of the smaller towns. American-made clothing and shoes, or locally made articles carrying well known American labels, are sold in the higher priced shops (ibid: 8).

There is a sense of continuity--with 20 years of distance--in Lewis' testimony and that of Stuart Chase (1931) on the contribution of radio to "modernization-Americanization", which we presented in the previous chapter. The introduction

and development of the modern mass media in Mexico seem to be closely related to the transnationalization of the country. But let us offer a broader historical context to the events we are describing.

The Stabilizing Development Policies

A historical contextualization to the development of television during the 1950s and 1960s will help us understand TV's interactions with and role in the broader economic and political processes. Among the several attempts to provide a periodization of the recent political-economic history of Mexico, the years around the middle of the 1950s are considered an important conjuncture (Cordera, 1979; Villareal, 1977; FitzGerald, 1977; Gollás and García Rocha, 1976; Boltvinik and Hernández Laos, 1981). By that time Mexico had entered the "second stage" of import substituting industrialization, now mainly based upon the massive inflow of foreign investments (Pellicer de Brody, 1974: 75). We have pointed out before that the Alemán administration's policies and attitude had been very favorable towards foreign investment. However, owing to circumstances out of the State's control, such investments had not been that dynamic. It is not until "the end of 1953

(perhaps because of the economic adjustments in the United States provoked by the Korean War) when a growing interest by the North American government and businessmen can be percieved in investing in the more industrialized countries of Latin America" (ibid:78-79).

The "growing interest" was reciprocal. By the end of Miguel Alemán's administration (1952), Mexico was entering into an economic crisis. The terms for traditional Mexican exports had deteriorated under the conditions of the international market, and the commercial agricultural sector, though still growing, began to lose dynamism. The wage freeze policies implemented by Alemán, along with high inflation rates during the period, had diminished aggregate demand, and thus affected negatively the growth rate of the manufacturing sector, of which the light consumer goods subsector had been the most dynamic during the "easy" import substitution stage. This was the clearest sign of exhaustion of the so-called "first stage" of the import substituting industrialization process (Boltvinik and Hernández Laos, 1981: 465-468). At the same time, by the early fifties the State's financial strength, which had been based largely on the forced savings experience of World War II, was diminished. The strong public investment program, on which private accumulation was based, faced the problem of lack of financial resources (Green, 1981:106). In 1953 a report was published of the first

systematic and exhaustive analysis of the Mexican economic performance up to 1950, and its future perspectives. The analysis was done by two economists of the Mexican government and two World Bank (IBRD) economists (Ortiz Mena et al, 1953). One of the principal conclusions of the report was that internal savings were already insufficient to finance investments in the country. Therefore, the analysts pointed out: "In the next years, since internal savings are temporarily stabilized and there shall be a greater demand of investment funds, it shall be necessary to depend to a greater extent on external financing" (ibid: 483).

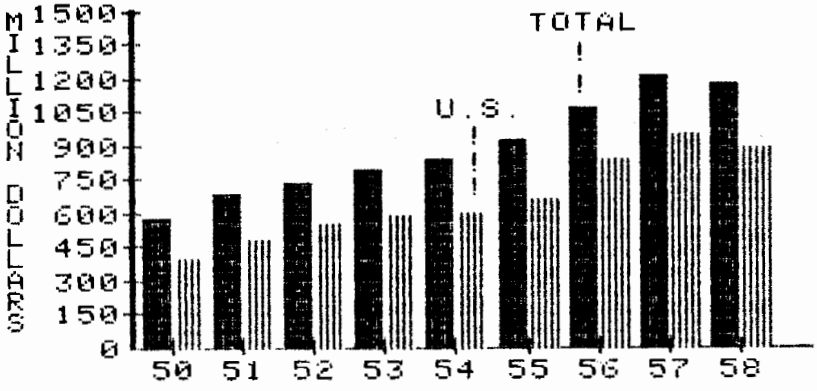
The concrete form of the external financial sources was the object of intense debate in both the private and the public sectors. The aforementioned report pointed out the convenience of channelling such resources through government borrowing, within carefully designed global development plans and adequate fiscal policies (ibid: 483-485). Another form was through direct foreign investment. The Commerce and Industry Chambers, directly influenced and backed by several private and government organizations from the United States, entered a debate against the Chamber of the Transformation Industry (*Canacintra*), which feared that a massive inflow of foreign investment would displace Mexican enterprises and dominate the Mexican markets (Pellicer de Brody, 1974:78-82, 93-101). Incidentally, by about the same time, the fears

expressed by Canacintra were being pointed out by economist José Luis Ceceña (1955:81-109) as actual trends. The researcher added that the foreign enterprises that were entering into Mexico tended to operate in highly monopolistic markets, were controlled from outside the country, and the support of their governments could tend to undermine at certain points Mexico's sovereignty.

But the concern over foreign participation in Mexico's affairs was not constrained only to economic agents or analysts. Just a month before Miguel Alemán relinquished the presidential chair to Adolfo Ruiz Cortínez, an ad hoc commission comprised of representatives of some of the principal dailies and magazines of Mexico City sent a telegram to the president. In it the commission expressed the publishers' concern with "the growing invasion that Mexico is suffering on the part of publications which are published in Spanish in countries whose national language is not Spanish" (*Industria*, Vol. VI, No.40, Nov.,1952:22). All of the publications that caused the commission's concern originated in the U.S.: *Selecciones del Reader's Digest, Visión, Mecánica Popular,* and *Life en Español*. Eventually, however, all of those who opposed the foreign economic and cultural penetration would have to learn to live with it (see Figure 5-1). Thus, for example, by 1965 *Selecciones del Reader's Digest* and *Life en Español* were reported as

FIGURE 5-1

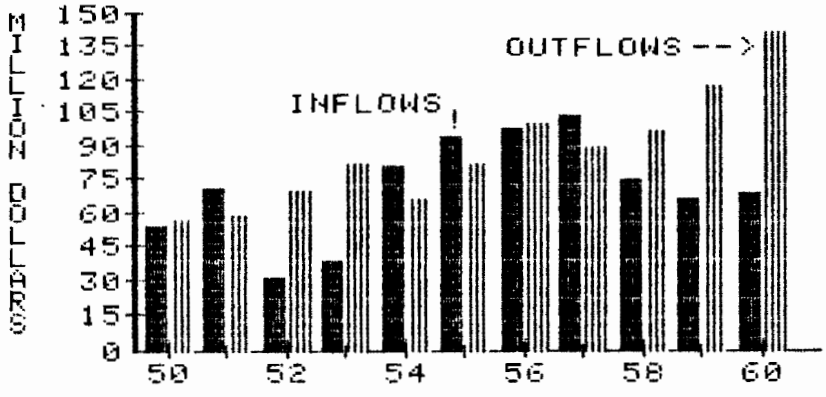
TOTAL & U.S. FOREIGN INVESTMENT



SOURCE: H. MAY AND FERNANDEZ A. (N/D): IMPACT OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN MEXICO

FIGURE 5-2

1950-60 DIR. FOREIGN INVESTMENT FLOWS



SOURCES: NAFINSA, 1983:348,TABLE 7-11
ORTIZ AND SERRA PUCHE,1983:9,TABLE 3.1

the two magazines with the largest circulation in Mexico (Olizar, 1965:205).

The economic crisis that led to a devaluation of the peso in 1954 forced the government to take a number of pragmatic measures to sort out the crisis. From those measures implemented, the "stabilizing development strategy," which would guide the economic policies of the Mexican State until the late sixties, began to take form. This strategy did not really differ substantially from Alemán's. The main difference was that, at any rate, the parity with the U.S. dollar was sustained. At any price, therefore, the inflationary spiral had to be contained by preventing an accelerated increase in prices and wages (Meyer, 1980:126). The protectionist policies were continued, but there was a shift towards the promotion of the durable and intermediate manufacturing sectors. Direct foreign investment was encouraged, with rather few actual restrictions (Pellicer de Brody, 1974:101-104; Villareal, 1977:74). Finally, because of the political incapacity of the State to implement a fiscal policy that could enable it to generate internally the resources needed to fulfill its economic role, the trend towards growing government borrowing from abroad began (Green, 1979; 1981). The stabilizing development strategy marks the beginning of the second stage of import substituting industrialization, and a deepening of Mexico's

economic dependence.

The "industrialization and growth at any rate strategy" did draw Mexico out of the recession, and the anti-inflationary policies and measures taken by the government were relatively successful for almost a decade. The exchange rate was kept firm at 12.50 pesos to one dollar, and the average growth rate of the GDP was over 6% until the late sixties. Citing similar figures and other data, a 1962 report of *Business International* (p. 4) asserted: "For international traders and investors Mexico unquestionably takes star billing among Latin American Markets." The "Mexican miracle," however, was a two-sided coin. The process of industrialization and economic growth had brought with it a process of "marginalization," and an unequal distribution of material and cultural rewards for the Mexican population at large, which was described in detail by Pablo González Casanova in 1965 (pp.90-128). The unequal distribution of income has been singled out as the main factor explaining the "exhaustion" of the first stage of import substitution, of light consumer goods (Boltvinik and Hernández Laos, 1981). Thus, the second stage of import substitution, within which the dynamic sectors were those manufacturing intermediate, durable and capital goods--in that order of importance--, had to rely on the consumption capacity of the higher echelons of the wealth and resources ladder (Lustig, 1980). On the other hand,

"...import substitution contributed, while it advanced at an accelerated rate, an effective demand additional to the narrow internal demand created by the concentration of income" (Boltvinik and Hernández Laos, 1981:483). An econometric analysis performed by Nora Lustig (1980) has shown that income concentration was an important factor explaining the demand for and growth of the durable consumption goods manufacturing sector in the 1960s.The Walter Thompson de México advertising agency (1959:88) described the 1958 urban population of the country as divided in the following market categories: "A-B-class" (upper and middle class, with family monthly income estimated at 4,000 pesos--320 dollars--or more), 9.2% of the population; "C-class" (lower middle class, with income from 1,500 to 4,000 pesos), 32.6%, and "D-class" (under 1,500 pesos monthly family income), 58.2%. Table 5-1 shows the evolution of family income distribution in Mexico during the 1950s and 1960s.

Table 5-1

Distribution of Family Income by Deciles
Mexico, 1950, 1958, 1963, 1969
(Percentages)

Deciles	1950	1958	1963	1969
I	2.7	2.2	2.0	2.0
II	3.4	2.8	2.2	2.0
III	3.8	3.3	3.2	3.0
IV	4.4	3.9	3.7	3.5
V	4.8	4.5	4.6	4.5
VI	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.0
VII	7.0	6.3	6.6	7.0
VIII	8.6	8.6	9.9	9.0
IX	10.8	13.6	12.7	13.0
X	49.0	49.3	49.9	51.0
5.0*	8.8	10.7	11.6	15.0
5.0	40.2	38.6	38.3	36.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gini coeff.	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58

Source: Navarrete, Ifigenia M. de (1970): "La Distribución del Ingreso en México: Tendencias y Perspectivas."
* The last decile at the top of the scale has been divided into two parts of 5% each.

The table shows that during this period of accelerated economic growth, the income share of the poorest 60% of the Mexican families decreased, while the next 30% largely kept their income share constant. On the other hand, there was a slight increase in the share of the richest 10%, which, when divided in half shows that a high middle class was created, whose income share grew at the expense of both the poorest 60% and the richest 5%.

Now, in marketing terms, we are not talking about an extremely reduced potential market for either final or durable consumer goods, given the absolute amounts that those small percentages stand for. For instance, in 1963 the total population of Mexico was over 39 million. An advertising expert described the Mexican market for 1963 in the following terms:

> One out of four families in Mexico (24%) have incomes of more than 1,500 pesos [120.2 dollars] monthly. This 24% of the population accounts for 53.5% of all money spent on consumer goods (Oliver, 1968:199-200).

About one quarter of the population, nearly ten million persons mostly concentrated in the urban areas of the country, were deemed the ideal targets of the consumistic claims of advertising through the mass media (ibid). The rest of the population is virtually non-existent for marketeers. But the media messages actually reach beyond that reduced "potential market," and along with the availability of consumer credit, they produce what Nora Lustig (1980: 215) has called the "empty refrigerator" phenomenon. A very indirect indication of the effectiveness of advertising and other strategies for the "production of consumption" can be observed in the evolution of the average growth rate of per capita private consumption in Mexico: during 1960-65, it was 2.3%, for 1965-70 3.5%, showing a decreasing trend thereafter (ECLA, 1980: table 24).

The 1950s and 1960s were years of great expansion of the Mexican television industry, which we have shown was almost totally controlled by the *Telesistema* corporation. Table 5-2 shows some indicators of this growth.

Table 5-2

Growth of Television
Mexico, 1950-1970

Year	No.TV stations	TV sets (Thousands)	Sets per 1000 population
1950	2	1.3	0.05
1955	9	116.0	4.00
1960	19	650.0	17.90
1965	40	1218.0	28.40
1970	78	2993.0	59.50

Sources: Secretarfa de Comunicaciones y Transportes (Data provided to author);UNESCO: *Statistics on Radio and Television, 1950-1960*, and *Statistics on Radio and Television, 1960-1976*

This period, during which there was a massive influx of foreign investment to Mexico, also witnessed the massive influx of the transnational corporations' marketing companions, in particular the advertising agencies. Table 5-3 presents the founding dates of some important advertising agencies.

Table 5-3
Foundation Dates of Selected Advertising Agencies, Mexico

Year	Agency
1941	Grant Advertising
1942	Publicidad D'Arcy
1943	Walter Thompson de México
1947	McCann-Erickson
1951	Noble & Asociados
1951	Foote, Cone & Belding de México
1952	Robert Otto & Co.
1956	Panamericana Ogilvy & Mather
1956	Kenyon & Eckhardt de México
1958	Intercontinental Advertising de México
1960	Publicidad Ferrer
1964	Girona Publicidad (Transamerica Adv. Network)
1965	Doyle-Dane-Bernbach de México
1966	Young and Rubicam
1967	Olsen Publicidad
1970	Arellano-Norman Craig & Kummel, Inc.

Sources: Coen Anitúa, Arrigo (1971): "Sus Instituciones." and Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos (MPM): *Directorio de Agencias y Anunciantes*, Apr-Sep, 1981.

Most of the advertising agencies listed in the table are today among the top 15 agencies which control about 40% of the advertising market in Mexico (CGCS). Of the new advertising agencies that emerged during the 1970s, some of the most important were merely extensions of existing ones, established in order to service the accounts of clients with the same line of products or services as their old clients.

An important observation should be made here. A very clear structural characteristic of the Mexican social formation is its political and economic centralization. Hence, most of the

important decisions regarding the economy or the politics of the country emerge from Mexico City. This situation is reflected in a "media centralization," which can be clearly observed in the central control and management of the TV networks, and in the fact that all the important advertising agencies have established their headquarters in Mexico City. Of the transnational advertising agencies, only one, Grant Advertising, established an office in Monterrey in the 1940s. This centralized structure has had an important consequence in the allocation of the advertising budgets. Although television has been mainly an urban medium during the last thirty years, it has been the most centralized of all mass media, and so it has come to be the closest thing to a "true national medium" (Florida, 1981:309-310). This explains the growing preference of advertisers for television, which in 1961 accounted for only 6.3% of advertising expenditures in Mexico (Ortega, 1962:681), and by 1966 accounted for 35% of such expenditures (International Advertising Association, 1967).

With the revitalization of the economy as a whole, fostered by the "stabilizing development" policies and the second stage of import substitution, most of the years of *Telesistema*'s reign as almost absolute monarch of Mexican TV were actually golden years for the whole marketing apparatus, of which advertising agencies and the mass media

are important components.

Along with the growth of the apparatus of "informal education," the formal educational system expanded during the 1950s and 1960s, due to the "human capital-type" of policies implemented by Alemán and his successors (Muñoz Izquierdo, 1979:131-150). Thus, the percentage of the federal budget devoted to education grew from 16.9% in 1950 to 24.5% in 1960, and 34.6% in 1970 (Nafinsa, 1981:358-359). However, as with the distribution of income, education has presented a very skewed distribution, highly correlated with social class (ibid). Pablo González Casanova (1965:62-89) found that, by the mid 1960s, owing to the rate of growth of the population and other factors, the marginal population in Mexico was growing *in absolute numbers*, even though the *proportion* of the population gaining access to litecacy, education and other cultural and material goods was growing too.

5.3.3. *The 1960 Federal Law of Radio and Television. The New Competition.*

We have seen that the years when the stabilizing development strategy implemented by the State was fostering rapid economic growth and industrialization, were times of almost

absolute monopolization of television in the country. We have also seen some indications that TV was fulfilling a contradictory role in the process of capital accumulation, via the promotion of consumption in a market where the relative consumption capabilitiy of the population was diminishing. However, the second stage of import substitution was based mainly on the domestic production of durable consumption goods (especially automobiles and home electric and electronic appliances) for which a need had to be created among the small segments of the population who could afford them (Lustig, 1980). Television's advertising function had a key role in that process.

We have seen as well that President Ruiz Cortínes' administration (1952-1958) seems not to have been very sympathetic towards the way commercial television was functioning in the country. For example, only 3 new concessions were granted during his presidential term. Curiously, however, the *Telesistema* monopoly was created with Ruiz Cortínes' authorization, and probably more explicit support (Sabido, 1979:7). The following two presidential periods would favor an unprecedented expansion of the television industry. For example, during Adolfo López Mateos' administration (1958-64), 26 concessions for new TV stations were granted, and Gustavo Diaz Ordaz's administration granted 42 new concessions.

Since the beginnings of Mexican television, the State had manifested plans to grant a permit to the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) to operate a TV station (*Radio Annual-Television Yearbook*, 1953:927). During Ruiz Cortines' administration, the explanation given by the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation for not granting new concessions to operate stations in the Mexico City area was that the only two technically available channels had been already assigned to UNAM and the National Polytechnical Institute (IPN) (Toussaint, 1983:48). The National University, however, never did take advantage of the opportunity to open its own channel of massive cultural transmission.

In December, 1958, Channel 11 of Mexico City was assigned to the Secretariat of Education, which handed it down to the Polytechnical Institute (ibid; Granados Chapa, 1976: 225). Working with a very limited budget and scarce technical and human resources, the IPN Channel hardly constituted a real alternative to commercial television. For ten years Channel 11's weak signal covered only a small portion of the Mexico City Metropolitan Area. It was not until January, 1969 that an investment of 8.5 million pesos was devoted to technical improvements to the official channel (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:48). Also, it was not until August, 1969

that a presidential decree clearly defined the official objectives of Channel 11, as a channel devoted to educational, cultural and social orientation broadcasts (ibid; Toussaint, 1983:48). However, Channel 11 never received the State's full support to become a real alternative to commercial television. Hence, "this first cultural television channel has had to evolve at a craftsmanship level, in contrast to the enormous industrial investments of commercial television" (Granados Chapa, 1976:225).

The 1960 Law of Radio and Television

The year 1960 was important for the Mexican radio and TV broadcasting industry. With the expedition on January 8, 1960, of the Federal Law of Radio and Television, the broadcasters proved to themselves and the State their own bargaining strength. The law was tailored to the broadcasters' interests, as the following words of the then chairman of the National Chamber of Radio and Television (CNIRT) indicate:

> [President López Mateos] ...conceded us his determinant concourse *in order to materialize vigorously our purposes*, which have crystalized in a law and its respective regulation, that amply guarantees the exercise of our specific functions on the basis of a complete freedom of expression, autolimited by our own civic and moral convictions (Guillermo Morales

Blumenkron, in Cremoux, 1974:21; our emphasis).

Ten years had passed since television's beginnings in the country, and no official regulation on the medium's social functioning had been issued. The only previous regulation regarding television was a 1950 decree, of a mere technical nature, which established norms for the installation and functioning of television stations.

We shall describe here only two concrete issues that reflected the negotiating efficacy of the broadcasters' organizations when the law was being elaborated in the Chamber of Deputies, and discussed and approved by both deputies and senators: First, the definition itself, within the law, of the broadcasting activity as an activity of *public interest* and not a *public service*, as was originally proposed. The juridical debate that led to the legal definition of broadcasting as an activity of public interest has been summarized by José Luis Fernández (1960), an Azcárraga lawyer and broadcaster himself who headed the legal pressure group of the broadcasters over the legislation, and more recently in a critical fashion by Raul Cremoux (1982). Of interest to us is the fact that this definition, but not the other, fully permitted radio and television to be considered *lucrative activities*, exploitable by private enterprise (Fernández, 1960:43).

Simultaneously, this definition limited the legal possibilities of State intervention in broadcasting, and avoided the provision of Article 28 of the Constitution that allows *public service* activities in the field of communications such as the postal service, telegraph and radiotelegraphy, to be monopolized by the State (ibid: 171-172; Cremoux, 1982:17). As a byproduct of the legal definition, the broadcasters managed to avoid some local and state taxes, but surely this was not the center of their interest during the legal-juridical struggle (Cremoux, 1982:17).

The second issue about which the broadcasters had their way in the legislative process refers to two aspects of the contents of broadcasting. On the one hand, some legislators were concerned about the excessive advertising time in both radio and television. Antonio Castro Leal, former rector of the National University and then Federal Deputy, who participated in the commission that wrote the first draft of the Law, stated that:

> We deputies felt betrayed by the Senate, who reformulated some of the items that we considered fundamental. In the first place, the project prepared by us established a maximum number of minutes dedicated to advertisements...
> (...) The senators--*perhaps because of the influence of those services' enterprises*--substituted our text by the following words: "Commercial propaganda must keep a prudent equilibrium between commercial advertisements and the whole of programming" (Castro Leal, 1969:29; our

emphasis).

With such ambiguity, pointed out Castro Leal, it became possible and "legal" to overload some programming time--especially "prime time"--with 20 or more minutes of an hour with commercial propaganda (ibid).

The other aspect of the programming time issue won by the broadcasters related to Castro Leal's proposal--aproved by the Chamber of Deputies--of dedicating one daily hour of broadcasting time to the government's "cultural, social or informational broadcasts" (ibid:100). Again, as Castro Leal observes, the Senate was "more sensitive to the interests of the enterprises," (ibid:101) and the reformulation and final form of that article of the Law reserved only 30 minutes, *continuous or discontinuous*, for the State to broadcast its own messages through commercial broadcasting. First, it was only half the proposed time; and second, it did not need to be continuous, but also divided throughout the broadcasting day.

The legal attempt we just described at State participation as communicator, along with the establishment of Channel 11 in 1958, have been described by Miguel Angel Granados Chapa (1976:224-227) as part of the first timid attempts by the State to regain some of the ground lost in the reversal by

Presidents Avila Camacho and Alemán of the process of expansion of government participation in broadcasting under Cárdenas. The reason has to do not only with a growing awareness of the legitimation potential of the electronic media, but also--as Castro Leal's testimony shows--with a new awareness of the cultural and educational possibilities offered by these media. However, the broadcasters showed their power to establish the bargaining agenda in their own terms, and we shall see below how even when the State has decided to participate more fully in the communications arena, the beneficiaries in the last instance have continued to be the broadcasters themselves.

Initial State Interest in Cultural TV Broadcasting

An important argument in this dissertation is that the Mexican State has not had a clear, explicit communications policy, with continuity over the years since broadcasting was established in the country. Despite certain characteristic general "attitudes" of the different presidents and their staffs toward the electronic media, their concrete policies and actions have not always been coherent with their stated attitudes and discourse. However, most analysts agree that since around 1960, when the Federal Law of Radio and

Television was established, the State has become increasingly preoccupied with the social effects of commercial television, as well as with the cultural, educational and political potentialities of the medium (Esparza Oteo, 1981:33-34). Thus, after the establishment of Channel 11, aside from several previous non-actualized statements of purpose, it was not until the Diaz Ordaz administration (1964-70) that the State began to encourage the educational use of television.

Mexico hosted the 1968 Olympic Games, and in preparation for the games the National Telecommunications Network was expanded considerably. Thus, the technical infrastructure for the expansion of TV was provided by the State--and we shall see that the broadcasters took every advantage of it. This new technical capability of reaching a larger part of the national territory through TV signals prompted the government to include in the 1965-70 Telecommunications Program a project to establish a "national network of educational television" (SCT, 1968:152). The tentative objectives that were set for this network were:

> To cover all the national territory, offering educational programs at different levels and specialties, and cultural diffusion programs; besides, if feasible, to broadcast simultaneously different programs which could range from literacy and elementary education up to technical training and high specialization (ibid).

On August 6, 1969, the federal resolution which created the

Federal Network of Official Television Stations was published. This network was assigned 37 channels distributed throughout the country (Granados Chapa, 1976:232). Actually, this official network as such never began operations, but set the scene for the creation in 1972 of the Cultural Television of Mexico network (TCM), by President Luis Echeverrfa. We shall return later to TCM.

The project that the Diaz Ordaz Administration did implement was the *Telesecundaria*, or high school by television, which began experimentally in 1966 with closed circuit transmissions (Encinas Mendoza, 1981:121). In 1968, the *telesecundaria* courses were broadcast through *Telesistema*'s Channel 5, although the production was by the Ministry of Education (Esparza Oteo, 1981:24). *Telesecundaria* has been the only government educational project through television which has continued through more than one presidential term (ibid). However, the origin of telesecundaria seems not to have responded directly to the State's communications policy, but to an educational crisis in the country, due to the "growing insufficiency of direct education to satisfy the demand for secondary education, and the educational disequilibrium between urban and rural zones" (ibid:76).

By the late 1960s, ideas originated in the industrialized

countries about the "massification" of consciousness and culture, and the degradation of taste through the mass media and the "culture industry" in general, began circulating among some intellectual circles (Pasquali, 1963; Eco, 1969). Some high ranking State personnel were also begining to worry and speak out publicly about such issues. Hence, in November, 1968, the then Minister of Gobernación, Luis Echeverría Alvarez, delivered a rather critical speech before the broadcasters, in the inauguration of the Tenth National Week of Broadcasting. In his speech, Echeverría cited some research results that indicated that Mexican adolescents spent, on the average, two and a half daily hours watching TV (over 20% of their non-sleep time), and only one hour and a half daily doing schoolwork. Echeverría also indicated that 97% of those adolescents watched only entertainment programs, and finally, the Secretary mentioned his concern with the high proportion of violent content and foreign programs in Mexican television's programming. Then, Echeverría made an invitation to the broadcasters which, we shall see later in this chapter, was taken very seriously when he became president two years later:

> Couldn't we in Mexico, if we all unite, beginning with those who are directly concessionaires and managers of the diffusion media; representatives of all social sectors, psychologists and sociologists, parents and the State itself as coordinating element, *find a formula* which would enable us to protect the interests of the audience, especially those of the new generations and simultaneously, but with due hierarchy, the private

interests? (In Cremoux, 1974:66-70; our emphasis).

In the next section we discuss out the "formula" that the television broadcasters proposed--and actually "imposed"--to the State for the reorganization of Mexican television.

In 1969, the State made another kind of attempt at direct participation in the commercial electronic media, and the broadcasters showed again their bargaining strength *vis-à-vis* the State. On 31 December, 1968, the Federal Government decreed a new tax affecting all enterprises that operated goods of the nation's direct property through federal concessions, when such activities had been declared of *public interest* (Gradados Chapa, 1976:228). Obviously radio and television clearly fell within this category. The fiscal measure consisted basically of a tax of 25% on payments for services to the enterprises operating under federal concessions. Actually, the direct burden would fall on the advertisers, but the broadcasters saw their profits threatened, because the tax was likely to diminish demand for their services. The tax reform also included a provision for an alternative to the payment of the tax, transfering 49% of the enterprises' stock to the state banking system. Through this option, the State would have held direct control over those activities (González Pedrero, 1969:66-67). The broadcasters, through their chamber and legal apparatus, and

in alliance with other private institutions, waged a fierce legal battle on several fronts (ibid:68). Besides the legal struggle by the lawyers of the Chamber of Radio and Television and the political pressure exerted directly and indirectly--via other private organizations--, a general public relations campaign was launched. Part of this campaign included the beginning of transmissions through *Telesistema*'s Channel 5 of some cultural and educational programs (including *Telesecundaria*): "naturally at the times with lowest rating and in a channel with little commercial success" (ibid). The final outcome was a triumph for the broadcasters: The modification by mid-1969 of the tax reform. This modification consisted only in the addition of another alternative to the payment of the tax, by putting at the disposal of the government one eighth of the radio and television stations' broadcasting time. The State, in turn, would use this 12.5% of transmission time to broadcast its social, cultural and educational messages (Fernández Christlieb, 1979:340; Granados Chapa, 1976:228-229). Naturally, the broadcaters have always chosen this alternative. Given the government's lack of adequate production facilities and personnel, this so called "fiscal time" has scarcely been used by the State over the years. On the other hand, because such payment "in species" is *not cumulative*, it really constitutes a real subsidy, or hidden tax exemption for the broadcasters.

It is rather paradoxical that, after the State's original formulation of this ambitious tax reform, the historical outcome resulted in a complete victory for the broadcasters--helped by other private organizations. This sound victory even included an "extra bonus" in the hidden tax exemption.

Expansion of Television. The Newcomers

During the latter half of 1962, the Ministry of Communications and Transportation determined that there existed the technical possibility for the exploitation of a new commercial television channel in Mexico City. In January, 1963, the Government publicized the opening in the *Diario Oficial* (Official Daily) and other newspapers with the greatest circulation, "in order to give an opportunity to those who have the technical and economic solvency to obtain the concession for the establishment and exploitation of this new channel" (CIRT, n/d:40). For some unknown reason, it took about five years for a new concession to be actually authorized in the Federal District.

In the meantime, in the early- and mid-sixties, *Telesistema Mexicano* expanded its network throughout the provinces,

establishing repeater stations especially for Channel 2 (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:23). This task was facilitated by the State's introduction in 1963 of the microwave network, as part of the National Telecommunications Network, which was an important part of the government's global modernization project (SCT, 1968:50-86). Such substantial infrastructural government investment prompted *Telesistema* to invest during the same year (1963) around 12 million pesos, in a huge transmitting tower that would increase the power of its channels and improve the reception of its TV signals (Enciclopedia de México, 1977:48). With the availability of video tape it was feasible for *Telesistema* to begin the relatively large-scale export of programs to Central and South America and also to the United States (ibid; De Noriega and Leach, 1979:22). Also during the early 1960s, both the availability of video tape and the combination of Hollywood and the U.S. TV networks made possible the expansion abroad of the North American telefilm production industry for which Mexico became an important market (Read, 1976:23-95). The criterion used by *Telesistema* and its advertisers to select the imported serials was reportedly their previous ratings in the United States (Arriaga, 1980:228).

Another sign of Emilio Azcárraga's entrepeneurial vision is his establishment in 1962 of two stations in the United States: KMEX in Los Angeles and KWEX San Antonio, which

constituted the foundation of what would later become the Spanish International Network (SIN) (*Television Age*, July 1, 1968:25; Gutiérrez and Schement, 1981:192-193). The Spanish-speaking market in the United States had been neglected by the big North American communications corporations, and so SIN in time became the fourth largest network in the U.S., after CBS, NBC and ABC.

Another event that reinforced the political strength and relations of *Telesistema Mexicano* was the formal insertion into the organization of the son of former president Alemán, Miguel Alemán Velazco. By the mid sixties Alemán was heading *Telesistema*'s affiliate, *Teleprogramas Acapulco*, which was created "to mass produce *telenovelas* and to explore new potentials of the format" (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:22). He also organized the News Direction of *Telesistema*, and acted as press director of the official party during Luis Echeverría's presidential campaign and later performed as radio and television advisor to the president (Lajoie, 1972:6). *Telesistema*'s news coverage--under Alemán's direction--of Echeverría's campaign was described by a TV director as "the most extensive ever realized, all across the country" (Viya, 1970:152).

Movie film producer Manuel Barbachano Ponce founded in 1965

an organization called *Telecadena Mexicana*, with the objective of competing for the TV market in the Mexican provinces. In 1967, *Telecadena* inaugurated its first three TV stations in Northern capital cities, and by the early 70s it had 15 channels operating in the Central and Northern states. But local advertising was scarce and because of the centralized structure we have mentioned before, "even regional advertisers preferred to have their publicity originated in Mexico City and then transmitted on a national network" (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:23). Thus, in 1975 *Telecadena* declared bankruptcy, and its channels were taken over by existing organizations (ibid).

The mid- and late 1960s were years of expansion and change for Mexican television, for several reasons. On the one hand, the XIX Olympic games were scheduled to take place in Mexico in October of 1968. For the Gustavo Díaz Ordaz regime the Olympic games were so important that it did not hesitate to use the brute force of army guns and tanks to repress on October 1st. a massive demonstration of popular unrest. What began as a simple student incident soon became a mass movement that included the middle and working classes of the Federal District, uneasy about the deteriorating economic conditions. The mass demonstrations were "pacified" by the government with the killing of a couple of hundreds of persons (Zermeño, 1978). In order to provide an adequate

national and international diffusion of information about the Games, the government expanded the National Telecommunications Network--whose core was the microwave network--and installed the satellite ground station *Tulancingo I* (SCT, 1968:74, 130-132). Again, the government's investment in infrastructure coincided with an improvement in *Telesistema*'s equipment. In preparation for the Olympic games, color television transmissions began in 1967, and were fully implemented in 1968 (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:22).

Just before the Olympic Games began, two new television stations were inaugurated in Mexico City; in fact, a total of 20 new stations began transmissions that year. With the inauguration of XHTM-TV Channel 8 on September 1st and XHDF-TV Channel 13 on October 12 of 1968, a new--albeit short--period of competition began for Mexican television.

Channel 13 was established by *Corporación Mexicana de Radio y Television*, owned by entrepeneur Francisco Aguirre. During 1969, Channel 13 ranked fourth in popularity --slightly above Channel 8-- in audience ratings of the five Mexico City stations (Cole, 1972:148). However, its ephemeral economic success, based on an over-intensive commercialization of advertising time, soon ended in the face of financial problems. By late 1971 and early 1972, Francisco

Aguirre had divested himself of Channel 13's stock. A para-state enterprise, *Sociedad Mexicana de Crédito Industrial* (SOMEX), gradually acquired the stock, until on March 15, 1972, it became the sole owner of the Channel (Lozoya, 1974:402; De Noriega and Leach, 1979:24). In this way the State became, in 1972, the owner of a commercial television channel.

Channel 8 was established by *Televisión Independiente de México* (TIM). Among the original stockholders of the company was another radio entrepeneur, Guillermo Salas, who immediately retired from the company. The remaining minor shareholders were Manuel Barbachano Ponce of *Telecadena Mexicana* and Gabriel Alarcón, who was a former employee of William Jenkins, owner of a movie theater chain and conservative newspaper *El Heraldo de México*, and stockholder of the Diners Club of Mexico. The controlling interest in Channel 8 belonged to the Garza Sada family, leaders of the powerful Monterrey Group (Cole, 1972:127). Even though the Monterrey Group had established a television station in Monterrey in 1960, their real participation in Mexican television can be said to begin with Channel 8. Thus began a period of intense competition between *Telesistema Mexicano* (TCM) and *Televisión Independiente de México* (TIM). In 1969, TIM incorporated as affiliates five of the financially troubled *Telecadena Mexicana*'s

stations (Pérez Espino, 1979:1451). By 1972 all 15 channels of *Telecadena* were affiliated with Channel 8 (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:23). There was a direct and fierce competition for the audiences and the advertising market during these years (1968-1972) especially between Channel 8 and Azcárraga's Channel 2. In order to attract the largest possible audience, programming in both channels became more and more "strident":

> [The broadcasters found themselves inventing] programs of ever more vulgar tones, in order to maintain the rating race--recognized Televisa's vice-president for research. (...) If one of the channels developed a successful program, the other tended to reproduce it but in an intensified, more strident tone, so as to attract the public's attention (Sabido, 1979:11).

The "debasement" of TV's programming contents fostered criticisms from many sectors, and served at least as a pretext for some changes that occurred soon after. In the next section we shall describe the changes in the Mexican television system that occurred during the 1970s, and their contextualization in the crisis of the State's development strategy.

5.3.4. *Crisis of the Stabilizing Development Strategy. Emergence of Televisa; Expansion of State Participation in TV.*

This section provides a description of the changes in the late 1960s and especially in the early 1970s that shaped the present "Mexican formula" for television. This institutional setup, we shall see, is distinguished by a new intensified participation of the State in broadcasting, and at the same time by a process of increased concentration of ownership and control of television. We shall see that during this recent process, the basic contradiction of the Mexican television system, between its social character and its private appropriation, has sharpened: with the unprecedented expansion of Mexican television, its social reach, significance and consequences have expanded, while a few groups and individuals continue to own and control this important social medium of communication and education.

5.3.4.1. *From Stabilizing Development to "Shared Development" to Structural Crisis*

The economic strategy that the Mexican State followed during

the second part of the 1960s proved to be effective in achieving economic growth and capital accumulation. Table 5-4 shows a bird's eye view of the evolution of the process of capital accumulation from 1950 to 1970:

Table 5-4

Mexico, Investment and Consumption
1950-1970 (Selected Years)
(% of GDP)

	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970
Gross Fixed Investment	14.1	16.0	16.9	17.5	19.6
Govt. Consumption	4.4	4.4	5.3	7.0	7.8
Private Consumption	80.1	78.9	80.2	77.0	75.2
Exports Less Imports	1.3	0.5	-2.5	-1.5	-2.6
Gross Domestic Product	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from Nafinsa (1981): *La Economía Mexicana en Cifras*, p. 43, Table 2.5.

We can observe in the table a steadily rising rate of investment throughout the two decades. The table also reveals the widening deficit of the current account balance of payments, which E.V.K. FitzGerald (1977:5) has indicated *partly* financed investment through "external saving." The other two features observable in the table are the rising rate of government consumption, which in part simply reflects the growth of the State apparatuses during the period; and on the other hand the diminishing share of private consumption. It is clear that the increased rate of investment has actually been met by cutting the share of private consumption in GDP. This trend could be due to a new, increased

"propensity to save" on the part of the Mexican population. But this is doubtful, according to most accounts of the recent evolution of the Mexican economy. Rather, most analysts point out that this situation only reflects an important contradiction of the Mexican capitalist road, namely, its increasing capacity to produce, along with a diminishing relative capacity to consume (Gollás and García Rocha, 1976; Villareal, 1977; Cordera, 1979; Ayala et al, 1979; Boltvinik and Hernández, 1981). This explanation focuses on the concentrative effects of the process of industrialization through import substitution in Mexico. An important consequence of this capitalist development has been the unequal distribution of income across geographic regions, economic sectors, factors of production, families and individuals (Gollás and García Rocha, 1976; Bergman, 1980; Gollás, 1980; García Rocha, 1980; Lustig, 1980). In its turn, the unequal distribution of income has been a limiting factor because the industrialization process has had to rely on the domestic market. Given the import substitution strategy, exports have not been sufficiently diversified and their growth has been offset by the expansion of imports. The import substitution of light consumer goods was exhausted around 1950, and the substitution of durable consumer goods began to show signs of exhaustion by the mid-1960s, in both cases due principally to the limitations of the internal market, defined by the

unequal distribution of wealth and resources (Boltvinik and Hernández, 1981). Thus, the other side of the coin is that the process of capital accumulation in Mexico has been accompanied by a process of concentration and centralization of capital, that is, concentration of ownership and control of the means of production (Jacobs and Martínez, 1980). In the most dynamic sectors of the economy, especially in manufacturing, the process of concentration has been correlated with a process of increased participation of foreign investment (ibid; Fajnzylber and Martínez, 1976; Sepúlveda and Chumacero, 1975).

The political crisis of 1968, which forced the government to resort to massive repression, was an early symptom of the deteriorating economic conditions. Of particular importance is the fact that one social group that participated rather forcefully in the massive manifestations was the middle class, whose expectations had been growing throughout the "Mexican miracle" of stabilizing development. Hence, by the end of the 1960s the Mexican State confronted one of its worst legitimation crises (Saldivar, 1980). Industrialization had its costs, and when Luis Echeverría became president in 1970, his administration was the first in 30 years to recognize those costs:

> ...that is to say, the problems of unemployment, concentration of income, dependence on foreign capital,

> the public debt, and the low capacity of the public sector to finance itself were all acknowledged. Although inflation and the world recession (1973-74) complicated and limited the implementation of new policies, there were significant changes (Villareal, 1977:96).

It is impossible to provide here a complete overview of the events and changes that took place during the Echeverría administration, which ended up in the economic crisis and devaluation of 1976 (cfr. Tello, 1979). But it is important to point out again that Echeverría confronted a deep legitimation crisis (Reyna, 1977:165). The growing expressions of unrest of the working class and the middle sectors of the population showed that the "myths of the conciliatory, arbiter State" were being undermined (González Casanova, 1981:72). The Social consequences of the State's development project were thus actually unveiling the *class character* of such a project. Thus, in order to recover some legitimacy, Echeverría took up, at least at the discoursive level, the banners of Cárdenas' populism (Saldivar, 1980). In his inaugural speech Echeverría said:

> It is not true that there is an inevitable dilemma between economic expansion and income redistribution. Those who claim that we must grow first to distribute later either are wrong or lie because of their interests...
> If we consider only global figures, we might think that we have defeated underdevelopment. But if we contemplate the surrounding reality we have a reason to be deeply concerned. A high percentage of the population lacks shelter, running water, food, clothing and sufficient medical services (in Tello, 1979:41).

In his attempt to regain hegemony, Echeverría used several political procedures: a) public recognition of the existing social problems b) the populist rhetoric and his "democratic opening" (*apertura democrática*) or encouragement to all sectors of the population to criticize and express themselves openly, and c) some timid redistributive attempts, whithin what was called the "shared development strategy."

Some concrete measures that characterized the "shared development strategy" included agrarian, educational, fiscal, administrative and political reforms, as well as measures relating to the control of foreign investment and technology transfer (Saldivar, 1980:12). The attempted progressive tax reform led the private sector to orchestrate a forceful resistance. By the time the tax reform was actually implemented, it had lost most of its redistributive thrust: "...the fiscal policy continued benefitting income derived from the possession of capital against labor income, notwithstanding the growing financial difficulties of the public sector..." (Tello, 1979:205). The failure to implement the original fiscal reform project left the government with the only other alternative to obtain the necessary funds to carry out its projects: massive borrowing from abroad (ibid; Green, 1981:108).

In the face of a falling rate of private investment--which

had actually begun to diminish its dynamism by the second half of the 1960s--, the State under Echeverría began expanding its economic participation in sectors previously reserved to private investment only (see Table 5-5).

Table 5-5

Gross fixed capital formation by institutional sector 1939-1976 (% of GDP)

	1947-56	1957-66	1967-71	1972-76
Public Sector	5.4	6.1	7.4	9.0
Private Sector	9.2	10.8	11.8	12.0
Total GFCF	14.6	16.9	19.2	21.0
Public Share	37%	36%	39%	43%

Source: Banco de México, in E.V.K. FitzGerald (1977): *Patterns of Saving and Investment in Mexico:1939-76.*

Among the many sectors to which the State expanded its direct participation were the film industry, which by 1975 was almost totally controlled by the State, from financing to production and distribution to exhibition (García Riera, 1976), and commercial television.

The deep legitimation crisis and popular demands led Echeverría to implement policies aiming to help the popular masses to improve their wages and living conditions. Once again, the bourgeoisie's ressistance was fierce, and the actual outcome was that *real wages* were never really modified from 1970 to 1976 (Tello, 1979:184). The consumption

capacity of the masses was therefore not improved, notwithstanding the creation or revitalization of several State institutions geared towards the protection of and subsidy to consumption by the popular masses of durable and final goods (*Conasupo, Infonavit, Fonacot, Instituto* and *Procuraduría Nacional del Consumidor*, etc.) (ibid:186-187; Saldivar, 1980:85-86; Grindle, 1977).

The private sector, by criticizing and opposing such government actions, was therefore acting as a myopic bourgeoisie, considering labor only a cost of production instead of also a potential effective aggregate demand for its own goods and services:

> The efforts, many of them frustrated, on the part of the government to control prices and to protect by other means the workers' wages, were continually and systematically attacked by the top organizations of the private sector.
> [Such efforts]...were severely criticized by certain entrepeneurial groups notwithstanding the fact that benefitting the working class by strengthening its purchasing power, they also promoted the private sector itself, by offering it the opportunity of a broader market (Tello, 1979:186).

It is important to bear in mind that the Echeverría administration's objectives were not actually to change structurally the economic and political arrangements in the country, but to revitalize a pattern of capitalist economic development and capital accumulation that had already

exhausted its immediate possibilities (Ayala et al, 1979; Boltvinik and Hernåndez Laos, 1981). That the Echeverría administration was only rearranging the conditions for private capital accumulation was only realized by a few fractions of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the former president of the Confederation of Employers of Mexico (*Coparmex*) Roberto Guajardo Suárez declared in 1974:

> For any objective observer, it is clear that the present government has been neither "socialist" nor "communist." (...) In contrast, it can be affirmed that few regimes, like the present one, have worried more about the promotion of and stimulus to private initiative. In only three years more decrees, laws and diverse amendments have been dictated, promoting the entrepeneurial sector, than during the entire previous administration (quoted by Concheiro et al, 1979:148).

Most of the economically important fractions of the bourgeoisie--both national and transnational--were not aware of this actual support, and thus by the middle of the *sexenio* a "crisis of confidence" was apparent. Such a crisis of confidence led to a further contraction of productive investments, which contributed to the existing structural factors and trends that precipitated the deep 1976 recession with inflation, and devaluation of the *peso* by almost 50% (Boltvinik and Hernåndez, 1981; Ayala et al, 1979; Tello, 1979; Saldívar, 1980)*

* For thorough analyzes of the period, the crisis and its causes, cfr. the works just referred to.

This is the general historical context within which important changes in the Mexican television system took place. The next section describes how Echeverría, having rediscovered the ideological and political functions of the mass media, attempted to expand the State's participation in those media, with the contradictory result of strengthening and extending private control of them.

5.3.4.2. *The New "Mexican Formula" of Television: New State Participation; Emergence of Televisa.*

The fist half of the 1970s marks a turning point in the organization of the Mexican television system. Competition among the private television networks was eliminated again, with their "confederation" into the largest communications corporation in the country's history. At the same time, the State initiated a full scale participation in the television broadcasting area, both as a "cultural-educational" *and* commercial broadcaster. The first image that comes to mind is that of a new character of competition, now between public and private broadcasting. However, we contend that the historical outcome has actually been one of complementarity, and that the private broadcasters, which we have seen represent some of the most important fractions of the national bourgeoisie and have tight links with transnational

capital, have in reality strengthened their position and benefitted from the new situation. In contrast, the State's participation, even though growing in quantitative terms, has shown a "self-debilitating" trend due to a fundamental lack of coherent and concrete communication plans and policies. Interestingly, these events have occurred--as we show below--amidst a rhetoric of change on the part of the State.

We saw in the last two sections that by the late 1960s television had expanded in a competitive environment, and that the State, facing a strong crisis of hegemony, rediscovered the ideologico-cultural and political social effects of the electronic media. When Luis Echeverría took over the Presidential chair, two powerful economic groups, The Monterrey Group (owners of *Televisión Independiente de México*--TIM) and the Azcárraga-O'Farrill-Alemán group (owners of *Telesistema Mexicano*--TSM), were waging a fierce competitive battle for the television market. We have pointed out also that competition had brought about an unprecedented degradation of the contents of TV programming, and criticism to this state of affairs came from several fronts, in particular from the State itself. But competition was taking place within a trend towards concentration within the television system. By 1965, according to the Census of the service sector (S.I.C., 1967), 8 out of 34 surveyed TV stations accounted for 75% of the total capital invested; in

1970, 6 out of 73 stations accounted for the same proportion of total capital invested (S.I,C., 1974). While in 1965 23.5% of the stations accounted for 83% of total gross revenues, in 1970 4.1% of the stations accounted for the same proportion of revenues, and for 83.4% of the total value added (ibidem) . A rather high proportion of the TV stations in the country were controlled by TIM and especially by TSM.

Echeverría's concern about the social consequences of television began when he was still Minister of *Gobernación*, as we showed before. An indication of the continuation of such a concern is that the first day of his administration, Echeverría created an Undersecretariat of Broadcasting (*Subsecretaría de Radiodifusión*) within the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation. This Undersecretariat would be in charge not only of regulatory tasks previously performed by several uncoordinated organisms, but also of the production of government messages through radio and television and of the coordination of several of the State's actions as broadcaster (Alvarez Acosta, 1974). Thus, since its beginning the Echeverría administration had in sight an expansion of State participation in the broadcasting area.

During 1971 President Echeverría made several public criticisms of the mass media, based on his concern with the

"miseducational" effects of the media on children and adults. In May 1971, Echeverría declared to the press:

> Those who manage the diffusion media...must understand that the future itself of the economy, within which those who sponsor advertising and programs work, is linked to the great social conceptions of our people. That for their own interest we have to make, within the confines of the liberties of Mexico, a labor of harmony so that education through schooling and out of the schools...find the way to harmonization... If we do not find the route in this task of understanding and harmony, *what may be achieved in the schools shall be destroyed--and already, in good part, is being destroyed and undermined outside of the schools* (in Lozoya, 1974:403; our emphasis).

It is oftentimes difficult to pinpoint the extent to which particular attitudes, expressions and actions of the State, or State personnel such as the President himself, are overtly inserted within broader political strategies. But Echeverría's criticism of the media, in particular of television, did occur in a general context of populist rhetoric on the part of the President, in his attempt to reconciliate the working and middle classes, intelectuals and students (especially university students) with the State; it happenned when his policy of "democratic opening" encouraged criticism from all sectors not only toward the State itself, but especially toward some of the most conservative forces and vested interests of the country. Echeverría himself often criticized those conservative forces and interests with even occasional concrete references to particular economic and political groups (Saldivar, 1980; Tello, 1979;

González Casanova, 1981; Reyna, 1977:164-165). In sum, criticism of the media by the President occurred at a time when the State was attempting to regain legitimacy and hegemony, which had been undermined after the 1968 political crisis.

Very soon, as is usual in the Mexican Presidentialist politics, the President's criticisms were followed by criticisms of the media by members of the President's cabinet and other public officials (Lozoya, 1974:402-405; Granados Chapa, 1981:60-63). This created a "snowball effect," and during 1971 and 1972, television programming was criticized on many fronts. One important source of criticism of commercial TV was the newspaper *Excelsior*, which was the most influential and prestigious daily in Mexico and enjoyed a world-wide reputation as a serious, liberal news medium (Delli Sante, 1979:370-377). Commercial television responded, especially *Telesistema Mexicano*, and in 1972 occurred what was called a "media war", with mutual attacks and counterattacks between TSM and *Excelsior* (Granados Chapa, 1981:60-61). *Excelsior* had taken seriously the relative opportunity for real free expression and real social criticism that Echeverría's "democratic opening" policies and rhetoric encouraged, and had become an important critic of the general situation of economic dependence of the country, the transnationalization process, and the social

ills that affected the nation. Angela Delli Sante (1979) has clearly documented that the broadcasters's attacks on the influencial daily were actually part of a broader campaign, organized originally by the American Chamber of Commerce and some sectors of the Mexican bourgeoisie. This campaign included first the withdrawal of advertising from the newspaper by many important industrial, commercial and financial corporations (both transnational and national), and in a second stage, direct attacks through radio and television. *Excelsior* was accused of being a communist newspaper, although it is well known that *Excelsior* was only a rather good example of editorial pluralism and good news reporting (Merril et al, 1970:180-187; Sewel, 1982:630-638). It was only with the State's financial and political support that the daily survived the campaign against it. Paradoxically, it was *also* the Echeverría administration who staged the take over of the directorate of the newspaper in 1976 (*Excelsior* is a cooperatve), after it became severely critical of the government itself (ibid; Pierce, 1979).

What is important for us is the broadcasters' defensive stance towards the criticisms that were being directed against them; but this was also part of a wider reaction by some important fractions of the bourgeoisie--including the transnational sector--towards the generalized criticisms by

many sectors, including the State, to Mexico's capitalist development and the social problems it had created up to that moment. We shall see that this situation prompted the TV broadcasters to forget their previously fierce competition and to form a united front.

Several events that occurred during early 1972 fostered the private boradcasters' "unity." On March 15, the para-state financial institution SOMEX acquired all of Channel 13's stock, and thus the State entered fully into commercial broadcasting (Lozoya, 1974). The configuration of commercial television by that time is presented in Table 5-6:

Table 5-6

Mexico. Commercial TV Stations.
1972

Network	Owners	No.Stations	% of Total
TSM	Azcárraga-O'Farrill-Alemán	75	71.43
TIM	Garza Sada	15	14.28
Telecadena Mexicana	Barbachano	14	13.33
Channel 13	SOMEX (State)	1	0.95
	Total=>	105	100.00

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos: *Directorio de Medios*, May-August-November, 1972, from Pérez Espino (1979): "El Monopolio de la Televisión Comercial en México (El Caso Televisa)."

It should be noticed that of the 14 stations of *Telecadena*, 5 were operating as repeaters of TIM's Channel 8 and two as repeaters of TSM's Channel 2, which increases the share of those two networks to 19% and 73.3% respectively, of the total number of stations.

On March 21, President Echeverría inaugurated the first station of the Cultural Television of Mexico network (TCM) in the state of Oaxaca (SCT, 1976:253). On the basis of the 1969 decree that created the network of official television stations, on May 2, 1972, was published in the *Diario Oficial* the Presidential decree creating Cultural Television of Mexico (TCM) and authorizing the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation "to carry out the federal government's plans and projects on rural television" (ibid). Given the government's insufficient production facilities and personnel, the decree itself contemplated the need to select from commercial television those programs considered "adequate for the State's purposes,...with no other commitment than that of transmitting the program complete, including commercial advertisements, which constiutes a benefit for the interests of commercial television" (ibid).

Finally, another important event was the publication, on April 4, 1972, of the amendment to the Federal Law of Radio and Television, regulating the contents of broadcasting

(Cremoux, 1982:85-128). Even though apparently the new regulation arose from the President's concern about the contents of television, there is no indication that the broadcasters viewed it as directly jeopardizing their interests (Granados Chapa, 1981:27). Thus, there is no indication of the broadcasters to have lobbyed, or negotiated the contents of the regulation to the extent they did in the case of the Federal Law of Radio and Television itself or the 1969 tax: "The regulation is so ambitious, or to be exact, utopian, that there is not even a response from the entrepeneurs; every one of the articles shows by itself its inefficacy" (Esparza Oteo, 1981:30). But what actually happened was that the entrepeneurs were preparing themselves to face the challenge not only from the growing criticism of them, but from the increased State participation in television broadcasting and the prospects for a further expansion of such participation.

In Mexican politics there is a widespread custom, which stems primarily from the so called "Presidentialism:" When the official party nominates a new candidate for the presidency, most individuals and groups search through the candidate's previous speeches and/or writings for themes, expresions, rhetoric figures, etc., which they can use to communicate with him (in public and in private), so as to flatter him, and identify with him. In this sense, most Mexican

politicians can be considered "content analysis experts." But not only politicians follow this practice and it is not done only when the incumbent is a candidate, but also when he is already in power. Recall that in 1968, when Echeverría was minister of *Gobernación*, he urged the broadcasters to search for a *fórmula* for Mexican television, to improve the contents of the broadcasts in order to attend social needs, and not just those of profitability for the entrepeneurs. Under criticism from government officials, from the President himself and from other sectors of the population; and under the competitive pressure that constituted the State's ownership of Channels 13 and 11 and TCM, the broadcasters were by 1972 actually searching for a "formula" to suggest to the President, that would permit them to continue profiting from the broadcasting business and to legitimate themselves before the President, the government in general and the public.

Thus, the vice-President for research of Televisa informs us that "the process of tonal degradation [of programming contents] led to such a situation that President Luis Echeverría called a working meeting in June of 1972" (Sabido, 1979:12). In a personal interview, Mr. Sabido indicated to us that actually it was the private broadcasters who took the initiative in suggesting to the President that he call the meeting. "The objective was to stop that process

of tonal degradation and to attain a better utilization of official as well as commercial television, which up to that moment were totally disconnected" (ibid). In that meeting with the President, with most of his cabinet and with the directors of the State's television channels (13, 11 and TCM), the private broadcasters were able to present their plan for the creation of a "Mexican formula" of television:

> The result was the creation of a new formula of Mexican television: in which the State acts in a coordinated fashion with its two TV channels, its rural television network and with the 12.5% of time from every one of the commercial channels, with the private sector, that under the name of Televisa joins the efforts of channels 2, 4, 5 and 8. In this way the State and the private sector find equilibrium with three and a half channels each (ibid:13).

We do not really understand the arithmetic that leads to "three and a half channels each," because in terms of the number of television channels owned by TSM and TIM at the moment they formed the new organization, they had over 85% of the commercial television channels operating in the country. But it is obvious that a "division of labor" rationale was behind the plan, which Echeverría authorized. Executive vicepresident of Televisa, Miguel Alemán Velazco, summarizes the division of labor thus:

> The plurality of Mexican television can be synthesized by saying that Channel 2 permits a national communication; Channel 4, urban communication; Channel 5, world communication; Channel 8, national feedback; Channel 11, educational; Channel 13, cultural. And the 12.5% that the law reserves to the State in the

> channels, is theoretically dedicated to the communication needs of the government with public opinion (Alemán, 1976:195).

However, the division of labor was not so clear cut, and probably because of their legitimation needs, the commercial broadcasters left open the possibility of transmitting cultural or educational programs through their channels, and even of dedicating one of them to the broadcasting of the fine arts (Sabido, 1979:14). An important contradiction of the private monopoly of television in Mexico, that we shall see becomes more acute over time, is that between its constant need of social legitimacy and the fact that it is only a handful of individuals who benefit from such a monopoly (Sánchez-Ruiz, 1981:36). The important aspect of the new "Mexican formula" was that it permitted the merger of the competing private television networks in a huge corporation called Televisa, S.A., which began operations in January, 1973. This new corporation joined together members of some of the most powerful fractions of the Mexican grand bourgeoisie, such as the Garza Sada family, leaders of the Monterrey Group, the O'Farrills of the Puebla Group, as well as the Alemán and Azcárraga families, members of the "fraction of the fourties" (Concheiro et al, 1979:133-203). This latter fraction is generally the one that directly benefitted from the economic policies of the Alemán administration, and which has found in the partnership with

high ranking state personnel (like Alemán himself) and close cooperation with the government an important source of profit and economic-political strength (ibid).

Still, on September 1 of that year, President Echeverría insisted in his annual State of the Nation speech that:

> We are obliged to demand that the image that reaches millions of children and adults does not deform the values of our coexistence, and that the technological advances not be used to promote intellectual servitudes (in CIRT, n/d:50).

The "Mexican fórmula" of television, then, constituted a duopoly (of the State and Televisa) bestowing to a small group of entrepeneurs a real monopoly, at least within the private sector itself, of the ownership and control of a pervasively influential mass medium. On the other hand, in terms of the real penetration of the networks and the functioning of the television system as a whole, Televisa became the actual quasi-monopoly over the audience's attention--and the advertisers' monies. We shall provide at the end of this chapter a description of the expansion of Televisa and of its present predominance over the Mexican mass media system as a whole.

For the year 1973, when Televisa began functioning, the Chamber of Radio and Television claimed that the TV industry represented, directly or indirectly, an investment of 16

billion pesos. Of that total, 12.5%, or 2 billion pesos, had been invested by the broadcasters in equipment, programs, etc.; the government had invested 3 billion pesos (18.7%) in the installation of the microwave network and other infrastructure. The manufacturers of TV sets had invested 3 billion pesos, or 18.7% of the total. But the real bulk of the --direct and indirect-- investment in the industry had been contributed by the public, which up to that year had spent 8 billion pesos, or 50% of the total, in the purchase of television sets (CIRT, n/d:48). Even though this breakdown of the components of the "television industry" may seem rather arbitrary, the data show that the contention that TV programs are "free" to the audience is only a myth. Dallas Smythe (1981) has shown that this is the case also in Canada and the United States. We do not have data about the "indirect tax" which may constitute the part of advertising expenditures added to the cost of consumer products, and which probably would increase the amount of the public's "investment" in the television industry.

Expansion of the State Networks

During the Echeverría administration only 4 new concessions were granted for private television stations (in contrast with 42 concessions granted by the previous administration). Hence, private television did not expand quantitatively, although we have seen above it already centralized almost 100 stations under one corporate roof.

The State networks, on the other hand, did expand considerably. Eight of the stations of *Telecadena Mexicana* became repeaters of Channel 13 when the former declared bankruptcy in 1975 (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:23). In addition, new stations were opened to relay the State's commercial network: By 1976 Channel 13 had 26 repeater stations and 28 the following year (González Pedrero, 1976:191; De Noriega and Leach, 1979:65). The new production facilities of Channel 13 were inaugurated in July 1976, with the most modern equipment available. That year, the reported *potential* audience of the Channel was 3.8 million TV-households, nearly 4 times the number reached 2 years before (Granados Chapa, 1976:234). The power of Channel 11 was increased in 1973 also (CIRT n/d:49) but because no repeater stations were assigned to it, its coverage continued confined to the Mexico City metropolitan area. *Televisión Cultural de México* (TCM) did expand considerably, as

figure 5-7 shows:

Table 5-7

TCM Stations, 1972-1977

Year	No. New Stations	Cummulative
1972	16	16
1973	20	36
1974	15	51
1975	19	70
1976	40	110
1977	11	121

Sources: Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes: *Memoria 1970-1976*; for 1977, De Noriega and Leach (1979): *Broadcasting in México*.

By the end of the Echeverría administration, TCM claimed a penetration of 13 million potential viewers (*International Television Almanac*, 1978:608). The expansion of State television, which was explosive during Echeverría's Presidential term, slowed down by the first years of José López Portillo's administration (1976-1982), having then expanded moderately. Incidentally, the change in the government's attitude toward the media (about which more below) can be judged by the fact that, while under Echeverría only 4 new concessions to private TV broadcasters were granted, during the first 4 years of López Portillo's presidency 27 new concessions were

granted, while the expansion of the State networks was limited (S.C.T., direct information). By the last month of the López Portillo administration (Nov. 1982) the Secretary of Communications and Transportation granted to Televisa the concession to install and exploit a new network of 95 TV stations in 23 states of the country (*Proceso*, No 319, Dec. 13, 1982).

Even though the State's production facilities were expanding and modernizing, the utilization of the 12.5% "fiscal time" which the commercial stations are obliged to put at the State's disposal, remained very low. For instance, in 1973 the average proportion of the TV stations' total transmission time actually utilized by the State was 5.5% (Bernal Sahagún, 1974:145). The following year that proportion had gone up by only one percentage point (6.6%), so the fiscal time scheme continued to be a real "hidden" tax exemption (Alvarez Acosta, 1974:17).

In the next chapter we shall describe the trends and changes in the relationships between the State and television after the Echeverría administration. For the moment, some information about certain aspects of programming may give an indication of the loss of "enthusiasm" of the State with respect to its own participation in TV broadcasting, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary. *Televisión*

Cultural de México, which originally was managed by the Undersecretariat of Broadcasting of the Communications and Transportation Ministry, was renamed *Televisión Rural de México* (TRM) in 1977 and made dependent on the new General Direction of Radio, Television and Cinema (RTC) of the Secretariat of *Gobernación* (internal political affairs). RTC's director was Margarita López Portillo, sister of the new President. In 1979 TRM changed its name again to *Televisión de la República Mexicana*, with the objective of reaching urban as well as rural audiences (Toussaint, 1981:51-52; Esparza Oteo, 1981:74). We have seen that since the formation of TCM (now TRM), the State's production capability has been increasing. The Undersecretariat of Broadcasting under Echeverría had modern TV-production studios located in the Telecommunications Tower of he Communications Ministry, and the facilities of Channels 13 and 11 were available too. On the other hand, the official prduction agency PRONARTE (*Productora Nacional de Radio y Televisión*) was created in 1977 as part of the Direction of Radio, Television and Cinema (RTC), with the objective of producing television materials for TRM and for the fiscal time programming of the State. However TRM's programming does not reflect this apparent increase in the State's production capability. Table 5-8 shows a breakdown of TRM's programming, excluding the *Telesecundaria* broadcasts, which constitute the morning

programming fare of the network, according to the source of the programs --whether ad hoc productions, or taken from the other Channels and networks.

Table 5-8

TRM Programming, According to Source of Programs
(selected years)
Percentages

Source	1976	1977	1979
State Productions	35.7	24.2	16.6
Channel 13	43.6	22.7	10.8
Channel 11	12.3	12.8	14.1
Televisa	8.3	40.3	58.3
Totals*	99.9	100.0	99.8

* Totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.
Note: Excludes the *Telesecundaria* broadcasts.
Sources: SCT (1976):*Memoria 1970-1976*, p. 266; De Noriega and Leach (1979:*Broadcasting in Mexico*, pp. 70-71; Ortiz Pinchetti (1979): "Televisión Rural, del Estado al Servicio de Televisa", p. 15.

Note that the percentage of State productions diminishes considerably from 1976 to 1979. Channel 13's contribution was cut in half from 1976 to 1977 and again from 1977 to 1979, while Channel 11's has remained relatively constant. But what is really noteworthy is that TRM was relying increasingly on programs taken from Televisa's channels, from less that 10% to almost 60% of its programming. Furthermore, Ortiz Pinchetti (1979:15) reported that 75% of the programs taken from the Televisa channels in 1979 were foreign programs, all of them from the United States: *Charlie's Angels,*

Disneyland, The Love Boat, etc. The paradox is that TRM (and actually all broadcasting in Mexico, according to the Federal Law of Radio an Television) was supposed to be a medium for strengthening the national identity and culture (cfr. Cremoux, 1981:19-20). Still, the following year the offical in charge of the State's media, Margarita López Portillo, declared to the press that "we would like Televisa to participate more in Rural Television, because this medium is the cultural salvation of the country" (*Proceso*, No. 189, June 16, 1980:44). It seems that currently that trend has been reversed, and TRM is broadcasting more programs from the State channels, especially Channel 11.

In a breakdown that we performed in 1980 of the Mexican networks' programming, Televisa had the highest proportion of foreign programs (43.4%) and the lowest proportion of cultural and educational programs (10.7%). In contrast, Channel 13 transmitted 76.3% national programs and 19.4% cultural and educational fare, and Channel 11 had 97.1% national and 73.5% cultural and educational programs (Sánchez-Ruiz,1980). Thus, in spite of the State's increased production capabilities through the creation of PRONARTE and the productions of Channels 13 and 11, it is from the private networks that TRM was taking most of its programming during the years shown in the above table. Moreover, because the decree that created TRM stipulated that

the programs taken from commercial television should be transmitted *with their commercial breaks*, Rural Television in Mexico has served both to "modernize" peasants, inviting them to drink Coke and drive a Ford, and to expand the private broadcasters' audience (which means increasing their "cost-per-thousand" advantage as advertising media). Therefore, regardless of whether or not the State has had concrete and explicit plans and policies for TRM to serve its purposes (of education, cultural transmission *and* legitimation, for instance), it is a fact that the network has also served the interests of private television and its advertisers.

Channel 13's network is the second largest commercial network, after Televisa's Channel 2. However, notwithstanding Channel 13's penetration of approximately 18 million potential viewers (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:65), it has proven to be a commercial fiasco. For example in 1976, of the total advertising expenditure devoted to television, Channel 13 received only 3.2% (ibid). Advertisers are interesed in reaching the largest possible amount of potential consumers through their investment in the media, and Channel 13 has had the lowest ratings in audience research reports (Menasse et al, 1976:239-246; Erreguerena, 1980:12). This is due in part to a lack of clear definition of the network's programming policies, which became still more apparent--and acute--during

the López Portillo regime, when in six years Channel 13 had 9 directors and at least one spectacular scandal due to corruption of high ranking personnel (*Proceso*, No. 254, Sept. 14, 1981:6-9). The first director of the network at the beginning of the present administration (1982-1988) found a panorama of zero liquidity, debts of 2,200 million pesos, technical chaos, an excess of free lance personnel along with unionized workers with nothing to do, among other problems (*Proceso*, No.326, Jan.31, 1983).

Why then, does the State continue to run a commercial TV operation that is a commercial failure, suffering from administrative chaos and is going unwatched by a good proportion of its potential audience? One possible reason is that the State supports Channel 13 in order to have an ideological and propaganda apparatus at hand whenever it is needed and for legitimacy purposes (although with the current negative result of having a small actual audience). This could be supported for instance by the fact that the station trasmits a relatively high proportion of news programs (16.9%), of which 46.3% of the content is political (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:67). Another hypothesis, not necessarily exclusive of the former, is that the State maintains Channel 13 in order to "cover" and legitimize the virtual monopoly that Televisa exerts over Mexican television. Another, complementary hypotesis, is that the

State actually tried to reorient the route of Mexican television, in particular during Echeverría's presidency. Because of a lack of clear communications policies and plans, however, this effort ended up "strengthening private TV and leaving the communication process in the hands of the financial bourgeoisie, because the supposed alternative that Channel 13 represented was quickly incorporated to the interests, ideology and form of operation of the latter" (Pérez Espino, 1979:1468). But it is important that, purposely or not, the existence of the Channel 13 network *does* represent a legal obstacle for the recognition of Televisa as a real monopoly of commercial television in Mexico. In other words, whether obeying a predetermined plan or not, the State's direct intervention in commercial television *does* mediate a fundamental contradiction between the inherent *social* character of television as a medium of social diffusion and its *private* appropriation, control and exploitation.

Even Channel 11, which since its establishment in 1959 has continued as a "non-commercial" television station, is not exempt from serving private interests. For example, because of insufficient funding from the government, the station has had to include advertisements which by 1980 already took up 15% of its transmission time (*Proceso*, No. 189, June 16, 1980:46). But a more notorious example of the cultural

channel serving the interests of capital is the resignation in May, 1980 of 22 members of the station's news department, in protest of the firing of the news director because a few days before he had transmitted the point of view of striking workers at General Motors (*Proceso*, June 9, 1980:46-49).

The next chapter offers an analysis of a particular historical episode--the right to information debate--which shows further political dimensions of the relationship of the State and private television in Mexico. Now we shall describe the dimensions and power of the Televisa media empire.

5.4. *The Televisa Media Empire.*

For a television network Televisa is a rather impressive corporation, although there are even larger private networks elsewhere, such as TV-Globo in Brazil (Mattos, 1982). A U.S. observer commented on Televisa in the following terms: "...imagine ABC, CBS and NBC all under one corporate roof, and you begin to visualize the control which Televisa exerts over Mexican broadcasting" (Eoff, 1978:49). Table 5-9 illustrates Televisa's dominance over commercial television in Mexico.

Table 5-9

Televisa's Share of the total of Commercial TV Stations
Mexico, 1980

Network	No.Stations	% of Total
Channel 2	53	41.1
Channel 4	6	4.6
Channel 5	17	13.2
Channel 8	5	3.9
Telesistema (Non repeater Stations)	14	10.8
Total Televisa	95	73.6
Channel 13	26	20.1
Other	7	5.4
Total	129	100.0

Source: Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos: *Tarifas y Datos, Medios Audiovisuales*, June-August, 1980.

Of the 129 commercial TV stations (including repeaters) listed by the standard rate and data guide of the Mexican advertising industry, nearly three fourths are controlled by Televisa, either as relays of its one-channel-networks, or through their being affiliated to its subsidiary *Televisoras Afiliadas a Telesistema Mexicano, S.A.*

The real power of this quasi-monopoly of Mexican television, however, does not reside only on its TV activities. We have shown before that the owners of Televisa are related directly or indirectly to the most powerful fractions of national and transnational capital in Mexico. On the other hand, for instance the O'Farrill family has its own media empire,

comprised by several print media of wide circulation in addition to their participation in Televisa. But Televisa itself is an economic group in itself, with about 50 companies in several economic sectors, but especially in the "culture industry." Since its formation this corporation has undergone a process of horizontal and vertical integration and diversification, resulting in one of the largest and most powerful media conglomerates in the world. What follows is a brief description of the conglomerate.

The families who own Televisa, the Azcárragas, O'Farrills, Alemáns and Garza Sadas have been sketched above. The Garza Sadas, owners of the industrial-commercial-financial Monterrey group, recently sold their stock to Gabriel Alarcón (*El Heraldo de México*, May 27, 1892:1). The powerful and expanding Monterrey group had to divest from many of its holdings, when the recent economic crisis and devaluation caught it with a large debt in dollars and other financial problems. Gabriel Alarcón Chargoy was among the original stockholders of Channel 8 and TIM. Alarcón is also owner of conservative newspaper *El Heraldo de México*, of a movie theater chain, and stockholder of the Diner's Club of Mexico, among other economic interests. He belongs to the Puebla Group and, as pointed out before, his wealth's origin was linked to William Jenkins, as were most of Puebla's big fortunes (Granados Chapa, 1982b:30-34).

Thus, to the vast array of mass media owned and controlled directly by the Televisa group, we should add the media owned individually by its stockholders, in particular Alarcón and O'Farrill. *El Heraldo de México*, widely known by its conservative political stance and its extensive coverage of the Mexican and foreign "jet-set," has a circulation of 185,000 daily issues and 200,000 for the Sunday edition. Of the total, sixty per cent is sold in Mexico City and the rest in the provinces (MPM:*Tarifas y Datos, Medios Impresos*, Aug.-Oct., 1980).

Rómulo O'Farrill owns *Publicaciones Herrerías, Novedades Editores* and *Editorial Mex-Ameris*. These publishing houses produce 7 newspapers in 5 cities of Mexico (including the English language daily *The News*) with an average joint circulation of 300,000 issues and, 17 magazines with a monthly average circulation of almost *13.5 million issues*, according to the standard rate and data guide of the advertising media in Mexico (ibid). One of the last publications of the O'Farrill conglomerate was *Vogue* in Spanish, of Condé Nast Publishing. According to Mattelart (1973:133-134), O'Farrill is affiliated with *Editorial Abril* of Sao Paulo, which is linked with Time, Inc., and with *Editorial América* of Miami, of Cuban-Americans, which is the largest producer of *Fotonovelas* for Latin

America. O'Farrill has also been associated with *Editorial Novaro*, of Time Inc. and Bruno Pagliai, which publishes among other magazines the Spanish translations of the Walt Disney comics for Mexico and Central America (Coen A., 1972:312; Mónaco, 1978:311; Concheiro et al, 1979:188).

Televisa's publishing division owns 2 companies, *Provenemex* and *Editorial Televisión*. The former publishes 4 magazines especially directed to women with an average joint circulation of 850,000 monthly issues. The latter company publishes *Teleguía*, with 800,000 *weekly* issues. Hence, the joint monthly print production of Televisa is about 4 million issues (MPM, loc.cit.). If the production of the Alarcón and O'Farrill companies' production is included, then the group's participation in the print media becomes even more dominant.

Of course, all these media, besides being "communication media" that diffuse information, ideas, images, etc., are at the same time *advertising media*. As such, the television activity constitutes the most profitable sector of the Televisa conglomerate. For instance, in 1970, of the total advertising expenditure in measured media in Mexico, 39.5% went to television (INRA/IAA:*1970 World Advertising Expenditures*:6). By 1976, TV's share had grown to 66% (ibid, 1977), and has continued at that level (Florida,

1981:309). This evolution is visually shown in figure 5.3. In 1976, according to data of 2 employees of the company (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:51), Televisa received 93% of the advertising expenditure devoted to television in the country, the rest going to Channel 13 and the few remaining "independent stations." By 1980 Televisa's share of TV advertising revenues was estimated to be 80%, which is still a very high proportion (Florida, 1981:310). This type of control of the market is called by economists of all theoretical persuasions a *monopolistic structure* (Newfarmer and Mueller, 1975; Connor and Mueller, 1977). In 1976, 78.3% of Televisa's revenues originated from advertising in their television networks (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:54). Televisa offers to the advertisers "the most attractive package of saturation coverage ever put together in the history of Mexican television" (ibid:53). This can be corroborated in Tables 5-9 (above) and 5-10.

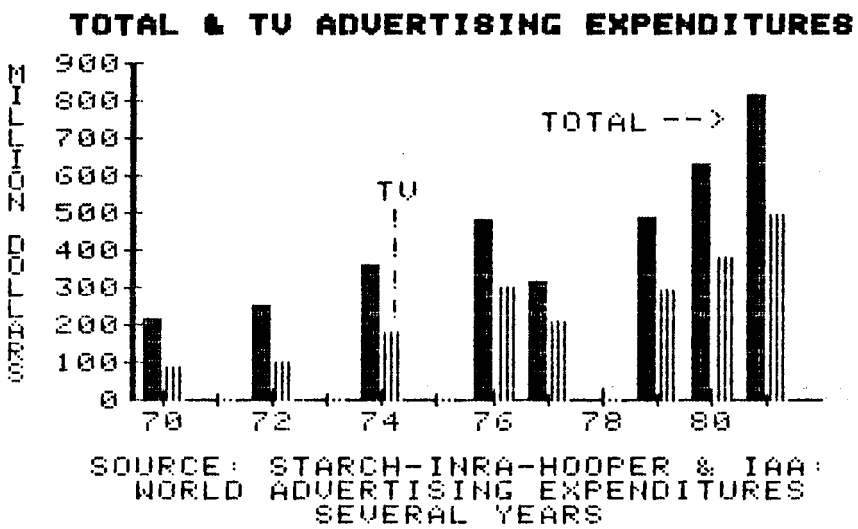
Table 5-10

The Televisa Networks

Channel	No. Stations	TV-Households reached
2	53	6,831,691
4	6	2,698,852
5	17	5,482,891
8	5	2,998,510

Sources: MPM: *Tarifas y Datos, Medios Audiovisuales*, June-August, 1981; Televisa (1981), Informative Brochure.

FIGURE 5-3


TOTAL & TV ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES
MILLION DOLLARS
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
TOTAL -->
TV
70
72
74
76
78
80
SOURCE: STARCH-INRA-HOOPER & IAA:
WORLD ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES
SEVERAL YEARS

In its public relations pamphlets, the corporation boasts that

> Our network of 114 relay and transfer stations takes our programming to more than 72 cities and 700 municipalities in the Republic of Mexico with a potential viewing public of more than 50 million (Televisa, 1981, informative brochure).

Advertising is a relatively important economic activity, and the most direct link of television and the other mass media to the general economic processes as part of the "sales effort," that has the objective of accelerating the circuit of capital in its realization phase. It is therefore the most direct contribution of the media to the general process of capital accumulation, in particular regarding the sectors that produce final and durable consumption goods (Department II in Marxian terminology). However, on the one hand advertising is just one among a series of marketing and sales promotion strategies (consumption credit, direct sales promotion, etc.) and on the other hand mass advertising is not available to all sectors of the economy. TV advertising, for one, is a very expensive form of sales promotion. Research on industrial concentration has found a high correlation between "product differentiation" (operationalized as advertising expenditures divided by sales) and concentration, and in the Mexican setting with transnational prescence also (Martinez and Jacobs, 1980;

Connor and Mueller, 1982). Actually, the principal television advertisers in Mexico happen to be part of the most concentrated and transnationalized sectors of the economy, such as industrialized food and soft drinks, liquors and beers, cosmetics, etc (ibid; Fajnzylber and Martínez, 1975). Table 5-11 shows the structure of TV advertising expenditures in the Mexico City-based TV channels and networks, for August 1980:

Table 5-11
TV Advertising Expenditure
Mexico, August 1980

Rank	Advertisers	No. Companies	Expenditure (Thousand pesos)	% of Tot.
1.	Gov't. Campaigns & Companies.	39	164,050,360	18.4
2.	Beer & Liquors	28	138,693,340	15.6
3.	Food & Drinks	38	109,588,460	12.3
4.	Cosmetics & Toiletries	45	89,061,300	10.0
5.	Banks	11	47,605,270	5.3
6.	Mass Media	13	45,304,390	5.1
7.	Clothing & Shoes	20	39,676,350	4.4
8.	Tourism	46	39,479,050	4.4
9.	Department Stores	25	34,774,176	3.9
10.	Diverse Instruments & Hardware	20	34,590,290	3.8
11.	Real Estate	31	32,060,400	3.5
12.	Culture Institutions	27	31,014,410	3.4
13.	Automobiles	16	27,856,190	3.1
14.	Different Campaigns (private)	9	23,374,800	2.6
15.	Cigarettes	3	14,754,950	1.6
16.	Electric Appliances	9	6,978,350	0.7
17.	Drugs	9	4,834,000	0.5
18.	Other	7	4,257,400	0.4
19.	Furniture	5	2,726,100	0.3
	TOTALS	401	890,679,606	100.0

Source: Agencia de Corresponsales Americanos: *Gastos de Publicidad, TV-D.F., de Todas las Marcas que se Anunciaron en este Medio en Agosto de 1980.* México, Septiembre de 1980.

Recall that for 1980 Televisa's share of TV advertising expenditures was around 80%, so we can assume that the data in the table reflect to a certain extent the structure of the corporation's advertisers and advertising revenue. We can see

in the table that advertising relates television not only to the economy proper, but also to the State. The State advertising expenditure shown in the table represents 71 campaigns by 39 different State institutions--among para-State enterprises and government agencies. The source did not pinpoint which of those campaigns may have been charged as part of the 12.5% fiscal time. However, it is remarkable that the most important client of commercial television is the State, which in part simply reflects its current weight in the Mexican economy. On the other hand, it also shows that the State relies for its propaganda efforts not only on its own media, but also on the private commercial media, of which Televisa's are the ones with the most penetration in the country. Companies of the industrial sector represented 49.5% of the TV ad expenditures, and the service sector (including commerce) accounted for 25.8%. There are not available data about the proportion of current transnational and national advertisers in Televisa's networks, but from the source of table 5-11 we could identify the transnational presence in some of the advertised branches: 46% of the liquor and beer companies advertised were transtational; in the food and soft drinks branch, 42% transnationals; 71% in cosmetics and toiletries; 78% in drugs and medications, 56% from the automobiles branch, and 50% in diverse instruments and hardware. We indicated before that there is evidence that for example the industrial branches

with the greatest levels of concentration and transnational presence, especially in the consumer goods sub-sector--among which are most of the principal advertisers in the table--, are those with highest investments in advertising in Mexico (Connor and Mueller, 1977; 1982; Martinez and Jacobs, 1980). On the other hand, Televisa's links with the transnational sector through advertising are direct, given the predominance of the transnational agencies in the Mexican advertising scene: of the 20 most important advertising agencies in 1981, 16 were either branches of North American agencies or Mexican affiliates of U.S. agencies (*Advertising Age*, April 19, 1982:m-52).

In 1974 Televisa entered in partnership with the Mexican State acquiring 48% of the stock of Satelat, a company that rents 24 continuous hours of the Intelsat IV F-3 satellite to the U.S. company Comsat (Toussaint, 1981b:56). During the López Portillo administration (1976-1982), Televisa signed several covenants with the federal government to expand the network of satellite ground stations through joint investments. Nearly 100 stations were constructed with the objective of reaching the totality of the national territory with television signals. Incidentally, the opinion magazine *Proceso* (No. 206, Oct. 13, 11980:10) commented in an informative note on one of these convenants that "it is noteworthy that at no time did the Minister of Communications

refer to the participation of the State television--Channel 13 and *Televisión Rural de México*--within the objective of taking the television signal to the whole country." This process of joint ventures in satellite communication infrastructure had its culmination in the joint (State-Televisa) purchase from Hughes Aircraft of a satellite for direct broadcast, which is to be launched in 1984 (*24 Horas* newscast, Oct. 4, 1982). Hence, with the direct support of the government, Televisa's "most attractive package of saturation coverage," has enabled its monopolistic control of the television advertising market to become still greater.

Televisa operates the *Univisión* network, with 13 TV stations (3 in Mexico and 10 in U.S.) that transmit directly to the Spanish speaking public in the United States (MPM:*Tarifas y Datos, Medios Audiovisuales*, June-August, 1980). Furthermore, Televisa has majority participation in the Spanish International Communications Corp. (SICC) and the Spanish International Network (SIN), which by 1982 had grown to 189 affiliated stations in the United States (*Broadcasting/Cable Yearbook,1981*:A-48; *Marketing Communications*, Vol. 6, No. 7, 1981; *Televisa, Carta de Noticias*, June-July, 1981). Emilio Azcárraga senior's widow holds 20% of the stock of SICC, which is voted by her son Emilio Azcárraga Jr., and Televisa holds 75% interest

of SIN (Gutiérrez and Schement, 1981:192). SIN has become the fourth largest television network in size in the United States and is operated officially by the former corporation. A high level executive of Televisa commented to this author that the corporation's control of SIN, is a source of foreign currency in times when the Mexican peso has suffered several devaluations in the recent years and therefore constitutes both a source of financial health and a source of political strength when negotiating with the Mexican government. In Spain, Televisa established a subsidiary named *Televisa Europa*, which links the corporation with the Spanish public, advertisers and TV networks through exports, coproductions and direct broadcasts via satellite (Televisa, 1981: informative brochure). By 1980, Rómulo O'Farrill claimed that Televisa's signals reached a potential audience of 68 million persons throughout the Americas (*24 Horas* newscast, Sep. 8, 1980). This coverage could by now have doubled with the expansion of the SIN network in the U.S., which by that year had only 52 affiliated stations (ibid).

Still in the field of television, Televisa owns the largest cable TV operation in Mexico, *Cablevisión*. Its two most popular channels transmit programs picked up directly from the major U.S. networks to the high and middle class neighborhoods of Mexico City (De Noriega and Leach, 1979:24). The corporation also maintains its own dubbing facilities for

the North American programs broadcast through its over-the-air networks. Another company owned by Televisa is *Productora de Teleprogramas* (ProTele), which produces and exports TV programs, especially soap operas (*Telenovelas*). Through *Imagen y Talento, S.A.*, the corporation scouts and trains new artistic talent for their networks. We can see that Televisa has undergone an impressive process of vertical integration, which permits the corporation to control several key aspects of their television operation without having to depend on external factors (with the important exception of the technological component, as for instance in the RCA-NBC case, and which is part of the more general problem of technological dependence of Mexico). Even though Televisa has expanded considerably its production, and is already an important exporter of TV programs to the rest of Latin America and the United States, it still rellies heavily on imported programs, especially from the latter country. Antola and Rogers (1982) recently found that Televisa continued importing in 1982 the same proportion of its programming time as in 1973, or about 50% (see Table 5-12).

Table 5-12
Origin of Televisa's Programming
Audience-Hours (%)

Channel	Imported			Domestic	Totals
	U.S.	Latin American	Other		
2	0	2	0	98	100%
4	0	0	0	100	100
5	98	0	0	2	100
8	95	0	0	5	100

Source: Antola, L. and E.M. Rogers (1982): "Television Flows in Latin America," p. 6a, Table 2.

Other companies owned by the corporation range from soccer teams (*América* of Mexico City and Aztecs of Los Angeles) to sports and artistic shows promotion enterprises, to real estate and their radio and film divisions. Within the radio division, Televisa controls the powerful national radio stations XEW, XEQ and XEX, and their FM counterparts which broadcast only for the Federal District. The film division is constituted by the company *Televicine*, the most important film production enterprise in Mexico today. Televicine was established at the beginning of the López Portillo administration, when Margarita López Portillo, director of RTC, decided to give up the almost total control that the State had exerted over the film industry during the Echeverría regime (1970-1976). The results of the "re-privatization" of the film industry are controversial. Emilio García Riera, the most important film historian and

critic in Mexico wrote that 1975, when the "virtual statization" of the Mexican film industry was nearly total, was "the best year, up to now, in the history of the national cinema" (García Riera, 1976:180). After the film industry was returned almost completely to private hands and the profitability imperative, in 1982 Gabriel Figueroa, one of the most respected film photographers in the world, commented to the press that "this has been the worst *sexenio* for the Mexican cinema (*Proceso*, No. 316, Nov. 22, 1982). The quality of the films produced was so low that Margarita López Portillo herself "exploded" and scolded the film producers in a public meeting for their "easy cinema, of the worst quality, with the only objective of personal profit" (*Proceso*, No. 287, May 3, 1982). *Televicine* has not excelled at making different or better films. An indicator of the growth of the company is that in its first year it produced 4 films, while in its second year 17 were produced (Televisa, 1981: Informative Brochure).

The previous description provides an image of the power that Televisa exerts not only in the Mexican television scene, which is unmatched, but in the culture industry as a whole. This power of multi-media penetration of the consciousness of the Mexican people translates, necessarily, into an impressive ideologico-political power. The standard information vehicle of the advertising business in the United

States has described Televisa's president, Emilio Azcárraga, as "the second most powerful man in Mexico next to the presidency, because he controls the media. Certainly he dominates the advertising business in a way unmatched anywhere in the Western World (*Advertising Age*, July 5, 1982:M20). Even though advertising, being the main source of revenues for Televisa, has determined to a greater or lesser extent its performance as an ideological-cultural and economic agent, the corporation's monopolistic control of the television advertising market and its control of other media have provided it with a considerable relative autonomy. An instance of this autonomy is that in 1982, when the corporation was in need of hard cash to make the initial payment on the satellite to Hughes Aircraft, Emilio Azcárraga went directly to a selected group of advertisers, bypassing the advertising agencies, and offered them sizable discounts for their advertising during the new season in return for pre-payment in full of their campaigns. The move brought about protests from the advertising agencies and the left-out advertisers ("Chrysler was included in the deal and Ford was not"), but such protests fell on "deaf ears" (ibidem; ibid, Sep. 6, 1982:3).

Televisa's most obvious direct link with the State lies in the Alemán family's participation. Until his death in 1983, Miguel Alemán Sr. was the acting leader of the most

conservative faction of the official party (PRI). In addition, Televisa maintains both informal and formal links with the State and government officials. Control of the Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry has been a source of political strength, as a pressure group led by the corporation (Cremoux, 1974). On the other hand, for instance Emilio Azcárraga has shown that he has inherited his father's ability to relate with and influence the State and its personnel. He has even recently declared that he belongs to the official party, which is not usual among the members of the Mexican grand bourgeoisie. After a meeting with the then candidate to the presidency of the Republic, Miguel de la Madrid, Azcárraga corroborated to the press his PRI "militancy," his loyalty to the president and his adherence to the candidate of "his party" (*Novedades*, May 14, 1982:18). We have seen before that, even when Televisa has been on the spot, receiving criticisms from even the president as in the Echeverria *sexenio*, the corporation has managed to come through with flying colors, even strengthening its position of force. The real and potential power of Televisa as a "ministry of informal and non-formal education" can be inferred from Chapter 1 and the information provided in this section on its multi-media penetration in the consciousness of the Mexican people. There is probably no doubt that the handful of individuals who own and control the corporation have a great deal of economic,

ideologico-cultural and political power within a social formation, such as Mexico, which has a population of about 70 million. With the willing or unwilling support of the Mexican State, such undemocratic structure seems bound to perpetuate itself, as we shall see in the next chapter. But we shall also show that there is emerging a widespread consciousness, among many organized groups and fractions of the working class, intellectual circles and within the State itself, of the existence and operation of this undemocratic system of social communication. A political struggle is being generated to reverse the historical forces and trends that have led to such a structure.

CHAPTER 6

The State and Television: Right to Information Debate and Recent Developments

In the last chapter we saw that the Echeverría administration faced an important period of crisis: predominantly political and ideological at the begining, and economic as well at the end. Actually, crisis has been the sign of the times during the last decade or so in Mexico. The last two presidents (José López Portillo and Miguel de la Madrid) have received the country in similar conditions: a devalued peso, an increasing foreign debt that in each case was a historical record high, a large deficit in the balance of payments, massive capital flights abroad, economic recession *and* high inflation, pervasive unemployment and underemployment. These deteriorating economic conditions have necessarily affected the social conditions in the country, which, we have pointed out, are characterized by an extremely unequal access to income, wealth, culture and domination resources. This situation has been reflected in a growing crisis of hegemony and legitimacy for the Mexican capitalist State (Coleman and Davis, 1983; Looney, 1982; Urquidi, 1982; Labastida, 1981; González Casanova, 1981; Street, 1981;

Grayson, 1981;1980).

This chapter describes recent developments in the political economy of the country and in the State-television relationships, within the historical context of the recent crises and their structural consequences. We shall provide an account of the political reform of José López Portillo's government and of a central component of such a reform, the constitutional amendment through which the State guarantees the "right to information," as well as the debate that emerged around it. These constitute an important historical episode of the recent past, which shows how "relative" is the relative autonomy of the State in Mexico. In the light of this episode and the historical account of this and the previous chapters, we shall then analyze in the conclusion the structure of relationships between the Mexican State and television, their role and functioning within the particular path of capitalist development followed by Mexico, their historical determinants, and possibilities for change.

6.1. *Recent Developments: Structural Crisis.*

We provided in Chapter 5 a brief description of Mexico's structural crisis at the end of the Echeverría *sexenio*. The political, ideological and economic situation had become

so critical that, for the first time in fourty years, rumors about a *coup d'etat* circulated by the end of 1976. The country's economic and political life was virtually paralyzed. The social, political and economic forces of the nation were uncertain for a couple of months about Mexico's short term future, until the López Portillo administration took charge in December, 1976 (González Casanova, 1981:24-27, 70-82; Levy and Székely, 1983:8). In order to regain the ideological, political and economic direction of the country, José López Portillo and his team elaborated a strategy based on two main "themes:" The "alliance for production," which recalled very closely the "national unity" rhetoric and policies of the Avila Camacho and Alemán administrations, and a limited but much publicized political reform. The latter was accompanied by an administrative reform within the State apparatuses and an initial strong rhetoric against corruption in he government.

The immediate economic crisis was eased by an emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund ("that global policeman of troubled economies" --*Fortune*, Aug. 23, 1982:153), with its attached policy conditions and monitoring. During the first two years of his term, López Portillo scrupulously observed the austerity measures--mainly, reduction of government spending, credit restrictions and keeping wages down--that the IMF imposed as conditions to the

loan. Two other sources of emergency financial relief were a 600 million dollars loan from the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Board of the United States, and a syndicated loan of 800 million dollars granted to Mexico by a group of North American banks led by the Bank of America (Pellicer de Brody, 1977:48-50). This external emergency support from the United States government and the international banking community--both private and public-multinational--, which would be repeated six years later (*Fortune*, Aug. 23, 1982:146-154; Newsweek, Aug. 30, 1982:54-56), has redefined the terms of Mexico's dependency (Grayson, 1980:55; Pellicer de Brody, 1977).

Another key element that contributed to the recovery of internal and external confidence in the economic performance of the country was the discovery in the mid seventies of vast oil reserves, which by 1979 made Mexico the seventh-ranking country in proven oil reserves and 12th among producers of hydrocarbons (Nafinsa, 1981:382-383). Over-optimistic estimates by Mexican government officials put Mexico's *potential* oil reserves at 200 billion barrels, just below Saudi Arabia's proven reserves (Jorge Díaz Serrano, interviewed in the *McNeil/Lehrer Report*, January 3, 1979, Public Broadcasting Service). Oil became a "magic word" and by 1979 and 1980 government officials, especially the President, were boasting about the "administration of

abundance" and all official plans were geared around the exploitation of the "black gold" (Grayson, 1980; 1981a). In 1979 the government created an ambitious Global Development Plan (GDP), which was coordinated by then Secretary of Programming and Budgeting Miguel de la Madrid and actually comprised a dozen or so sectoral plans (SPP, 1980). The core of the development plan, welfare rhetoric apart, was the "wise" exploitation of the oil resources and a National Industrial Development Plan (NIDP), announced in March 1979 (Street, 1981; Looney, 1982).

On the financial basis of an unprecedented escalation of oil production and exports, the development plans' main objective was again *growth* based on industrial production, but this time the administration wanted to attain *very high* growth rates, *fast*:

> To the surprise of many observers, the plan placed priority on the growth of basic industries rather than on labor intensive activities (which would admittedly create more employment, but were seen by the administration as economically inefficient) (Looney, 1982:25).

Economic participation and equality were again given a low priority; the government plans were aimed at the creation of wealth, to be redistributed later at an unspecified time, within a framework of political stability. This has led some

observers to find similarities between the López Portillo and the Alemán administrations (Levy and Székely, 1983:153-159 and passim). However, these general objectives--with the exception of the oil component--can be said to be at the heart of the global development model implemented since the post-Cárdenas era up to the present.

The Industrial Development Plan's strategy was projected in three stages. The first objective, to overcome the crisis of 1976 and its aftermath, was considered already achieved. The second stage would consist of the consolidation of the bases for a self-sustained development process, and the third would constitute the phase of accelerated growth: "...the possibility of overcoming the crisis lies in the financial potential offered by the surplus derived from the export of hydrocarbons" (SEPAFIN, 1979:20). The NIDP expected that the Mexican economy would reach the third stage by 1982, and it included projections to 1990. An observer asserted in 1981 that the plan was "bold in its dimensions," promising growth rates never before attained by the Mexican economy (Street, 1981:376): from a GDP growth rate of 7.1% in 1979 to a sustained 10% from 1982 to 1990 (SEPAFIN, 1979:111). Industry was expected to grow by 12% annually and certain key sectors even faster (e.g., petrochemicals by 18% and capital goods by 20%). The several types of incentives that the government offered to private enterprise, along with a shift from the

populist rhetoric of Echeverría to more conciliatory public expressions by the government, led the national and transnational private corporations to a mood of confidence. For instance, the Monterrey group, which already was the largest and most powerful national economic group, diversified its investments and grew at an unprecedented pace, from 12 to 157 companies in only six years (*Proceso*, No. 289, May 17, 1982:6).

The fulfillment of the development plan's objectives implied huge investments on the part of both the private and public sectors, and the bulk of the needed financial resources came from borrowing abroad. The public foreign debt, for instance, grew from 19.6 billion dollars in 1976 to 59 billion by 1982 (Wilkie, 1983). The latter constituted 74% of a total (both private and public) foreign debt of 80 billion dollars. Traditionally considered a good subject of credit by the international banking community, in early 1982 Mexico received a high ranking of 62.8 on a scale of 100 (compared to Latin America's average of 34.5 and world average of 45.5) in a survey of bankers involved in the Euromarket loan activity (ibid:ix). This process of intensifed borrowing abroad occurred when international interest rates, influenced by those in the United States, were soaring to a high of almost 20% (idem:ix). But the Mexican State did not mind the burden, assuming further increases in oil prices and

expecting huge revenues from the intensified production and export of the "black gold."

It is difficult to describe in a few pages the crisis of 1982 and, in particular, its structural and conjuntural--short term--causes. Hence, before we give an account of the political component of the López Portillo government's global strategy--the political reform--and its direct relationship with television, we shall provide a brief description of the principal events that led to the 1982 Mexican economic crisis.

During the first years of the López Portillo administration, under the "Alliance for Production" and the official development plan, the principal economic indicators pointed towards a strong economic recovery. For instance, the real GDP growth rate went from 2.1% and 3.3% in 1976 and 1977, respectively, to 8% in 1979 and slightly over 8% in 1980 and 1981. Income per capita grew consequently. It seemed that the 10% growth target was not far from being reached. Because of the increase in public and private investment, the number of jobs grew faster than the population from 1978 to 1981 (Levy and Székely, 1983:155; Street, 1981:375). However, the bulk of the population during these years was kept calm only with promises, for it was being hard-hit by an inflation rate of nearly 30%, which was not being compensated

for by corresponding wage increases. By mid 1981, it became apparent that international oil prices were in a downward trend, because of the so-called "oil-glut," to which it remains to be seen how much Mexico itself contributed with its increased production (from less than a million barrels per day to 2.2 million by 1982, about half for export). Not only oil prices fell, but also those of Mexico's other principal exports, such as cotton, sugar, silver, zinc and copper (Wilkie, 1983:ix; LAN, 1982:6-7). Although after the 1976 devaluation the peso's value was left "floating"--that is, fluctuating--, up until 1981 it had actually been kept overvalued which, on the one hand discouraged exports and encouraged Mexican imports. The current account balance had deteriorated from a 1977 deficit of $1.6 billion dollars to $6.6 billion in 1980 and $11 billion in 1981. Had it not been for the huge revenues brought in by the oil exports, $10 billion dollars in 1980 and $14.5 billion in 1981, the situation could have been still worse (Levy and Székely,1983:153-155). On the other hand, an overvalued peso inhibited the entry of foreign tourists and stimulated Mexican tourism abroad: "Mexico's long-standing surplus balance of tourist spending turned against the country in the third quarter of 1981, when Mexicans spent more outside than foreigners spent inside" (Wilkie, 1983:ix). Also, the low price of the dollar and the lack of confidence in the peso led scores of Mexicans to convert their bank accounts in

Mexico to dollars (the so-called "dollarization" of the Mexican economy); others opened banking accounts accross the border at the high interest rates then prevailing in the U.S. and still others invested in real estate and other interests in the U.S. (*Proceso*, No. 250, Aug. 24, 1981; LAN, 1982:6).

All these trends and events, some of them deeply rooted in the development model, some originating from external processes--the world recession, "oil glut," etc.--and some from faulty decisions by the State and the private sector, resulted in the worst economic crisis suffered by the Mexican social formation since the Revolution. The peso was devalued in February, 1982 from 26.5 to 40 to the dollar, and again in August when it was left fluctuating again, reaching a low of 100 to the dollar. Still, in 1981 the government increased its borrowing based on the faulty assumption that oil prices, and therefore oil revenues, would rise again. But they did not, and the availability of hard currency was depleted by massive capital flights. In August, 1982 exchange controls were established for the first time in the post-Colonial period, and on September 1, in his State of the Nation speech, José López Portillo announced the nationalization of the banking system. In a rather smart political move, the President found in the private bankers a scapegoat, charging them of having encouraged the capital flights and the

"dollarization" of the economy (charge that may not be false, but that was not necessarily *the* cause of the crisis).

On the brink of bankruptcy, Mexico appealed for help to its international creditors and other concerned parties. The Reagan administration organized a framework for handling the Mexican peso crisis, along with some European central banks:

> ...the package included $2 billion in federal credit guarantees against future deliveries of American agricultural products to Mexico and of Mexican oil to the [strategic oil reserve of the] United States. Another $1.5 billion in short term funds would be provided by a consortium of Western central banks, including the FED [U.S. Federal Reserve Board], coordinated through the Basel-based Bank for International Settlements. The IMF [International Monetary Fund] would put up more than $4 billion in credits over a three-year period on condition that Mexico tighten its economic management (*Newsweek*, Aug. 30, 1982:54-55).

The private banks, led as 6 years before by the Bank of America, were asked for an additional U.S. $1 billion short-term credit and agreed to renegotiate Mexico's debt (ibid). Thus, even though they were forced by the situation itself to provide help to Mexico's near bankrupt economy, the U.S. government and the international banking community have actually increased their political and economic "leverage" over Mexico's domestic policy, as had happened 6 years before (FitzGerald, 1978:280-281). In particular, the U.S. secured supplies of oil for its strategic reserve at preferential

prices, and the U.S.-dominated IMF once more would dictate the fundamental lines of the Mexican economic policies. Mexico got in return a momentary relief, at the expense of a loss in its degrees of freedom to determine its own short- and medium-term future

Miguel de la Madrid assumed the presidency in December, 1982. That year the economy registered negative growth (-0.2%) for the first time since the Revolution and suffered an inflation rate of 98.8%. The rate of unemployment and underemployment, estimated in previous years to be somewhere between 40% and 50%, was conservatively estimated to be around 55% in 1982 (*Proceso*, No. 344, June 6, 1983:11; *Latin American Markets*, No. 50, Jan. 31, 1983 and No. 59, June 6, 1983). De la Madrid faced the potentially explosive situation by appealing since his electoral campaign to all social sectors and classes to join him in the task of overcoming the crisis. Thus "democratic planning" through "popular consultations," along with "moral renovation" of the government and society, became the basis of the regime's new rhetoric in an attempt to regain legitimacy and credibility, which were at an extremely low point during the crisis.

However, it remains to be seen how "popular consultations" can direct government planning when some of the principal lines of economic policy are being imposed from outside, as

in the case of the IMF conditions. In the face of the crude reality of the popular masses slipping inexorably in their living standards, even the officially controlled labor movement had to petition for wage increases, which are incompatible with the "stabilizing" measures imposed by the IMF--of which the "administration" of wage increases is an importat component (*Latin American Regional Reports-Mexico & Central America*, May 6, 1983:7-8). On the other hand, de la Madrid himself and his cabinet represent the culmination of a trend within the Mexican State, towards "*técnicos*" (literally "technicians," but better translated as "technocrats"), replacing the traditional politicians, who had electoral careers and actual--even if sporadic--contact with the people (Smith, 1979; Camp, 1977; *Proceso*, No. 321, Dec. 27, 1982:6-10). Thus, it is difficult to ascertain how individuals who are used to "technical," centralized decision making, with little or no real political experience, can take into account the input of widely far apart interests and demands and incorporate them into the actual planning and decision making process--even in the coopted form that the Mexican State traditionally has used so well (Levy and Székely, 1983:249).

The first measures taken by de la Madrid's administration reassured the private sector that their interests would be secure: 34% of the newly nationlized banking system was

immediately returned to private hands, and during the first month of his administration the President sent to Congress an avalanche of legislation initiatives, geared towards the "reactualization of relationships with big capital":

> The support to private property reached its legislative climax with reforms to the Constitution that established the so-called "Economic Chapter," a series of new dispositions that affirm the leading role of the State in strategic areas of the productive sector but also confer concessions and guarantees to the private sector (Cordera and Trejo, 1983:25).

Furthermore, de la Madrid's government, needing to attract new flows of foreign currency, reversed the prevailing policy--especially since the 1973 Law of Foreign Investment enacted by Echeverrfa--, favoring the "Mexicanization" of the economy. While the 1973 Law generally restricts foreign investment to a maximum of 49%, the de la Madrid administration began authorizing investments with 100% foreign control, as in the case of IBM, Hewlet Packard, Texas Instruments and other high tech companies (*Latin American Markets*. No. 58, May 23, 1983:10-13). Direct foreign investment amounted by 1983 to around US $11 billion, 70% of it from the U.S. (ibid).

Paradoxically, Miguel de la Madrid having been the coordinator--and probably the mastermind--of López Portillo's rather detailed Global Development Plan, his own

National Development Plan 1983-1988, presented to the nation on May 31 1983, was "more a statement of political intent than an exercise in econometrics" (*Latin America Weekly Report*, June 3, 1983:3). Stressing the need "to maintain and strengthen the democratic institutions"--that is, the need for political stability--, the main objectives of the Plan were said to be: a) to overcome the crisis, curbing inflation and creating and protecting employment, b) to regain the capacity for rapid and sustained growth, and c) to "initiate the qualitative changes that the country requires in its economic, political and social structures" (*Proceso*, No. 344, June 6, 1983:6). These general objectives closely resemble those of López Portillo's Development Plan. However, this time the government's document did not optimistically emphasize the possibility of overcoming the financial limitations to growth through the surplus provided by oil exports. The Plan predicted negative growth of between -2 and -4% for 1983, for 1984 a growth rate of between 0 and 2.5% and 5 or 6% during 1985-1988.

It is difficult to predict what the historical outcome will be in the medium- and long-term. What is evident is that by a combination of "fate" and "design," the Mexican State has implemented economic policies that are encouraging a greater integration into the world system of capitalism, a greater financial, productive and commercial dependence from and

vulnerability to outside forces and interests, and a trend towards redefining and strengthening its relations with the national bourgeoisie. The mass of the people continue to be the real losers and it is not too pessimistic or exaggerated to expect a still more serious political crisis, whose outcome could be violent. In a recent public opinion poll by conservative magazine *Contenido*, 53% of those surveyed indicated that "there will be rebelion and uprisings if the crisis continues" (*Latin America Regional Reports, Mexico & Central America*, May 6, 1983:8).

In the next section we shall analyze the political strategy that the Mexican State has followed in order to cope with the growing crisis of hegemony and legitimacy, and how the struggle around the undemocratic control of the electronic communication media, especially television, has been an important component of this political process. The "political reform" and the "right to information" debate and struggle constitute an outstanding political feature of the structural crisis that Mexico has suffered in the recent years. And television, we contend, has been a salient arena of political struggle.

6.2. *Recent Developments: Political Reform.*

The political strength of the Mexican State, which lies at the heart of the nation's political stability, has been based on its reformist character, which is part of its exercise of hegemony in the Gramscian sense of a "combination of force and consent" (Gramsci, 1971). The Mexican State has shown its capacity to adapt to new circumstances and the flexibility to play the "populist" or the "elitist" game according to the correlation of forces at the different historical moments. The State has been able to manage and channel demand-making on the part of the different classes and political forces through negotiation, cooptation and as a last resort repression (González Casanova, 1981:121-145; Coleman and Davis, 1983; Reyna, 1976, 1977). The type of reforms that the State has enacted can best be characterized as "preemptive reforms," because they actually constitute a "co-optative response by political elites to their fears of uncontrolled political mobilization by the less advantaged elements of society" (Coleman and Davis, 1983:3). José López Portillo's political reform, and the "right to information issue" which ensued from it, are a good instance of a "preemptive reform," that is, a hegemonic strategy that allocates certain concessions to the subaltern classes and groups and incorporates certain aspects of the discourse of alternative political forces, in order to maintain the same

fundamental structures of domination and exploitation (Gramsci, 1971:182; 195; Mouffe, 1979). Coleman and Davis (1983), who have studied a set of economic reforms and concessions during the Echeverría and López Portillo administrations and the reactions to them within the Mexican working class, state that a preemptive reform is a cooptative response of power-holders, which:

> ...may be substantive, organizational, or both. A substantive response would occur when public policy is reoriented toward providing more public or private goods to potentially disruptive social sectors. An organizational response would be one in which *new opportunities for participation in decision-making are created, but in such a way that new participants will not affect decisional outcomes substantially*. As such, an organizationzal response is essentially a symbolic device to increase solidarity between rulers and ruled (p.3, our emphasis).

We contend here that the political reform implemented in 1977 by the López Portillo regime is a preemptive reform of the organizational type, although it provides a certain space of limited possibilities for a future actual democratization of the political processes in Mexico.

The idea of a political reform came about during the acute economic crisis of 1976, when the legitimacy of the State was severely undermined among both the privileged groups, mainly because of Echeverría's populist rhetoric, and the working class because high levels of inflation, unemployment and

underemployment, etc. were lowering their already deteriorated standards of living. However, as we pointed out before, the symptoms of a political crisis in Mexico had begun to appear by the late 1960s, with the 1968 massacre of Tlatelolco as an important landmark (Leich, 1981:361; Labastida, 1979). The State's preoccupation with improving the apearance of democracy in the Mexican authoritarian system has been nearly always present. In 1963 and 1973, the government enacted electoral reforms, aimed at widening the range of voting participation. In the 1973 electoral reform, Luis Echeverría's administration lowered the legal minimum age for voting from 21 to 18. It also lowered the minimum percentage of the total national vote (from 2.5% to 1.5%) that would permit minority parties to have a guaranteed minimum number of deputies; and for the first time it gave access to all contending parties to radio and television time, without cost to them, during the election periods. This was the State's initial response to a clearly observable trend towards a political crisis in Mexico, as we shall see below.

There are several indicators of the political crisis evolving during the 1970s. The most salient is an increasing abstention from voting (González Casanova, 1981:70-74; Grayson, 1980). This shows the exhaustion of the legitimating electoral arrangement that the State had found since the

1940s, of one dominant, official party (PRI) contending with three coopted or satellite parties, one from the left (PPS), one from the right (PAN) and one (PARM) whose real ideological differences with the PRI were less than clear (Middlebrook, 1981:58-62). Thus, not only did the dominant party begin losing votes, but these votes were not transferred to the "opposition" parties (Rodrfguez Araujo, 1979:48-50). During the 1970s several types of new nonconformist movements emerged, ranging from student and working class mass movements, to guerrillas and terrorism in several states (González Casanova, 1981:73). Finally, public opinion polls showed a significant change in public evaluations of the State from he 1960s to the 1970s, showing the people's continuing loss of faith in the system and growing signs of "alienation" (Villoro, 1979: 352-353; Middlebrook, 1981: 58-59).

During The Echeverrfa administration's "democratic opening," a number of new opposition groups and parties emerged, some from the right and most from the left, all aimed at expressing worker, peasant and student discontent (Middlebrook, 1981:59):

> The emergence of these opposition parties was perhaps the most significant indication that the existing "official" mass-based organizations and political parties had grown increasingly incapable of incorporating important segments of the population.

Thus, in the face of growing signs of discontent, but especially the prevailing political system's inability to channel such discontent through the existing organizations, in particular through the official party's sectors, the López Portillo administration proposed a three-pronged program to restore legitimacy to the system: amnesty for political prisoners, an administrative reform, and the political reform. In April 1977 the Secretary of *Gobernación* and principal State ideologist, Jesús Reyes Heroles, made public the main outline of the political reform. Reyes Heroles and others within the liberal and progressive factions of the State personnel were aware of the erosion of the regime's political legitimacy and public support, worsened by the economic crisis, and feared that Mexico could fall into a dictatorial political formula *à la* Southern Cone. Thus, in his speech in Chilpancingo, on April 1, 1977, Reyes Heroles pointed out:

> Departing from this difficult [economic] situation, there are those who pretend a hardening of the government, which would lead it to rigidity. Such a rigidity would prevent the adaptation of our political system to new trends and new realities... It is the preaching of an authoritarianism without restraint or barriers (*Reforma Política*, April 1977:30).

Another danger was that still greater popular discontent would eventually lead to violence and guerrilla uprisings.

The State ideologists knew that they had to widen the possiblities of political participation and representation. But they also knew that the PRI still a very efficient and powerful political machine. Hence, permitting the opposition to participate, *fragmented in several minority parties on the right and left*, offered a way for the system to regain legitimacy and to delegitimize the opposing extreme positions. It was simply a renewal of the old formula, only now encouraging the officially sanctioned participation of more political parties, including the formerly banned Mexican Communist Party (PCM).

By the end of 1977 Congress approved the political reform along with a new electoral law. The reform comprised three central components: a) legal registration of new political parties was made easier; b) the number of chairs in the Chamber of Deputies was increased from 250 to 400, 300 of them "uninominal," or individually elected, and 100 "plurinominal," distributed among minority parties according to electoral strength; and c) free access to the electronic mass media was guaranteed for all contending political parties. Along with the promulgation of the new Federal Law of Political Organizations and Electoral Procedures (LOPPE), some amendments to the Constitution were made, of which the most relevant for us is the addition to article 6, which guarantees freedom of speech, of the clause: "The right to

information shall be guaranteed by the State."

As far as the dominant coalition is concerned, the political reform has fulfilled its objectives. First, through the participation of new political parties representing a broader array of options and points of view, especially in the Chamber of Deputies, the political debate has acquired new life. The political reform has thus contributed to the system's regaining some degree of legitimacy by incorporating the bulk of the opposition (from the extreme right Mexican Democratic Party (PDM) to the Mexican Comunist Party (PCM)--which joined forces with other groups and parties and became the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico) into the existing party system, *according to the regimes' own rules*. There seems to be consensus among analysts that the political reform was actually a "preemptive reform" of an organzational type--that is, a mere symbolic device geared to provide a forum for political debate, rather than an opportunity for the opposition to exert real influence on the decision-making process:

> None of these developments signifies an immediate, dramatic change in the Mexican authoritarian regime. While the introduction of new actors into the electoral arena and party system may affect the content and direction of national political debate, there has been no indication that the political reform will substantially alter the president-dominated decision-making process or the capacity of the executive to implement domestic programs and foreign policy

agreements (Middlebrook, 1983:65).

Even within the ruling apparatus there was a revitalization of the forms and procedures to reach and maintain control of the masses. Thus, the PRI deputies and candidates began spending more time than before with their constituencies and/or supporters (Leich, 1981:362-363). Because of the participation of new leftist parties in the electoral process, the labor sector of the PRI, represented by the Mexican Labor Confederation (CTM) and the Labor Congress (CT), became more militant, using more "leftist" rhetoric and making renewed attempts to broaden their mass base by inviting independent labor unions to join forces with them. The "labor bloc" within the Chamber of Deputies was also strengthened by the new signs of unity and militancy (González Casanova, 1981:85-88).

The opposition recognizes the limited scope of the reform, which is considered an *electoral* reform, rather than a wide-ranging political reform. Within the left there are some skeptics who criticize the limited possibilities for rapid, structural change (*Punto Crítico*, 1980: 73-79); but there are also optimists who expect to obtain long-term results through the parliamentary game, via strategic and tactical coalitions and the strengthening of political forces, rather than through an uncertain revolutionary

struggle (González Casanova, 1981: 83-107; Cordera and Trejo D., 1983). While the results of the most recent elections have shown the still uncontested predominance of the PRI, they have also shown a growing electoral strength of the opposition, in particular of the PAN on the right and, to a lesser extent, of the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM). But the official electoral machinery continues to be the dominant one, now with greater legitimacy in the face of greater competition.

This is the general political context of the right to information issue. An issue that constituted a real test of how far the Mexican State was willing to go down the reformist path, as we shall see in the following section.

6.3. *The Right to Information Debate*

As mentioned above, as part of the political reform the López Portillo administration enacted an amendment to Article 6 of the Constitution: to the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech was added the clause: "The right to information shall be guaranteed by the State." This issue became a focus of debate within the Mexican political and media scene during most of that *sexenio*. We contend

here that, like the broader political reform of which it was a part, the right to information issue was promoted by the State as a mere symbolic, "preemptive reform" of the organizational type. However, we also contend that such an amendment had a boomerang effect when several groups and organizations--including some of the liberal and progressive elements within the State apparatus--demanded real changes, questioning the undemocratic structure of ownership and control of the media, and in particular the oligopolistic control of Televisa over television and other mass media. The result of the debate--no significant change--shows that the dominant factions within the State are those allied with the private media owners (which in the case of Televisa are a particular condensation of national and transnational capitalist interests); this result corroborates once more the class nature of the Mexican State.

Concenptual Context.

Contemporary debates on the communication media have been influenced and permeated by individualist, nineteenth century libertarian notions of "freedom of speech" and its derivative, "freedom of the press." The core of this notion is that democracy can only occur in a society where every individual is free to express publicly his/her political

opinions. Thus, the print press has been considered for a long time a central component of the "free marketplace of ideas," where individuals circulate and consume the different--and perhaps opposing--political opinions and information, so as to *rationally* choose among them. Those political opinions and information are assumed to center on issues and candidates which shall be voted for or against in the democratic process (McPhail, 1981:39-43). This political relevance of the press as an "unfettered" vehicle of ideas and opinions has led to the position that for the sake of freedom of speech, the government should not regulate the press (ibid). Even after newspapers and magazines became important advertsing media and diversified their contents to the point that their informational role was difficult to distinguish from their entertainment functioning, the predominant conception of the print media continued to be that of the libertarian tradition. Radio and television have also been reduced by the dominant conception to "news media," even though the proportion of news and editorial programs in their total programming is usually rather low in capitalist societies. The international debates about the "free flow of information" since the late 1940s, when the freedom of speech was included in the United Nations' declaration of Human Rights, were also permeated by the libertarian conception. Before this, for instance in UNESCO, a broader conception had been discussed, which included the right of all men "to the

most complete and accurate information originating from all relevant sources, so that they can fulfill their roles in human society" (in Granados Chapa, 1981:121). But this conception, as originally proposed by René Maheu at UNESCO, was not considered a mere complement to the "freedom of speech," but as "the natural extension of the right to education":

> Including the right to information in the list of human rights does not merely mean the desire to increase or to improve the knowledge put at the disposal of the public. It means demanding a radical review of the function of information. It means considering the products, processes and even the organization itself of the industry not from the point of view of those who control its production, but from the angle of the dignity of those who...have the right to be provided the means of free thought (ibid:121-122).

This broader conception, however, was neglected by the U.N. We have shown in the previous chapter that the United States dominated the international discussion of these issues during much of the first half of this century. Thus, even within UNESCO the "freedom of speech-freedom of the press-free flow of information" formula was the dominant one (Schiller, 1976:24-45; Tunstall, 1977:208-214). Not until the 1970s was this position challenged within UNESCO and other international *fora*, especially by those countries that were mainly consumers, rather than producers of information and messages.

Thus, the conception that stresses the rights and the freedom of those who originate, rather than of those who receive, the information is the preferred one of those who are already in control of the media. For instance, during the debate and negotiations that led to the 1960 Federal Law of Radio and Television in Mexico, lawyer and broadcaster José Luis Fernández wrote a lengthy book on broadcasting and the law, where he asserts:

> Without any hesitation we are in favor of the private broadcasting system, that is, the system that may be called American, because considering *that the foremost task of radio is to inform and comment*, so that the people, in whose benefit it is established, may be opportunely informed of all the events that may happen and may form an accurate judgement of the world they live in, we oppose the information media being in the hands of governments (Fernández, 1960:45; our emphasis).

This position has several flaws. First, if "the foremost task of radio is to inform and comment," commercial broadcasting has not been, at least quantitatively, giving a high priority to news and commentaries. For example, the 1944 memoir of the then Secretariat of Communications and Public Works presented a breakdown of the programming of Mexican radio for two years (see Table 6-1).

Table 6-1
Radio Programming in Mexico during 1943-1944
(Percentages)

Type of Programs	1943	1944
Commercial	89.86	88.81
Cultural	2.34	2.57
News	7.67	8.30
Re-broadcasts	0.11	0.30
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

Source: Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas: *Memoria*, Sept. 1943-44:129-a.

A recent survey performed for the National Chamber of Radio and Television shows that 62.64% of Daily A.M. radio programming is music, 20.71% is advertising, only 4.91% newscasts, and 0.69% cultural and educational programs (Llano P. and Morales, 1980:188). The news content of radio-broadcasting in Mexico appears then to have diminished from around 8% by the early 1940s to almost 5% in 1979. There are no available breakdowns of television programming contents during the first decade of TV in Mexico, but it is universally aknowledged that entertainment has been the predominant portion (cfr. Arriaga, 1980:228; 232-237). For 1960, UNESCO (1963) found that during a "typical week" Mexican television devoted 73% of its transmission time to entertainment; 6% was devoted to news and 2% to comentaries; the rest comprised advertising, cultural programs and "political advice." A breakdown of one week's programming of the Televisa channels and State channels 13 and 11 in 1980

shows that only 9.8% of the total was devoted to news programs. In the Televisa channels 8.7% of total programming was newscasts (Sánchez Ruiz, 1980). From the literature review in chapter 1, we assume that audiences are actually influenced by the electronic media, to a greater or lesser extent, in forming a "judgment of the world they live in." But it remains to be seen how much of this influence comes from "objective" news and commentaries programming, and how much from the incidental learning that takes place through pure entertainment programs. Our assumption is that the salient dimension of the political relevance of the electronic media stems from their *informal educational* functioning through the whole array of contents they broadcast and, to a smaller extent, from the "objective" information they diffuse on political issues, problems and actors.

The other flaw that characterizes the libertarian conception stems from the assumption that the "accuracy" of the audiences' image of the world, derived from exposure to the media messages, arises from the *plurality* of viewpoints that are supposed to circulate through the media and are confronted in the "marketplace of ideas." The sheer costs of establishing an electronic mass medium, in particular television, literally prohibit a majority of the population from exercising their "freedom of speech" and "freedom of the

press." We have shown in Chapter 5 how concentrated the ownership and control of TV is in Mexico, and elsewhere we have shown the same for other mass media (Sánchez Ruiz, 1981). In the face of a similar concentration at the international level, the "free flow of information" doctrine has been challenged during the 1970s by the proposal of a "New International Information Order," which those nations that today control the flows of information and messages adamantly oppose (cfr. Schiller, 1976; McBride et al, 1980; McPhail, 1981).

The last flaw that permeates the conception under discussion is that it considers the only other possible alternative to a "free press" (or, within our discussion, "free privately owned electronic information media") to be *government* control, ruling out the participation of alternative social groups and organizations, such as universities, labor unions, political parties, professional organizations, etc.

The Debate

The above discussion forms the "conceptual" background against which the right to information issue has to be examined. The immediate historical antecedents and context to this issue are the international struggle of the Third World for a new international information order and, within Mexico, the debates and criticisms about the existing oligopolistic structure of ownership and control of the media, propitiated by Luis Echeverría's "democratic opening" (cfr. Chapter 5). Within the prevailing critical spirit at the end of Echeverría's *sexenio*, in 1975 the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies (IEPES) of the ruling party included, as part of its proposed *Basic Government Plan, 1976-1982*, an exhortation:

> [to]...review in depth the social function of print information and of that generated by radio, televison and cinema, as well as to evaluate the procedures and forms of organzation of the public and private entities that produce it, so that, at the same time that the freedom or the right of speech of the information professionals is reinforced, the confrontation of opinions, criteria and programs among political parties, labor unions, associations of scientists, professionals and artists, social groupings and, in general, among all Mexicans can be promoted (in Pereyra, 1979:34).

The formulation of the issue in the PRI's Basic Plan was

influenced by the progressive elements within the ruling apparatus, who deemed viable a real democratization of the Mexican society. The progressive faction within the ruling party was also present during López Portillo's campaign, adopting a critical stance towards the mercantilist control of the media, and demanding a greater State control of and participation in the electronic media (cfr. *Linea, Pensamiento de la Revolución*, No. 20, March/April, 1976). During these initial stages of the emergence of the right to information issue it was assumed that, by undermining the private oligopolistic control of the media, greater State control and participation would somehow guarantee a democratization of the mass communication processes (Fernández Christlieb, 1979).

At the begining of the López Portillo administration, the coordination and control of most State-media relations were centralized in the Secretariat of *Gobernación*, which is in charge of the internal political affairs of the country. It was evident that the *political* dimension of the media was the dominant one in the administration's conception. The informal-educational aspect of the media, for example, was not given much importance (Fernández Christlieb, 1976:203-204). As we indicated before, the President's sister, Margarita López Portillo, was appointed to head the General Direction of Radio, Television and Cinema of the Secretariat of

Gobernación. A poetess and a cultured lady, López Portillo had no previous real political or media experience, although she had previously occupied some administrative posts within the government apparatus. Nevertheless, her role had great political significance during her brother's presidential period.

When presented in 1977 as a part of the political reform, the right to information concept referred explicitly only to the right of all political parties to have access to the media. Thus, in the statement of purpose of the project of amendments to the Constitution sent to Congress by the President, one can read:

> It is also necessary to guarantee to the national political parties, in an equitable way, the means to diffuse widely their principles, theses and programs, as well as their analyses and opinions about society's problems. To this end, it is deemed appropriate to grant to the political parties the prerogative of permanent access to radio and television, without restriction to only election periods.
> This prerogative of the parties has the purpose of enforcing in a more effective way the right to information which...is incorporated to Article 6...(Cámara de Diputados, 1981, Vol. I:29).

The closest antecedent to this measure was the 1973 electoral reform enacted by Luis Echeverría, which allowed each political party to use 15 minutes per month of radio and television during election periods. The amendment to Article 41, also enacted within the political reform, gave the

political parties the constitutional right of *permanent* access to the mass media, which was concretized still further in Articles 48 and 49 of the Law of Political Organizations and Electoral Procedures. But the amendment to Article 6 was susceptible to many different interpretations, not only in terms of media acess to the political parties, and it was not given any other legal operationalization. A concrete regulatory law of the right to information was felt lacking, even by López Portillo and Reyes Heroles.

We call this first stage of the emergence and proposition by the State of the right to information issue the "liberal stage," because it was mainly influenced by Jesús Reyes Heroles, the master-mind of the political reform strategy, and a widely known liberal thinker, within the authoritarian Mexican political system (Rodrfguez Araujo, 1979:81-92). But it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this reformist movement was actually of a "preemptive" type, and that it did not originally constitute the State's response to *concrete* demands from organized groups. Asserts Fátima Fernández Christlieb: "The right to information was not, in 1976, a demand from society; it was a government proposal whose first purpose was to maintain the equilibrium of the political system...(*unomasuno*, March 27, 1983:5). That is, the right to information was only one component of the broader political reform, which, again, was geared towards the

revitalization of the hegemony and legitimacy of the Mexican State.

It is uncertain how far López Portillo and Reyes Heroles originally wanted to go in modifying the information system. Still, in his second State of the Nation speech in 1978, López Portillo announced that he would soon send to Congress a project of "law of guarantees of the right to information," which he indicated would "develop and give concretion to the final part of Article 6 of the Constitution" (*Proceso*, No. 187, June 2, 1980:9). He hinted that the idea was to democratize the information system, but gave no indication as to how it would be achieved:

> In this law project the right to information is defined as a fundamental social right...in order to assure access of the collectivity to an objective, plural and opportune information.
> Our juridical order must make information a democratic force, in whose exercise the different currents of opinion and thought, organizations and individuals should participate (ibid).

But there was no hint as to whether the structure of ownership and control would change under the projected law. A month later Reyes Heroles assured the broadcasters that the new law would not change, but instead complement, the existing laws and regulations (ibid). In other words, their prerogatives would not be affected. The representatives of the industry had already begun to pressure the government through their Chamber

and informal channels in a campaign that lasted through 1979. The private information media participated also in the campaign to forestall the enactment of the right to information law (Fernández Christlieb, 1979:332). But the "boomerang effect" had already begun to show. In 1978 and 1979 the officially controlled labor sector manifested overtly the need to democratize mass communication, and demanded workers' access to the electronic media as part of the right to information (Acle Tomasini, 1981:38-39). To the Labor Congress' demands were added those of several other official and independent labor unions and organizations, as well as leftist political parties (ibid:40-41).

A second stage of the right to information issue was taking form, a stage we call the "process of radicalization." The expression is meant in the etymological sense of "going to the roots," but also in the sense that the process would test how radical a reform the was State willing to enact. Most of the new groups that began entering the debate on the legislation of the right to information "went to the roots" of the problem, by questioning the extremely concentrated structure of ownership of the electronic media and especially the role of Televisa within that structure (Espinoza, 1981:19-25).

In 1981, the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), another official labor organization,

announced that it would seek an authorization--which it never received--to establish a TV station for the working class. This proposal was supported by other labor unions, organzations and opposition political parties (Acle, 1981:41). In January of that year, the leftist coalition led by the communist party presented to Congress a project of Federal Law of Communication, whose core was the struggle against "the monopoly of mass diffusion presently exercised by the grand bourgeoisie and the State" (*unomasuno*, Jan. 26, 1981:17). Both the officially controlled labor movement and the independent working class organizations had a common goal, which in the last instance was the transformation of the existing patterns of ownership and control. But this process of radicalization was not being aided by the changing correlation of forces on the Mexican political scene.

The right, led by Televisa, had already begun a pressure campaign against the "totalitarian plot" that, according to them, the proposed new regulations to the information media responded to (Granados Chapa, 1981:141). The principal argument against the legislation of the right to information was that the media were already "too regulated" and that the new regulations would jeopardize freedom of speech and freedom of the press--the libertarian argument discussed above. Within the executive power apparatus, the broadcasters had the support of Margarita López Portillo and of the Secretary of

Communications and Transportation Emilio Múgica Montoya, both of whom continued giving concessions to Televisa and establishing cooperation arrangemets, as we saw in the previous Chapter. The support of these two key government officials permitted the corporation to expand even further, despite the active debate over its already significant power in the Mexican media scene.

In December 1978, President López Portillo ordered the Federal Electoral Commission, headed by Reyes Heroles, to convene a series of public hearings on the right to information issue. It is evident that the administration was caught between the contradictory interests that were being expressed by the contending factions; it was also evident that the project of "Law of Guarantees to the Right to Information" which the President had recently announced, was not ready yet, perhaps because of the pressures of those same contending interests, especially the express concern of Televisa and the right about the freedom of speech issue. This time, López Portillo declared that the regulation of the right to information should "seek a just equilibrium between the freedom of speech, as an individual guarantee and the right to information, as a social guarantee" (in Granados Chapa, 1981:134). These public audiences never took place. We know that government officials and some of the interested parties consulted privately, and some right-wing newspapers started a

new campaign against the right to information (ibid:135). But, for the most part, the debate remained private, and the promised law seemed to be frozen for the moment.

In May, 1979, the supporters of the the right to information legislation received another blow, with the firing of Jesús Reyes Heroles as Secretary of *Gobernación*. He had been the heart and soul of the *Reforma Política*, and fears emerged that the reform would slow down and even stop without his presence (*Proceso*, No. 133, May 21, 1979:6-8; 11-13). Reyes Heroles' removal was a triumph for the conservative wing of traditional politicians within the ruling apparatus, who had opposed the political reform since the beginning (Middlebrook, 1981:61). Reyes Heroles' substitute, Enrique Olivares Santana, is considered a traditional "man of the system." His political career is not characterized by the innovativeness, or reformism and brilliant intellectual reputation of his predecessor (*Proceso*, No. 133, May 21, 1979:13). Reyes Heroles' downfall was also a triumph for those opposed to the right to information aspect of the political reform. Reportedly, Reyes Heroes did not have good relations with his subordinate, the President's sister Margarita López Portillo (López Azuara, 1979:7). She was an opponent of the right to information regulation, and an ally of Televisa in this and other respects, as shown in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, progressive elements within the State--especially the labor sector of the PRI--and independent organizations and opposition political parties continued to press for the right to information legislation (*Proceso*, No. 141, July 16, 1979:12-13; Fernández C., 1982:212-213). By the end of 1979, López Portillo decided that there would be, after all, public consultations on the right to information, this time in a different tribune: The Chamber of Deputies. By coincidence, the new leader of the majority in the Chamber, Luis M. Farías, was a former radio and TV announcer and broadcaster himself--he was the newscaster in the first news program of Emilio Azcárraga's Channel 2, back in 1951 (*Enciclopedia de México*, 1977:46-47). The public hearings would be chaired by Farías. Would he act as a fair, objective arbiter, or would he bias the public discussions in favor of the interests to which he had been linked for almost 30 years?

In September, 1979, the President created the General Coordination of Social Communication of the Presidency (CGCS), appointing Luis Javier Solana, brother of the Secretary of Education, as coordinator. Solana was a liberal, moderate left-wing newspaperman inclined to favor the right to information law and against the monopolization of the media. Hence, the progressive forces had a new potential ally within the ruling apparatus. One of the tasks that the President

ordered Solana to perform--probably at the request of Solana himself--was a comprehensive study of the information system in Mexico, the results of which would eventually help López Portillo to design his communications policy and to judge the possibilities for reform and democratization of the media.

Between February 21 and August 6, 1980, twenty public hearings on the right to information convened, most of them in the precinct of the Chamber of Deputies and 6 in several provincial cities. Televisa was the only single organization that participated several times, presenting speeches in 8 of the 20 hearings. Most of the 140 participants presented their opinions as individuals, although most of the opposition parties and independent academic and professional organizations related to the media were officially represented. Two absences are significant: First, the ruling party (PRI) did not appear officially as an organization, although its labor sector (CTM), for example, did take part in the last session; and second, the two national labor unions that represent the majority of the radio and TV workers, STIRT and SITAT, did not participate in the debate either, even though they had applied to do so. The absence of the PRI shows that it was divided internally on the right to information issue, and only the labor sector was actively interested in it. The SITAT and STIRT labor unions are known to be contolled by the broadcasters, especially the latter, formed by Televisa

in order to have control of its own workers (this author has direct knwledge of this, having been head of the Internal Communication Department of Televisa's Industrial Relations Direction during 1976). The two labor unions belong to the labor sector of the PRI, so they must have found themselves trapped in a contradictory situation, which explains their absence: if the radio and TV workers' organizations were really independent from the media owners, they probably would have followed the rest of the official and independent labor organizations in the struggle for greater worker participation in the mass media.

The debate was between two fundamental positions: either the new legislation on the right to information was considered necessary or it was not. Of course, Televisa and the private media owners in general supported the second postion, on the grounds that the media were already too regulated and that further legislation would jeopardize freedom of speech (*Proceso*, No. 180, April 14, 1980:27). Opponents of the legislation constituted 17% of all the participants in the hearings (Beatriz Solís, interviewed by *Proceso*, No. 257, Oct. 5, 1981:21). About 45% supported the legislation, criticizing the oligopolistic situation of the Mexican media, which permitted only a few sectors of the population to effectively exercise their "freedom of speech" (Cámara de Diputados, 1981; *Análisis Político*, Vol. 9, Nos. 2, 4,

5, 6, 8, 1980; Espinoza, 1981). A constant in the speeches of most of those favoring the legislation was he expectation that the State was in the best position to guarantee a real democratization of the information media. For instance, the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers presented in a 400 page document a detailed analysis of the evolution of the media in Mexico, and of the State's continued support and subordination to the private media interests, especially after Cárdenas. Nevertheless, they concluded that the Mexican State could strengthen the informational position of the subordinate classes and groups (Fernández Christlieb, 1981). Unfortunately, there was in the public hearings a general scarcity of concrete, detailed proposals on how alternative groups such as labor unions, universities, etc., could get access to and control of the media. Another aspect that was scarcely discussed was the educational power of the media, its implications for communications policies and legislation, and the tight relation that these should have with educational policies and legislation.

During the almost six months when the hearings were taking place, public officials were issuing contradictory declarations as to whether or not the López Portillo administration really had the political will to legislate on the right to information. In particular, Luis M. Farías contradicted himself, sometimes from one day to another

(*Proceso*, No. 182, April 28, 1980:20-21). However, most of his declarations were in the sense that, if freedom of speech were jeopardized, there would not be a legislation on the right to information. On his part, Luis Javier Solana asserted publicly that there should exist "juridical and political frameworks to guarantee the right to express oneself," to which he added, "we search for the access of the great majorities to information, restoring their own lost voice" (*Proceso*, No. 182, June 2, 1980:9). This situation of contradicting statements is a reflection of the fact that the administration did not actually have a clear, unified communications policy. Other signs of this lack of policy are the concessions that Televisa received, especially from the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation and from the Direction of Radio Television and Cinema of *Gobernación*, during a time when the corporation's very legitimacy was continually being questioned at the public hearings; also, the fact that by the time the hearings were getting underway there had already been many changes of key personnel in charge of State-media relations and in the State-owned media: Four changes in the press office of the President (by the end of the *sexenio* there were five); six changes in the direction of Channel 13 (9 at the end of the administration); three in Radio Education, two in Channel 11 and three in the government newspaper *El Nacional* (ibid:6-7). These and other contradictory situations show that: 1) the State did not know

what to do with its own media (which also shows Margarita López Portillo's inability to organize this sector); 2) the administration did not know how to deal with the State-media-society relationships.

After the public hearings ended in August 1980, almost complete silence ensued on the issue for the rest of the year. In the Chamber of Deputies there was no trace of activity on the part of the legislators about the right to information law project. In the meantime, the Ministry of Communications and Transportation continued to expand the reach of Televisa, through joint (State-Televisa) arrangements to install satellite ground stations and plans to launch the first Mexican-owned telecommunications satellites (*Proceso*, No. 206, Oct. 13, 1980:8-10).

In January 1981, the leftist coalition in the Chamber of Deputies broke the silence, presenting a project of Federal Law of Social Communication which, without attempting to nationalize the mass media, proposed several ways to give "access to the mass diffusion media to all social sectors and to all political, scientific and social currents" (*unomasuno*, Jan. 26, 1981:17). The project was not even discussed in Congress. By mid-1981, Luis M. Farías, the man in charge of developing (or hindering) the law in the Chamber, declared once more that "legislation on information could

affect freedom of expression," showing again his unwillingness to legislate on the matter (*unomasuno*, Aug. 6, 1981:5). In October of that year, Farfas asserted more clearly that it was "unnecessary" to legislate on the right to information (*El Sol*, Oct. 14, 1981:3). The issue was again officially frozen.

For the progressive groups, both inside and outside of the State that supported the legislation, the last hope apparently came up in September, 1981. During that month the PRI announced the name of its presidential candidate for the 1982-1988 period, Miguel de la Madrid. As usual in the country, the "unveiling" of the official party's candidate brought about a reordering of political allegiances and forces. This type of juncture is sometimes propitious for sudden political moves of regular magnitude, because it is a time of relative confusion as to whether or not the new President will follow the policies and trends he inherits from his predecessor. On September 28 1981, the opinion magazine *Proceso* published an article asserting that "the government has ready a draft of project for a General Law of Social Communication which regulates the right to information and whose explicit purpose is to promote the democratization of the mass communication media" (*Proceso*, No. 256, Sept. 28, 1981:14). Authorship of the project was attributed to the General Coordination of Social Communication of the Presidency, although it was not clear whether Javier Solana or

some of his subordinates had officially sent it to the magazine.

The law draft consisted of 424 articles which dealt with all types of social communication and information transmission activities: press, radio, television, film, theater, musical shows, cultural activities, production of records and videocassettes, teleinformatics, news agencies, advertising agencies. It proposed the creation of five institutions, with several degrees of linkages to the federal government, to control and regulate the media. Of these, two would be in charge of assuring the participation of all kinds of social groups and organizations in the production and dissemination of information: the National Council of Social Communication and the Federal Office of the Social Communication Attorney General (ibid). The present concession-based system of commercial radio and television would not change, but measures were proposed to assure the future de-oligopolization of the media. The law draft also proposed several mechanisms for popular participation in the media: through advisory commitees, audience associations, centers for popular communication, mural periodicals and cooperative communication companies. The draft touched upon many different aspects, and was presented by *Proceso* already in a summary form. But even in preliminary shape the document constituted a breakthrough attempt to widen popular participation in the

control of the media, to guarantee the State's direct participation and to respect and guarantee freedom of expresion and the right to information *for all*.

Actually, neither Solana's office nor any other government agency took public responsibility for the elaboration of the draft, and during two months after its publication in *Proceso* "official silence" descended around it. At the same time according to *Proceso* (No. 275, Feb. 8, 1982:7), within three and a half months after the draft was disclosed, 476 journalistic reactions were produced, including informative notes, feature stories, articles and editorials. According to a detailed account of the debate, the great majority of the writings about the legal draft were harsh criticisms, especially from the right-wing press (Clavé, 1981; 1982). There were very few positive reactions to the draft; the left and the reformist elements within the State seemed to have been caught by surprise. The Bulletin of the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers (*AMIC Informa*, No. 4, Dic., 1981) observed that:

> The contents of the [critical] articles and editorials display numerous common signs, which has only two possible explanations: A particular lack of imagination of their authors, that they copy each other, or the existence of a preestablished script (p. 12).

A common trait of most of the critical writings was their authors' recognition that they did not know the original

draft, so all of them were apparently departing from *Proceso*'s summary (Clavé, 1981: 5). Noted liberal columnist Manuel Buendía suggested that Luis M. Farías had orchestrated the campaign, filtering "incomplete and digested--and therefore inaccurate--information to certain newsmen" (*Excelsior*, Oct. 8, 1981). Eduardo Clavé (1981: 4) wondered, "If it was not Farías, with the intention of [politically] 'burning' the proposal, who could have handed out the famous document to *Proceso*?" The magazine never disclosed who delivered the draft to its personnel, but even if it was not Farías, it is evident that its publication had a backfire effect.

Actually, the draft was part of volume 21 of a 30-volume study (6500 pages) prepared by the Planning Direction of the General Coordination of Social Communication, which, as mentioned above, was assigned to Javier Solana by President López Portillo himself. The study was a detailed and wide-ranging diagnosis of the structure of the communication media and processes in Mexico. This author had access to a few of the original drafts of Chapters for that study. A group of about 40 experts had been working during 1981 on the project, and, apparently, some of the volumes were delivered to President López Portillo just before his State of the Nation speech of September 1, 1981 (*Proceso*, No. 275, Feb. 8, 1982: 6). But, if so, López Portillo was not persuaded by the study,

which was very critical of the patterns of concentration of ownership and control of the media in Mexico.

López Portillo had already shown his poltical unwillingness to support the legislation, and the political pressures of the right, in particular of Televisa and other media owners, had ensured that there would be no significant change for the moment. Also by that time, the crisis that led to the February 1982 devaluation was starting to make its symptoms felt. The López Portillo administration could not begin a new political venture in the face of the imminent crisis, especially when they knew that they could retain relative control of and/or the general cooperation of the existing array of ideological media.

López Portillo's "new" conception of the right to information was expressed soon after the publication of the draft, simply as a sort of self-censorship and self-discipline on the part of those already in control of the media: "...that freedom contemplates itself as a problem, and projects itself as a possibility of binding itself;" in a less abstract way, the President suggested that "the peers, that is, the equals, must be those who establish their own rules and assume their own commitments in function of common values" (*Novedades*, Oct. 18, 1981: 4th sec., p. 1). In the months ahead, government officials issued contradictory public statements,

especially Solana ("the right to information is not yet buried"--*Excelsior*, Nov. 16, 1981: 1) and Farfas ("who cares what he thinks?"--*Proceso*, No. 264, Nov. 23, 1981: 14-15). But Farfas, Televisa and all those opposed to the legislation on the right to information were reassured of their political triumph with the firing in February 1982 of Luis Javier Solana (*Excelsior*, Feb. 3, 1982). This was the culmination of a series of dismissals of the most prominent progressive an reformist elements within the administration, a series that began in López Portillo' first year in office (Carlos Tello) and eventually included Reyes Heroles and Solana himself.

The political reform at least opened a space for alternative political forces to actually participate in the electoral process and the political debate, even if in a coopted and limited way. The right to information component of the reform, in contrast, did not succeed in achieving a relative democratization of the information flows in Mexico. If anything, the duopoly held in television by the State and Televisa was strengthened. The private monopoly reaffirmed itself as the unofficial "ministry of informal education" and its power is still growing. During the last year of López Portillo's government, and near the end of the right to information debate, Televisa signed with the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation a covenant that made them

partners in the purchase of the telecommunications satellites that had been announced the year before (*24 Horas* newscast, July 5, 1982). Even though the country was already in an economic crisis, one of whose principal manifestations was the lack of foreign currency, Televisa was able to disburse the payment for its share of the satellites in dollars, thanks to, among other things, its income from the Spanish International Network in the United States. The last proof of the marriage of the dominant faction of the State and Televisa was the concession granted to the corporation, barely one month before the new administration took over, to install and operate a new TV network of 95 stations in 23 states (*Proceso*, No. 319, Dec.13, 1982). Many thought because of its "relative autonomy" from capital, the Mexican State could enact and enforce a democratizing media reform, but the State showed again on whose side it was, how "relative" its autonomy was, or its class character. The nationalization of the banking system in September 1982 might contradict the former statement, because it showed a high level of State autonomy from capital. However, because the banks and the enterprises they controlled had sizable debts in dollars as did most of the private sector, and because the devaluation and the financial crisis were likely to worsen their situation, a plausible hypothesis is that López Portillo could have actually helped the bankers, because by nationalizing the bamks the State assumed responsibility for their debts.

Nevertheless, even if the nationalization was only a smart political move geared towards scapegoating the bankers, it happened in a very exceptional situation, namely, the worst economic crisis ever experienced by the Mexican social formation; the State had some degree of *internal* autonomy, but was almost completely subordinated to external financial forces and interests.

Consultations Again--The New Administration

As the official party's candidate, Miguel de la Madrid at the beginning of his electoral campaign expressed his willingness to legislate on the right to information, as did his right-hand man, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, now Secretary of Programming and Budgeting (Clavé, 1982:5). But soon after, all public declarations by de la Madrid avoided the issue, stressing only the convenience of the continuation of the "mixed system" of mass media in Mexico. However, the new President was aware since his campaign of the educational effects of the media, "whose impact--as in the case of the electronic media--is often greater than that of the lesson of a professor" (*Novedades*, April 1, 1982:1). Added de la Madrid:

> The mass media of communication must feel themselves as a responsible part of the educational system and what we

> have said about education applies to them: a nationalist education, for free men and for democracy and justice, are the same ethical contents that radio and television must fulfill in Mexico (ibid).

But the candidate never raised the issue of *who* provides or should provide educational contents through the media. Incidentally, during the 1979 election period for federal deputies, the electronic media complied punctually with their obligation of providing the time allotted to the political parties by the Federal Electoral Commision, according to Articles 6 and 41 of the Constitution and to the Law of Political Organizations and Electoral Procedures. However, it is symptomatic that during the 1982 presidential election all the opposition parties, both left- and right-wing, complained repeatedly that Televisa was avoiding its obligation, by not following the schedules arranged by the Federal Electoral Commision, and by broadcasting their programs through the corporation's secondary channels (*El Dia*, April 17, 1982; *unomasuno*, May 12, 1982). Televisa had already proven its position of force. There was no official penalty to what the opposition parties called a "violation to the Constitution" (ibid). After an interview with the PRI candidate, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, in a rare public appearance, denied that Televisa did not respect the parties' TV time. Televisa's chairman went on to emphasize his PRI militancy and his adherence to candidate de la Madrid (*Novedades*, May 14, 1982:18). This militancy and adherence

were actually reflected in the large amount of attention paid by the Televisa channels to the PRI candidate versus the opposition parties (Toussaint, 1982:60-61).

Probably because of the disorganization that had prevailed during the López Portillo regime regarding the State-owned media and State-media relationships in general, four months after de la Madrid took power the Federal Government's "Plan for Social Communication" was announced (*UnoMasUno*, March 25, 1983). In the ceremony, in which five ministers spoke, the Secretary of *Gobernación*, Manuel Bartlett, announced a "popular consultation" on social communication to help define the State's communications policies within the National Development Plan, which the President had promised to the country for the following month of May. In Section 6.1 we indicated that de la Madrid's campaign included a series of "popular consultations" on the several national problems and issues, allegedly to provide an input to the candidate's further planning and decision-making once he was in power. The mass communication issue was dealt with within the public hearings devoted to the "national culture." As president, de la Madrid continued to use public hearings, or "popular consultations for democratic planning," as sources of popular input. These consultations were supposed to be the basis of the National Development Plan, which was presented to the nation on May 31, 1983.

The new administration forgot all about the debate of the previous *sexenio*, in particular the 140 papers presented to the public hearings in Congress, some with extensive background studies as in the case of the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers' paper. Also forgotten was the 6500 page study performed by the General Coordination of Social Communication of the Presidency. Everything began anew: 2,020 speeches were presented in the new public hearings, which took place in several capital cities in the provinces. Of these, 34% were devoted to television, 27% to radio, 22% to the press and 17% to the film industry (*Proceso*, No. 341, May 16, 1983:33). The organizers of the public hearings played down or avoided the right to information issue, but criticism of the "collusion of the State and Televisa" and their duopoly of television and other media was again present. Of 35 communications schools and departments that were represented in the hearings, 23 demanded a de-monopolization of television (*Proceso*, No. 344, June 6, 1982:15). The chapter on social communication in the National Development Plan 1982-1988 did not, as could have been expected, promise any change in the structure of ownership and control of the media, although it vaguely promised efforts to "avoid phenomena of concentration that may be contrary to the public interest" (ibid:14). It is important to bear in mind, however, that the government was busy searching for short- and medium-term solutions for the

crisis that it had inherited from the previous administration. And the "stabilizing" measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund upon Mexico, as we saw above, were of a conservative rather than reformist nature, so one could not expect any reformist government movement on the media or any other delicate or potentially explosive issue.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS.

We have traced the historical development of television in Mexico, its historical and structural antecedents and determinants, and highlighted some of its relationships with the State and the model of capitalist development followed by the country. The TV system has continually expanded its reach and possibilities of social influence. At the same time, its control has been increasingly concentrated in a few hands, in a process of monopolization that has culminated in its present structure: the State and a private corporation, Televisa, hold a duopoly over the pervasive informal education vehicle that, as we have postulated in Chapter 1, is television.

We have seen that the country has undergone a continuous process of "modernization," through a course of industrialization and "associated-dependent" capitalist development, and through its articulation to the international division of labor as a "semiperipheral" social formation. Along with this process, both the *formal* and *informal* educational apparatuses have expanded and modernized. Given the enormous weight that the Televisa corporation has acquired in the culture industry in general and in particular the

control that it exercises over commercial television in Mexico, we could postulate the *de facto* existence of a private "informal education ministry," parallel to the Secretariat of Public Education. Whether the social functioning of these two "ministries" is antagonistic or complementary is a matter of the level of analysis that one performs. Unfortunately in this particular research we could not conduct a comparative analysis of the objectives and social consequences of both types of education--e.g., some aspects of formal education through schooling, and informal education through TV. That is a huge task in itself and a potential subject for further concrete research projects. However, if we compare some relevant dimensions of the educational plans and projects of the State's formal educational apparatus with some observable social effects of TV as an informal educator, we may find elements of incongruence, for instance, in cultivating a national identity and pride, as we learned from some of the available literature reviewed in Chapter 1. Another type of relevant research that should be done in the future could, for example, compare the effects of formal public and private education and informal public and private education through television and other media. The *nonformal* educational use of the media should also be included in future comparative analyses.This particular area of research is almost unexplored, especially in Mexico, so there are virtually infinite avenues for future

research (La Belle, 1982; King, 1982). For the moment, at the risk of simplifying reality and in the light of our historical analysis, we contend that, from a more global perspective, one can hypothesize that both types of educational apparatuses--formal and informal--have been historically complementary, because they have supported and reinforced the general development pattern followed by Mexico, in which the Mexican State has assumed a leading role. But, again, this investigation has dealt with the historical development of only *one* apparatus of informal education, television, and its relations with the economy and polity in Mexico.

Along with the expansion of television and the concentration of its control, we have seen the increase of its power, in particular that of a private TV corporation: on the one hand, with the expansion of the medium's reach, centralized in the Televisa corporation, has come the expansion of its potential and real capacity to influence wider segments of the Mexican population. On the other hand, because of this actual and potential capacity, and of Televisa's demonstrated ability to relate with the State both as a pressure group and as an ally, the corporation has gained the capacity to impose its political will upon the State and upon society at large, as our historical account in Chapters 5 and 6 shows.

Contradictions

We have pointed out throughout the dissertation a number of contradictions that have permeated TV's development and its present structure, and which are tightly interwined with the contradictory basis of the Mexican capitalist State. To begin with, the basic social pact formalized in the Constitution provides that *all* Mexicans are "free" to express themselves publicly, to communicate with, inform and influence others, but only a few individuals and groups have the resources necessary to exercise this freedom on a broad social scale. Apparently a mere incongruence between historical form and content, this contradiction is, however, a reflection of deeper historical contradictions within the Mexican social formation and the institutional expression of its fundamental pact of domination--the State. Because of its historical roots in the 1910 Revolution and the populist and corporatist structure that has given it legitimacy since the 1930s, the Mexican State's social base is formally constituted by the broad masses (peasants, workers and the "middle classes"). The State's rhetoric claims that it governs for all of society; it has formally given itself the task of "conciliating" and "integrating" into its national project the interests of all social classes, which is contradicted by a global development model that has benefitted only a few groups and class

fractions. The State's role within the process of capitalist accumulation is then in perpetual contradiction with its own sources of legitimation. In a parallel way, the principal contradiction of Mexico's television system--and its mass communication in general--is between its increasingly wide social reach, influence and significance and its monopolized appropriation, control and exploitation. This principal contradiction of private broadcasting in Mexico is a correlate of the contradiction of a State that *formally* subordinates private property to the public interest (Article 27 of the constitution, which also stipulates that the space over the Mexican territory--support of the Hertzian waves of radio and TV broadcasting--is the original property of the *Nation*), but historically implements a development project based on private property and private interests. The socially *exclusive* control of television, its concentration in a few hands, produces its constant need for social legitimacy. But the private monopoly lacks the State's formal social base, hence the need to resort to alliances with the State itself and to particular legitimizing strategies (such as, for example, recently converting its Channel 8 to a *cultural channel*--although reducing the number of its repeater stations). Another related contradiction, which is inherent to the commercial character of television as an advertising medium, is that between its promotion of consumption on a wide scale and the development pattern in a social formation where

the relative capacity of the majority of the population to consume shrinks over time, owing to the unequal distribution of income and resources.

At this level of abstraction it can be affirmed that the Mexican capitalist State and commercial television are "united" by their own contradictions. Independently of concrete personal links and alliances, the State and private television appear to be "structural partners" since, for example, the global development model that they seem to pursue has, in the final analysis, been the same: private television in Mexico appears to have been functional to the capitalist development model implemented and fostered by the State. Along with the reproduction of the existing relations of production, exploitation and domination, both the State and private television share a common "structural" interest, namely, their own legitimized self-reproduction. If, as we have seen in the previous historical Chapters, the State and private television have arrived at closer and closer links of partnership and interdependence, it is most probably because both are mutually functional and beneficial: both private and "public" television have demonstrated their usefulness to the State in its search for legitimacy and hegemony. Simultaneously, getting closer to the State at the individual and institutional levels and obtaining the State's sanction of its process of growth and centralization of private TV, has been a

source of legitimacy for Televisa. But, as we have learned in Chapters 5 and 6, the social legitimacy of both the State and the private television monopoly has been gradually undermined by the increasing awareness of diverse social groups of the historical contradictions brought about by the growing concentration of domination resources in the Mexican social formation. Hence, television--and the media system in general--has become an arena of political struggle, which it was not in its beginnings and first two decades of development. Television is now in the political agenda of conscious groups that seek to represent the interests of the subaltern classes within the Mexican social formation. As long as there is space and opportunity for political struggle, even if limited and coopted as it is today in Mexico, there is some hope--even if remote after the recent developments described in Chapter 6--for change to a less concentrated and centralized system of mass communication and informal education.

Biography, Structure and History

In this section we discuss whether this research effort succeeded in answering our research questions. We include also some suggestions for further research, arising from our own incomplete answers, from additional questions raised by a

better understanding of some issues, and from related problems and issues not touched upon by this research. Every research project begins with questions, attempts to answer them as objectively as possible, and *should* end up with new questions to guide further inquiry. There is no "final word" in science.

The general objective of the dissertation, to contribute to the explanation of the long-term relationships among TV, the State and national and transnational capital, has been generally met. As to the research questions, we began by asking what accounts for the commercial character and functioning of television in Mexico. This question can be answered at several levels of generality, both synchronically and diachronically: Our tentative answer suggested that the commercial character and functioning of television responded to the needs of capital accumulation, with the mediation of the capitalist State. The historical data support the hypothesis.

At the most immediate, evident level some interests, some particular capitals, were available to be invested in the new communication medium. With the import substitution industrialization process, the advertising function of the mass media was increasing its economic importance, and the prospects of profitability for the new mass

medium--television. The State had the power to decide what institutional form TV would acquire in the country, and the chief of the Executive Power--President Alemán--put television in private hands to be developed commercially.

But the former hypothesis applies at a broader level of generality. We have shown in Chapter 5 that the Alemán administration was a synthesis and expression of the historical changes that were taking place in Mexico's political economy and in the world capitalist system. Historical parameters were set by the expansion and reordering of the capitalist system at a global scale after World War II and the emergence of Mexico's northern neighbor, the United States, as the leading force in this historical movement. The reaccomodation of economic, political and ideologico-cultural forces, which brought about a new international division of labor, influenced the insertion of Mexico--and some other Latin American countries--in that division of labor as an emerging "semiperiphery," through a pattern of dependent import-substituting industrialization. The new model of capital accumulation was favored in Mexico by political stability and by the direct participation of the State with its allocative and productive functions. It was a strong State that was in a process of "rectifying" the "socialist" tendencies of the Cárdenas administration, similarly to the State in the U.S. moving away from the "socialist" tendencies

of the Roosevelt era. All this historical-structural context, the base of which is the new global and national patterns of capital accumulation, but which also includes the growing economic, political and cultural influence of the U.S. upon Mexico and the concrete antecedent of an already mature, 27 year old radio-broadcasting industry, made the emergence of an advertising-based, U.S.-type commercial TV industry the "most probable" alternative, congruent with the capitalist road that the country was following.

Historical circumstances, "inertia" and vested interests, are difficult--although not impossible--to reverse. Not only did the commercial scheme remain the dominant one in the Mexican TV system, but the industry went through a process of expansion, concentration and centralization, expanding the power of those who controlled it. Thus, we have shown that important controversial issues in the history of Mexican broadcasting, such as the 1960 Law of Radio and Television, the 1969 new tax (paid with "fiscal time"); the State's entrance into commercial television in 1972; the 1973 regulatory law of radio and television contents; and the right to information debate, have all been instances of both the consolidation of the commercial model of TV and of the gradually greater power of private capital, with the support and/or mediation of the State. However, it must be recalled that this power has been increasingly contested by the

critical awareness of social groups, including some progressive sectors within the State itself, of the contradictory base on which the undemocratic system of mass communication and informal education rests.

We have been rather successful in answering the question of what groups or classes have controlled and benefitted from the development process of both the country and television. At the more concrete level, we have described the particular economic groups, families and individuals who have participated directly in the development of radio and TV broadcasting; the state's participation both as an allocator and as producer has also been substantiated, as well as the direct and indirect involvement of transnational capital. Radio was established by some traditional economic groups that remained from the pre-Revolution era and by an emerging modern bourgeoisie that fostered the development of broadcasting with some help from external capital. Television was established and expanded by the "new" bourgeoisie. Televisa came to be a "condensation" of some of the most influential and representative groups of the contemporary Mexican "grand bourgeoisie." Hence, we can safely assume that those groups and classes, including State personnel and institutions, have been the beneficiaries of the historical development of television and capitalism in Mexico. More concrete research needs to be conducted on the economic and political links and interdependences among these three

"key" forces and *structural* partners of dependent capitalism, namely the State and its institutions and enterprises, the dominant fraction of the national bourgeoisie, and transnational capital. These links and interdependences are fluid and changing, at times contradictory. But a long-term view, with hindsight, shows that they structurally define the type of unequal and exploitative capitalist development that Mexico has followed. It remains to be seen what real historical alternatives can be created by the subaltern classes and popular masses--if they manage to organize themselves--whose vindicatory movements have been either coopted or repressed up to date.

One issue regarding the *direct* links of television and transnational capital is unclear. On the one hand, we have not been able to determine when direct foreign investment withdrew from the Mexican electronic media scene. Still in the early 1970s, Wells (1972:106) reported that ABC had four stations in Telesistema and a production company in Acapulco (*Teleprogramas Acapulco* was directed by Miguel Alemán Jr.). But no further information is available. There is no doubt about the direct participation of North American capital--RCA-NBC--in the emergence of the Azcárraga radio empire in the 1930s. The expansion of this empire was fostered also by its direct links with CBS. The *Telesistema* TV stations were affiliated with the North American networks,

although "affiliation" in the network scheme of radio and TV broadcasting does not *necessarily* mean direct investment, but also simply the provision of advertising sales and/or programming. On the other hand, with the expansion of the Spanish Internationl Network in the United States, Televisa itself has become a transnational corporation. After the United States production companies and networks, Televisa is the principal exporter of TV programs to the rest of America, including the U.S. (Antola and Rogers, 1982). This situation seems to contradict our statement that television contributes to the reproduction of a pattern of *dependent* capitalist development. Actually, "Mexico" could then be considered a "media imperialist" on its own.

The "media imperialism" thesis (Tunstall, 1977:38-63; 182-184) can be rather misleading if the mass media control, financing and message flow is abstracted from broader political, economic and cultural relationships and exchanges among nations and blocs of nations. A problem for further concrete research--which has been indirectly addressed by this investigation--is whether *Televisa's* media "imperialism" (Mexico is not Televisa) has made any difference with respect to Mexico's subordination from financial, commercial and productive capitalist forces from outside. We suspect, based on the limited historical evidence in this dissertation, that it has not.

A related problem is whether the probable influence that Televisa's exported programming has abroad is matched within Mexico, for example, in the creation and strengthening of national identity and pride, against the secular *malinchismo* that pervades the country's dominant culture.

Another related problem refers to whether the impressive internal and external growth and development of the Mexican private TV monopoly has had any influence on, for instance, income distribution in Mexico--"redistributing" not *consumption patterns* but rather aggregate demand through income distribution. Again, from the limited evidence presented in this dissertation, we suspect that commercial television has actually been functional to a pattern of development that has produced an unequal distribution of income and resources, and therefore its "imperialism" does not make any difference for the common people in Mexico.

We have indicated several times in this conclusion that commercial television has been functional to the process of capital accumulaltion in Mexico. We have not done a time series econometric study of the television industry and its forward and backward linkages to other sectors of the economy, its actual influence upon consumption, etc. But there are general elements in our historical account that make such a

hypothesis more credible. We know that TV has *not* been dysfunctional to capital accumulation and economic growth in the country. The impressive expansion of private television shows that, to begin with, it has been a very profitable business. Mexico is the country with the highest proportion of advertising expenditures devoted to television in the world (Starch-Inra-Hooper, 1983:18). Hence, TV's clients also find it profitable to invest in TV advertising. Most probably this is so because TV *does* work as a vehicle for the promotion of consumption of the advertisers' goods and services, aiding in their respective processes of expanded reproduction (recall that advertising agencies are intermediaries between television and its final "consumers," which are industrial, commercial or service firms).

Another related issue that must be researched refers to the *concentrative* pattern of capital accumulation in Mexico and advertising's role in it. There is evidence that the manufacturing sector in Mexico has increased its concentration levels (measured for example by the proportion of production accounted for by the 4 largest firms in each industrial branch), from 42.6% to 45.2% from 1970 to 1975 (Martínez and Jacobs, 1980: 157-158). Those industrial branches in the consumer goods sector that advertise most heavily in general, and in television in particular, have also increased their concentration levels, so one can assume that TV advertising

has had a role in the concentration process. "Which was first," advertising intensity or concentration remains a subject for debate (cfr. for instance, Ornstein, 1977), but the evidence suggests that they are mutually reinforcing, *as aspects* of "market structures" and as instruments of market power, particularly in Mexico (Connor and Mueller, 1977).

Another variable that defines "market structure" and "market power" in developing countries is transnational presence, which also shows a high correlation with advertising intensity for the consumption goods manufacturing sector (Martinez and Jacobs, 1980). Transnational presence is also a relatively good predictor of performance (e.g., rate of profit) (ibid; Connor and Mueller, 1977). An issue for further concrete analysis is, then, on the role of television advertising in the process of concentration and transnationalization of the economy. More research is needed, too, on the relationships among the promotion of consumption by TV and other advertising media, the actual patterns of consumption, and income distribution. Again, the general historical data in this dissertation point towards a "positive" role of television in the concentrative pattern of capital accumulation and dependent development followed by Mexico.

But the immediate promotion of consumption (or the realization of the value of commodities in the market) is not the only way

that TV may serve the long-term process of capital accumulation. It is common-place (although this is also a subject for further research) that TV and the commercial mass media, through their role of informal educators, contribute to the creation, dissemination and reproduction of a set of cultural traits, attitudes and ideas, conducive to a "consumer culture" and to an ideological environment that accepts as "natural" the consumption patterns of an industrialized society (even in the face of disparities that may not permit the majority to enjoy such consumption patterns). This contribution is achieved not only through advertising, but also through the other programming (cfr. Chapter 1). In the last analysis, this process is conceptualized as producing an ideological justification of capitalism and therefore aiding in its reproduction.

This ideologico-cultural process also acquires political dimensions; for instance, mass mediatization through *telenoveas* and sports may be a form of reorienting the audience's attention away from economic and political problems, institutions and actors. Recall that the State and private capital are "structural partners" in television--and in the economy in general--in Mexico, so the ideologico-political functions of TV are important to both. But, again, there is still much more research to be done on these legitimizing and hegemonic workings of TV and the media

in Mexico, and the "informal education approach" is rather useful for this purpose. The available evidence reviewed in Chapter 1 suggests that there is an ideologico-political process in which television, as a pervasive informal educator, has an important role, and that this process is contributing to the reproduction of the prevailing patterns of capital accumulation.

What are the prospects for change? After the experience and setback of the right to information issue and struggle during the López Portillo regime, and with Mexico's current crisis, it seems rather difficult to expect any change in the present television system for the near future. The vested interests are entrenched and the stakes are high. Because of its preemptive-reformist nature, the State often creates expectations of change, that turn out to be unfounded. Therefore, the State cannot be considered a real hope for the political forces that seek a real democratization of the country's media system, as well as of the economy and polity. However, as we indicated before, as long as the State does not become a Southern Cone-type military dictatorship, as long as there is a certain space for political struggle and there remain within the State itself some progressive elements, there is some hope that the television system of the country may eventually serve the needs and interests of the working class and the popular masses. The struggle over mass

communication, its social effects and potential alternative social uses, cannot be divorced from the struggle over mass education and, indeed, over mass participation in the achievement of the material and cultural rewards that up to date have been so unequally distributed. This is a matter of political organization and struggles. Perhaps historical accounts like this one, which attempt to unveil the "passions and interests" behind the historical processes, can be of some help to the political movements for change.

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