

The Nature of Clientelism in Mexico City

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The Party of the Democratic Revolution's (PRD) organization and its elected politicians ostensibly work separately. Party activists and executives are said to shape and direct the party itself, attempting to increase affiliation, create electoral platforms, enhance structures and effectiveness, create popular awareness, and so on. Elected politicians from the party ranks supposedly represent all citizens from their districts and legislate with this responsibility in mind. With a closer look at the functioning of the PRD in Mexico City, it becomes readily apparent that a separation of motivation and action between the party on the one hand and politicians on the other is minimal. In fact, due to internal factionalism as well as a long history and culture of clientelism in Mexican politics, the activities of politicians and party activists are not only closely intertwined but often revolve around establishing clientelistic relations.

Since colonial times, patronage has been a source of political and economic stability in Mexico (Singelman 1981, Knight, 2002, Meyer et al 2003, Buve 1993, Krauze 1997). During its 71 year hold on power in the twentieth century, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) further institutionalized clientelism as the basis for politics (Hellman 1988 and 1994, Fox 1997, González Casanova 1981, Roniger 1990, Tejera Gaona, 2003, Heredia 2001). In the civil and political arenas it has always been necessary to find an influential friend in order to access resources or political positions. In return for the services rendered, this patron expects social and political quiescence as well as electoral support from his clients (Cross 1998, Cornelius 1977, Graziano 1976, Legg 1975, Clapham 1982, Roniger 1990). The PRI once assured compliance with tacit or overt threats of repression that have become decreasingly viable as democratization and freedom of the media progress (see Fox 1997). Nonetheless, the unwritten rules of

clientelism are a solidly established – albeit informal – institution that continue to enjoy wide following.

The Party of the Democratic Revolution was born in this context of clientelism. In 1988 the Democratic National Front formed around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and other figures whose group had broken away from the PRI. This collection of *ex-priistas*, leftist parties, and social organizations was intent on removing the PRI from power in a democratic transition and putting an end to poverty and inequality. After losing the 1988 presidential election due to massive fraud by the PRI, the Front disbanded and the PRD was created as a more permanent institution (Bruhn 1997, Borjas Benavente 2003, Reveles Vázquez 2004). Most of the party's founders were schooled either in the PRI's clientelist, corporatist, and *caudillista* (centered on local strongmen) politics or in leftist movements and parties based on centralized rule by charismatic leaders (Sánchez 1999 and 2001, Semo 2003). Many of them have not forgotten what they learned, applying old tricks in the new party in an attempt to steer the ship, and newcomers quickly learn the unofficial rules of the game. In addition, the PRD has not overcome its origins as a front; it continues to be an agglomeration of leftist groups rather than a coherent political expression. Numerous pressure groups – called tribes – exist within the party and each uses negotiation, alliance strategies, and clientelistic affiliations to increase its power.

Politics in the PRD tend to center more on winning internal elections than on creating a viable party platform with which to then defeat other parties in state or national elections. Due to this fixation, even politicians from the PRD's ranks who have won elected government positions often spend an inordinate amount of time trying to strengthen their position inside the party. Since its near-win in 1988, the party has maintained a position of approximately 17% of the national vote. Strongmen and their factions battle inside the organization for a share of the power

represented by this percentage, rather than trying to increase their share of the total.¹ Since the *caudillos* and their factions each build up their own following, even elected politicians who would prefer to remove themselves from the factional battles find it necessary to continue dealing with them in order to draw in the public support they wield.

The PRD has held power in Mexico City since the city's leadership was elected, rather than appointed, for the first time in 1997. The party's influence particularly reaches into the poorer sectors of the city. Its recognition and electoral draw are anchored in its factions' and leaders' clientelist practices. Through social organizations or individual identification with PRD politicians, citizens are attracted to the party by the "goodies" its members hand out. Social housing, subsidies for senior citizens, school supplies for children, computers for schools, scholarships, food packages, and t-shirts are among the resources used by PRD politicians and *caudillos* to bring in votes. Citizens' support may be assured through direct control by organization leaders, or through individual feelings of gratefulness.

Gratefulness is an important element in Mexican culture, where favours and kind deeds are conscientiously returned.² Since many poor citizens are unaware of their rights to publicly financed resources, they attribute advances in public services and political gifts to the charitable nature of the politician who has made them available (see Hellman 1994). They repay the good deed with electoral support. This cultural aspect works to the advantage of clientelism, which organizes and controls citizens' interests by trading political submission for resources that are provided discretionally although they are legally available to all (Heredia 2001: 4).

¹ The recent organization of citizens' networks (*redes ciudadanas*) to generate support beyond PRD militants for presidential hopeful and Mexico City mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador are a novelty.

² I owe the term "culture of gratefulness" (*cultura de agradecimiento*) to the journalist and author Ramón Pieza. Personal conversation, Sept. 16, 2004.

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of how the party's tribes function in the Federal District, focusing on the three dominant groups in this state and the party's key electorate: the poor.³ The piece is based on over 100 open-ended interviews, carried out in Mexico City in 2004, with PRD Senators, Congresspeople, Assembly Representatives, and party officials of all levels, as well as PRD militants, PRD sympathizers, and journalists. It is, thus, essentially an empirical contribution, although I hope that it will add to the discussion around clientelism as norm rather than aberration in Latin America.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first briefly describes the leadership and policies of Mexico City's *perredista* mayor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, presenting a picture of the political use made of the culture of gratitude. The second discusses the National Democratic Left faction, which has its roots in Mexico City's social movements. Its power lies in the streets, it is seen as the most corporatist and clientelist tribe, and it employs the most radical political discourse. The third section describes the New Left faction, whose leaders were apparatchiks in the socialist parties that existed prior to the PRD. They attempt to take over the new party's apparatus through key positions in the organization - although their local strongmen are as clientelistic as the Democratic Left's - are said to negotiate at all costs, and use a social democratic discourse. The final section depicts Unity and Renovation, a mixture of intellectuals, old party hands, and social organizations. It is the weakest of the three factions, balancing the other two's power through conjunctural alliances. Its members practice negotiation, clientelism, and a language of social justice.

³ For statistics on the PRD's electorate, see Bruhn 1997b: appendix D.

The PRD in Government: Andrés Manuel López Obrador's programs

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mayor of Mexico City and Chief of Government of the Federal District since 2000, is often criticized as populist by his opponents. "Populism" has recently been used by many adherents to the Washington Consensus to express their disagreement with Latin American politicians who institute welfare-state type policies in response to citizens' needs and demands rather than adhering to the neoliberal agenda favoured by big business, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. "In political discourse, its [populism's] use is often synonymous with authoritarian and corrupt governments that pander to public opinion" (Carlsen 2004). López Obrador has earned the label of populist due to the subsidies to seniors, single mothers, schoolchildren, and the disabled, as well as microcredits for housing improvement and self-employment, established by his government. He says, "anything that isn't in the recipes given to all the countries is immediately labeled populism. It's populism when there are programs of support for the poor, but saving the bankers is called progress".⁴

López Obrador points out that Mexico has taken important steps in recent years, toward a greater democratization of the sociopolitical sphere. In the socioeconomic realm, on the other hand, he finds that the country has regressed. Neoliberalism has deepened inequalities between the rich and the poor, economic growth is slower than population growth, the public debt has tripled since 1983, the real minimum wage has decreased, unemployment and insecurity are high and corruption is rife. In sum, he argues that the hegemonic market-based political economy has patently failed. His response is the institution of programs that will unleash the potential of Mexico's human resources. By ensuring that the economically disadvantaged have access to education, work, health care, housing, and good nutrition, López Obrador aims to create a state of

⁴ "Cautelosa, no protagonista, la política exterior que aplicaría: López Obrador", *La Jornada*, Feb. 17, 2005. López Obrador's remark about saving bankers refers to the infamous FOBAPROA deal.

justice and equality in which the lower classes are given the opportunities, skills, and resources to improve their standard of living (López Obrador 2004).⁵ However, the Mayor's detractors argue that his policies are clientelistic and financially unfeasible.

The Seniors' Nutritional Subsidy

One of López Obrador's simultaneously most lauded and most disparaged programs has been the nutritional subsidy to seniors. Launched in 2001 as part of the Federal District government's social politics, this effort is based on a concept of social rights. Only approximately 50% of the city's population has social security, putting the other half in a precarious position.⁶ The program "Integral Support for Seniors over the Age of 70" offers Mexico City seniors free medical attention, medication, and public transport, as well as a monthly nutritional subsidy, thereby providing this sector of the population with at least some of the minimal necessities for life (see GDF 2001).

The program is run through the Health Secretariat, where the necessary staff to oversee it existed due to previous hiring for family planning projects. In 2001, the city's 1 314 Health Educators completed a house-to-house survey to identify seniors and explain the program. Two years later, 335 498 seniors – approaching the entirety of citizens over the age of 70 in the city – were receiving a monthly grocery voucher for 688 pesos. In November, 2003 the project became law, giving the government of the Federal District the permanent responsibility of assuring that all citizens of the state over the age of 70 receive a daily pension of no less than half the official

⁵ This information is taken from López Obrador's "Alternative Project for a Nation" – which is considered to be his platform for the 2006 presidential election. His project for socioeconomic development in Mexico is largely based on the programs that have been established in the Federal District. According to the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, income and poverty indices have improved somewhat over recent years, but unemployment continues to rise. See CEPAL 2004.

⁶For social security statistics, see INEGI 2000.

minimum wage. According to the Health Secretariat, the initiative has thus far been financed through López Obrador's improved tax collection and an administrative austerity that has included cutting bureaucrats' salaries.⁷

Critics charge that the Seniors' Subsidy is problematical for a number of reasons. They describe it as a hand-out that creates dependency on the state rather than fostering self-motivation; fiscally irresponsible and unaffordable; a clientelistic initiative with the sole purpose of increasing the vote for López Obrador; and poorly planned because it is available to all seniors regardless of need. It is true that the Federal District's debt is rising, but whether this makes social programs such as the nutritional subsidy irresponsible is debatable (I will not enter this ideological dispute here).⁸ López Obrador does not call for the "interventionist, omnipresent, rigid and *vertical*" state of old, but an active one that "favours social initiatives" and establishes a balance between wealthy and poor (López Obrador 2004: 22, italics in original). According to his project, subsidies are not a hand-out from a paternalistic, dependency-creating state, but a necessary resource that allows the underprivileged to compete in the market. The Seniors' Subsidy is available to all because it is a right, not a privilege, and because the administration prefers to spend public funds on the public rather than on creating a bureaucracy to manage eligibility criteria. To be sure, the subsidy program brings the Mayor votes. In fact, it is highly likely that he developed it with this in mind, given his past electoral successes resulting from public spending programs.⁹ Yet, he is giving his electorate what it wants, and is doing so in the framework of what many consider a viable political and economic project.

⁷ Personal interview with Luz María Juárez Vázquez, Coordinator of Senior Citizens Care at the Health Secretariat, Dec. 2, 2004. See also Gobierno Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 2003; Gobierno del Distrito Federal 2003a and 2003b. For information on improved tax collection, see, for example, Elia Baltasar, "Aumenta 15% la recaudación de impuestos", *La Jornada*, Nov. 30, 2002.

⁸ For recent Federal District debt figures, see Laura Gomez Flores, "\$42 mil 310 millones, deuda del GDF en 2004", *La Jornada*, Feb. 7, 2005.

⁹ For López Obrador's personal and political history, see Trelles and Zagal 2004.

Nonetheless, there are issues related to López Obrador's politics that merit further discussion. First, it appears that programs other than the nutritional subsidy that fall into the Health Secretariat's budget are suffering while expenditures for the food vouchers rise. One journalist pointed out that the vouchers, which give senior citizens and their families a direct monthly reminder of López Obrador's good deeds, are prioritized over funding for necessary training of hospital staff and public medical care.¹⁰ However, public accounts suggest that health care spending has been increased across almost all rubrics under the López Obrador administration, until 2003 (see appendix 1). The Federal District's budget is an interesting topic for analysis, but does not directly concern us here.

Second, whether or not the Seniors' Subsidy is intentionally clientelistic, the culture of gratitude makes it so. As López Obrador is said to preach, "love with love is paid". In addition, while the Mayor attempts to hold himself above the scandals and the fray of factional battles that are rocking his party, he uses the factions' clientelism to his advantage. The turn-out at demonstrations supporting his person and his politics is heavily based on clientelistic mobilization tactics, and it is commonly acknowledged that he might not have won the Federal District had it not been for local caudillo René Bejarano's networks.

The National Democratic Left (Izquierda Democrática Nacional, IDN) (formerly Democratic Left Current, Corriente de Izquierda Democrática, CID) – the "Left within the Left"

The National Democratic Left is the most powerful PRD faction in Mexico City. A description of this group is necessarily a personalized account of René Bejarano, the current's undisputed leader even though he has officially left the party due to his role in the infamous

¹⁰ Personal interview with Carlos Aguila, freelance journalist and author, Nov. 19, 2004.

videoscandals, where he is seen filling his pockets with money provided by businessman Carlos Ahumada.¹¹

René Bejarano and Dolores Padierna, Bejarano's wife, are both teachers who began their political life in the National Union for Educational Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, SNTE) and the Socialist Revolutionary Party (Partido de la Revolución Socialista, PRS). After the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, the couple was among the founding members of the Unique Victims' Committee (Coordinadora Única de Damnificados, CUD) and their efforts to help those left homeless by the disaster led them to establish the Popular Union New Tenochtitlán (Unión Popular Nueva Tenochtitlán, UPNT). This organization sought to acquire land and construct housing, initially for earthquake victims and later more generally for Mexico City residents wanting to own property but lacking the means to acquire mortgages through the banks.

In the Mexican capital, housing is a scarce resource for that 50% of the 20 million inhabitants that are poor.¹² Requirements for mortgages are usually out of reach for these people, so that their only hope for owning property – and thereby bettering their children's living standard – is state-subsidized social housing. Groups such as the UPNT organize individuals wanting to buy homes, in order to represent them in front of the government's housing institute and help them with documents and legal requirements.

As a result of their work with the city's poor, these groups have significant political capital. Those who have gained access to their own home, or other resources such as packages of essential food items or taxi permits, tend to be grateful for the negotiating role played by the

¹¹ The videoscandals erupted in March 2004. Video tapings of illicit activities, including gambling and money laundering, involving several high-ranking PRD politicians were aired on national television, leading to several officials resigning their positions and leaving the party.

¹² For poverty data, see OECD 2004: 52.

organization that represents them. The culture of gratefulness translates into support for organization leaders who become contenders in the political arena or the candidate and party the leaders choose to support.

When Bejarano and Padierna decided to join Cárdenas' National Democratic Front in 1988, and then to become founding members of Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution in 1989, they took full advantage of their housing organization's political capital. Since the couple brought a considerable number of voters into the party with them, they became a negotiating force in party strategies in Mexico City. They continued to build their power base throughout the 1990s, establishing alliances with other housing organizations, workers in the unofficial economy, illegal taxi drivers, and so on. By the time Mexico City's mayor was to be elected rather than appointed for the first time in 1997, it was clear that Bejarano's and Padierna's support would significantly increase the PRD candidate's chances.

In the early years of the party's existence, Bejarano and his wife belonged to the first internal faction, the "Trisect" (Trisecta; see appendix 2). This faction arose as a broad alliance between several of the social organizations that had existed prior to the PRD's foundation and then joined Cárdenas' front. These groups intended to create a radical counter-weight to the reformists led by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, so as to be able to negotiate party strategies and decisions. Rivalries soon led to excisions from the Trisect. Among these were Bejarano and Padierna, who went on to form the Democratic Left Current (Corriente Izquierda Democrática, CID) in 1993 with other party militants, such as Mario Saucedo, Martí Batres, Manuel Oropeza, and Agustín Guerrero. Since this time, new groups such as Saucedo's Civics (Cívicos) have splintered off from the original CID, leaving the faction in Bejarano's hands.

One of the key reasons for the establishment of the Democratic Left was a growing trend in the party of what Padierna calls bureaucratization: a distancing of politicians from their social bases and growing focus on disputing administrative and elected positions rather than the content of programs and policies. Bejarano and others felt this to be a negative development; they also wanted to occupy positions in the party and in government, but did not want to lose touch with the bases.¹³ Not surprisingly, given Bejarano's previous activities in a socialist party, working with the poor, and his strategy of proximity to the masses, his Democratic Left faction attracted social leaders and organizations with a relatively radical political orientation. The CID was to become the Left within the Left. However, this development was not only one of ideologically like-minded activists finding each other in the arena of Mexico's only viable left-wing political party. The faction's growth through the 1990s and early 2000s is largely due to Bejarano's political talent, hard work, and negotiating strategies of sometimes questionable ethics.

Even those who do not count themselves among Bejarano's supporters admit that he is an exceptionally skillful politician. He is a charismatic man who makes his interlocutor feel important, remembers individuals' names after only one meeting, and knows how to bring people into his circle by appealing to their ambitions. One member of Mexico City's Assembly of Representatives who counts himself part of a small group within the Democratic Left that does not unconditionally support Bejarano, describes him as a "psychologist" who "flirts even with men" and has "an ability to figure out how to get to you". Nonetheless, we have to recognize - he says - "that Bejarano was the one who ensured that we, the people, could occupy the spaces of power previously reserved for the perfumed or the Democratic Current's [Cárdenas' group in the PRI] sacred cows".¹⁴

¹³ Personal interview with Dolores Padierna Luna, Dec. 9, 2004.

¹⁴ Confidential interview A with an Assembly Representative, Oct. 25, 2004.

Bejarano's success is not only due to his interpersonal skills and contact with the disadvantaged. He is also a driven, disciplined, and highly organized worker. Over the years of his political activity, he has supposedly kept a personal who-is-who registry of the city's political actors – including favours done and favours owing – giving him a detailed understanding of how the capital functions.¹⁵ He is an able multitasker who rarely refuses audiences, and, during his time as the PRD's whip in the Mexico City Assembly of Representatives, he was the first to arrive at work and the last to leave, making sure that the party agenda was well-organized and his deputies disciplined in their work.

The knowledge of the city built up by Bejarano has served his party well. When the rules for political representation in the Federal District began to be liberalized in 1995 with the open election of neighbourhood representatives, Bejarano saw an opportunity. He proposed that the party penetrate the city by establishing a presence in every neighbourhood and he led this effort – called the Citizens' Movement - using his faction's resources. This strategy not only allowed the PRD to move forward in taking over the PRI's structures in the city (a process begun by social organizations that had depended on the PRI joining the Cardenista movement), but strengthened Bejarano's personal power, since it was his organization that took over the city.

The political and social work done by Bejarano and Padierna has not been strictly altruistic; the couple has also benefited personally. Their establishment in the party's Mexico City hierarchy combined with their work with the poor has allowed them to build alliances based on financial benefits, influence trafficking, and trading political positions for support. Elio

¹⁵ I was told about Bejarano's "little black book" in an interview with one of the leaders of the Popular Front Francisco Villa (confidential interview B, Dec. 8, 2004), which is active in the Democratic Left. Paco Ignacio Taibo II also describes said book ("El pacto con el diablo - Notas sobre la crisis perredista", *La Jornada*, Aug. 14, 2003), cautioning that it may be an urban legend. However, he writes that he has seen Bejarano take notes in such a book. In my interview with Dolores Padierna (Dec. 9, 2004), she referred to a similar book, in which she had made detailed notes, among other things of the Democratic Left's strategy leading up to the March 2005 internal party elections and the 2006 presidential election.

Bejarano, René's brother, is also an Assembly member for the PRD and Antonio Padierna, Dolores' brother, is General Director for Judicial Matters and Government in the municipality of Azcapotzalco. Antonio, Ana María, and Dolores Padierna and René Bejarano have been denounced as the orchestrators of fraud numerous times. They are accused of misusing funds paid to their housing organization by families saving to own a home; unethically benefiting from their organization by contracting their own construction company; ignoring safety standards in the construction of buildings, leading to fissures in walls and dangers of cave-ins; and receiving funding from the PRI. René Bejarano and Dolores Padierna have also both been accused of misusing their respective positions as President of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District and Delegate for the municipality of Cuauhtémoc (Padierna is now a federal Congresswoman) for financial gain. Finally, Bejarano has lost his position in the Assembly and is currently in prison as a result of the March 2004 videoscandals.¹⁶

After the videoscandals, the name of the faction was changed to National Democratic Left. Ostensibly, this was done to give the current a more national character – it may be the most powerful force in the party within Mexico City, yet its presence at the national level is weak – but the change was probably just as much an attempt to dissociate the group from the scandals. The official leader of the National Democratic Left is Javier Hidalgo, an ex-leader of the once powerful Neighbourhood Assembly (Asamblea de Barrios) who has been a member of various party factions and has acted as an Assembly representative for the PRD.¹⁷ However, Padierna claims that Hidalgo is only a figurehead. Decisions, she says, are made by a coordinating council that includes her, Batres, and various other individuals who have been key operators for the

¹⁶ See *La Crisis* April 5 and April 20, 2004; *La Jornada* Feb. 6 and Oct. 24, 2001; *Día* February 28, 2003; *unomásuno* July 25, 2001; *La Jornada* March 4, 2004; *Contenido* Oct. 2004; Sánchez 2001: 60-62.

¹⁷ The Asamblea de Barrios was formed in the aftermath of the 1985 earthquakes by a number of pre-existing housing organizations that banded together, creating an influential social movement.

faction.¹⁸ Despite this assertion, it is widely thought that Bejarano continues to direct his current, albeit from prison.

In fact, Bejarano is criticized for the tough line taken inside the Democratic Left, which is far from democratic. Decisions are made by the leader and then passed down through the ranks. Discipline is essential and support of Bejarano is expected to be absolute. These practices, and allegations of fraud, have led to a split inside the faction. One group is composed of Bejarano's unconditional supporters, while a second – headed by Martí Batres, López Obrador's sub secretary of government – is somewhat critical of the current's leader. The Batres team claims to work within legal boundaries and function democratically. Nonetheless, the Batres family (Martí and his two sisters, who are active in the PRD as well) have also been accused of fraud for their social housing activities as well as the “Betty Milk” scandal (Sánchez 2001: 64 and 1999: 83).¹⁹ In addition, the Democratic Left includes a number of more or less independent members; social leaders or PRD militants who have entered alliances with the faction in order to gain access to a political position. A good example of how the faction operates in relations with its social organization partners is the Popular Front Francisco Villa (Frente Popular Francisco Villa, FPFV, or “Panchos”).

The Popular Front Francisco Villa

The idea of forming the Popular Front Francisco Villa (Frente Popular Francisco Villa, FPFV, the “Panchos”) arose in 1988 when people who had been ejected from their homes in the south of the city by the government found refuge in the Faculty of Political and Social Science of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,

¹⁸ Personal interview with Dolores Padierna, Dec. 9, 2004.

¹⁹ The “Betty Milk” scandal refers to PRD (Bejaranist) politicians selling contaminated milk to poor people at one third of commercial prices, in return for affiliation to the party, in 1999.

UNAM). The FPFV was formally established on February 12, 1989 as a broad front of social organizations demanding decent housing for Mexico City's poor. Its primary principles were independence from the government as well as from political parties, and unified action combined with organizational liberty for all affiliated groups. As the Front started to function, it became apparent that its members needed not only housing, but also urban services, health care, education, and employment. The association thus began to also organize street vendors and illegal taxi drivers, trying to protect these people's right to work. All of these demands combined translated into the call for an alternative political project for the country. As such, the Front's mission became the "construction of socialism", including expropriation of property and control of the state apparatus by the people, based on a Marxist-Leninist concept of democratic centralism (FPFV 2003: 5-9).

The Popular Front is controlled by a National Political Commission (Comisión Política Nacional) comprising six people who were either original leaders of the Front or became trusted friends in subsequent years. Commission make-up changes little, if at all; it is this group with the addition of one long-time companion that makes decisions, including who will head the various housing projects and integrate the National Political Council (Consejo Político Nacional).²⁰ The latter is an intermediary council where political strategies are discussed and from where decisions and instructions are communicated to the members.²¹ The ultimate head of the Front is Alejandro López Villanueva, the key figure in the organization from its genesis.

Due to their activities of publicly supporting poor people's demands and openly opposing the authoritarian government, the Panchos were often heavily repressed by police and military.

²⁰ When I asked Enrique Cárdenas - one of the National Political Commission members - how one becomes a leader in the organization, he and his companions laughed. One commented, "you're born there, aren't you? Or you inherit it." Personal interview with Enrique Cárdenas, Oct. 1, 2004.

²¹ The FPFV's organic structure is mapped out in its IV Congress documents (FPFV 2000: 37-45), but works a little differently in practice.

Some went to prison, some were killed, and many had to live underground. Luis, a Technical Consultant and Social Director for the Front, explains that he and his partner have been together for many years, but that they only recently dared to have a child. Before, he says, you never knew what was going to happen to us. It was not safe to have children.²² Alfonso, one of the Panchos' inner circle, gives similar reasons for the group not having kept detailed records of activities and membership over the years: these could have fallen into the wrong hands and been used for reprisals.²³

In 1997, the Panchos joined the Party of the Democratic Revolution. The leaders reasoned that continuing their clandestine struggle would complicate satisfaction of members' demands, while joining the PRD's election bid for mayor of Mexico City was a possibility to advance the country's democratic project and Front members' specific needs. Since the PRD is more an agglomeration of leftist social and political groups than a tightly organized party, it was relatively easy for the Front to fit in without having to alter its own structure, although a group that chose not to participate in the political alliance broke away and is now called the Independent FPFV. Joining the Democratic Left Current was an obvious choice, since its political discourse most closely resembled the Panchos'. In return for their support, the Panchos have been guaranteed one representative in the city Assembly. That is, a given number of the party's candidates for Assembly positions will be from the Democratic Left, according to internal negotiations, and the Front is assured a spot on this list. Some organizations that are smaller than the Panchos have similar agreements with the Bejaranists, a fact which has led to discussions among Front leaders of joining another current where more political positions – commensurate

²² Personal conversation with Luis Rendón Valle, Sept. 28, 2004.

²³ Personal conversation with Alfonso Torres, Sept. 30, 2004.

with the Front's membership size - could be negotiated. While this debate has not been serious, it points to the alliance with the Democratic Left being more pragmatic than ideological.

The Front has had two consecutive Assembly Representatives, both members of the Front's Political Commission and both as the head of the Assembly's Housing Commission. Ties with the PRD and heading the Housing Commission have certainly benefited the Panchos' membership, which now receives subsidies more easily.²⁴ The FPFV has, in general, come a long way. It has succeeded in building social housing for thousands of the poorest families in Mexico City, and prides itself on constructing more spacious apartments than the state. Its leaders live well and drive new cars. However, it is unclear whether the Panchos have used their positions in the party and the legislative arena to work toward the more long-term political changes they espouse. In its years under a Front president, the Housing Commission has not changed its rather chaotic approach to urban planning to a more comprehensive style one might expect from members of an organization that calls for better services. As for the presence of Front leadership elements in the Democratic Left, it appears not to have had any positive impact on the faction's - or the Front's - internal democracy.

As mentioned above, in order for a social organization leader to obtain a position within the party administration or on its electoral candidacy list, he or she must guarantee political support for the chosen faction. In the Panchos' case, members' obedience to the rules is strictly enforced.²⁵ People join the FPFV because they want to purchase their own home, but in order to eventually take possession of their property - a process that takes, on average, eight to ten years - they must do much more than save for the down payment. They must participate in many hours of the organization's own, as well as the party's, work and events. Involvement is controlled by

²⁴ Ella Grajeda, "Beneficiario perredistas con créditos de vivienda", *El Universal*, Jan. 16, 2005, Ciudad, pg. 2.

²⁵ It should be noted that the FPFV is an extreme case in terms of the discipline it expects of its members. However, its methods are replicated by similar organizations, almost without exception.

leaders and other members; those who neglect their duties are fined and may not receive their apartment, regardless of how much they have already paid toward it. The Front has somewhere between ten and fifteen thousand members (the exact figure is hard to pin down since there are no formal records and each leader will give a different number) who are obligated to attend PRD demonstrations and elections. This assures a solid stand point from which to negotiate with the faction.

People saving for a home with the Front generally live on the land where the building is to be erected even before construction begins. The organization either buys or simply invades a suitable piece of property and its members then build a camp (campamento) of small stone, cardboard, wood, and corrugated metal houses, depending on what materials they can find and afford. Many projects are autoconstruction, meaning that the community is responsible for digging water lines and branching electricity, cleaning and leveling the site, and tearing down and re-assembling their temporary shelters in order to clear the way for the new structure. Since the progression of such undertakings is notoriously slow, the camp often remains in place for many years. Critics claim that the Front deliberately brakes advancements because it is in the leaders' political and financial interest to have as large as possible a group of members at all times. Indeed, requirements are so extensive that some members become weary and choose to withdraw.

Until the moment the new owners take possession of their apartment, they are a captive resource for the Front. They must attend the organization's meetings every Sunday, do community work during the week, pay weekly quotas to the leaders, and participate in political events.²⁶ Attendance at all of these activities is recorded by the leaders and those who are absent pay a fine. In addition, points are given for participation, so that when a building is finally constructed, those with the most points are the first to choose their apartment. Leaving the Front,

²⁶ For an account of the PPFV, see also *Contenido* Oct. 2004.

if one tires of the system, is also difficult. Saving for the down payment is not done in individual accounts, but on a group basis. People who give up may lose the money they have already put aside because the leaders will simply ignore their requests for repayment and even those who succeed after persisting for several years are unlikely to receive the full amount owing. Asked about democracy inside the Front, Manuel Ramos, one of the leaders, caustically replies, “if you let democracy in there’s no way to control things anymore. The media makes it look like repression, but how else are you supposed to get anything done?”²⁷ The problem, according to Ramos and many others working in social housing organizations, is that people are conformist. They become accustomed to living in the camps because they do not pay rent or utilities and it is difficult to convince them to save their meager incomes for a down payment, mortgage installments, and other bills. Thus, it is felt, if the organization members are not pressured to work on the project, it may never advance.

In a PRD affiliation campaign leading up to the March 2005 elections to the party’s national and state executive committees, all Front members were required to join the party. Photocopies were taken of everyone’s electoral credential and these were then used to fill out party membership forms.²⁸ Those responsible for this task were told to “use their ingenuity” for entering the affiliates’ signatures on the forms. This work was done by Front administrative staff or Political Council members; individuals well acquainted with all of the members in their groups and, therefore, able to ensure that everyone provided their credential. The forms were then uploaded to the party register *en masse* by internet, despite this kind of activity being contrary to party regulations. Problems arose when the technical team inside the party created a type of

²⁷ Personal conversation with Manuel Ramos, Sept. 28, 2004.

²⁸ The populace tends to have electoral credentials since these cards function as identification in general and are necessary to perform all manner of transactions. In the Federal District, the electoral registry covers approximately 95% of the voting-age population, and 96% of this group has electoral credentials. See IFE 2003; IFE 2004.

firewall that would allow only three affiliations to be done from any one computer terminal. However, a Democratic Left faction insider in a key position in the State Executive Committee suggested that the Front simply provide him with a compact disk containing the relevant data, and he would take care of adding it to the register.

Such tactics are employed in order for the Democratic Left to have the largest percentage of party members in the city's various municipalities, and, therefore, to gain an advantage in internal elections. One reason for this is to have an advantage in the elections for State Councilors, who, in turn, elect the State Executive Committee and send delegates to the State and National Congress, where key decisions affecting party life are made. A second, and more important, reason is to fortify the faction's power base inside the party. Decisions regarding candidacies and statutes are ostensibly made by state and national congresses, where the membership is able to vote. In practice, however, outcomes are negotiated by the most powerful elements in the party. A faction representative present at one FPFV meeting explained, "at the last [National] Congress, we were all waiting in the auditorium, while in a little room upstairs eight guys were dividing the party up between themselves; we need to be in the little room, not in the auditorium".²⁹ Thus, the immediate project is to win internal elections, not popular elections, with the aim of making the Democratic Left a faction with power on the national stage and preventing the more conservative elements from taking over the party.

²⁹ FPFV meeting, Sept. 28, 2004. I witnessed the same practice at a Dec. 3, 2004 National Council meeting. The meeting had been called for 10:00 AM, but councilors stood waiting outside the auditorium until 1:00 PM, while party powerbrokers were ensconced in a room apart. When the official meeting finally began, it was marked by the atmosphere common at large PRD encounters: factions sit together, few listen to the speaker, some come equipped with banners to protest deals from which they have been excluded, and people come and go. Here, the objective appears to be seeing and being seen, as well as meeting and making deals with associates, rather than engaging in the formal business of the meeting at hand, since it is well known that matters of importance have already been resolved (or postponed) by those present in the private room.

This, then, is the foundation of the Democratic Left's mobilizational power in Mexico City. The Bejaranists negotiate with the city administration – in this case, López Obrador - based on their knowledge of and power in the city. They are said to support López Obrador unconditionally, but this backing does not come without a price: Bejarano was López Obrador's personal secretary from 2000 to 2003 and was considered the latter's most likely successor as mayor.³⁰ The same type of bargaining occurs between social organizations and the Bejaranists. Social leaders trade cooperation - their adherents' vote and turn-out at demonstrations - for political positions and preferred access to subsidies. The bases, in turn, participate in rallies and marches, shout slogans, carry banners, and vote according to instructions, showing loyalty to their leaders in the hope that the latter will negotiate resources for them.

Two cautionary notes must be made. First, the above is not to say that the socialist political discourse espoused by the faction and the social organizations allied with it is entirely empty. Many – though not all – of these political and social leaders faithfully believe in a leftist project that will put an end to malnutrition, unemployment, poverty, and the masses' political powerlessness. However, their methods for realizing this project may be questionable. Second, many, or most, of those who attend demonstrations for López Obrador because their organization requires them to do so, support their mayor and sympathize with the PRD at any rate. Therefore, the size of political meetings may be artificially inflated, but the underlying backing probably is not.

³⁰ The mayor of Mexico City is elected, but López Obrador's popularity is so overwhelming (approval ratings hover around 80%) that whomever he supports as a candidate is almost sure to win.

The New Left (Nueva Izquierda, NI, the “Chuchos”) – “The Right within the Left”

The New Left is known as the “Chuchos”, a colloquial form of the name Jesús that both of the faction’s national leaders, Senator Jesús Ortega and Jesús Zambrano, carry. This faction is the opposite of the Democratic Left in structure, strategy, and discourse. The Bejaranists’ power is rooted in Mexico City’s streets, the mobilization of the poor, and a language of socioeconomic equality for all citizens. The Chuchos, on the other hand, are the strongest national faction, but have a much weaker territorial penetration. Their tactic for dominating inside the PRD has been one of taking over the party’s apparatus and disseminating their ideas from this position, rather than having the largest social base and thereby gaining access to the structure. The Chuchos’ rhetoric is one of social democracy, negotiation with all of the country’s political forces, using globalization to Mexico’s advantage rather than fighting it, equality of opportunity for all citizens, and institutionalization of the party.

Both Zambrano and Ortega were active in the Mexican Socialist Party (Partido Mexicano Socialista, PMS) prior to 1988 and then joined Cárdenas’ National Democratic Front. In the early years of the PRD, that were marked by an internal dispute between Cárdenas, who called for a strategy of intransigence with the Salinas government, and Muñoz Ledo, who called for negotiation, both Chuchos were in the reformist camp. Under the leadership of Muñoz Ledo, this camp became the Rainbow (Arco Iris) faction in 1993, but it survived only one year before splintering into four sub-groups (see Reveles 2004: Appendix 4; Espinoza et.al. 2003; Sánchez 1999: 79). One of these groups began to consolidate around Ortega and Zambrano. With Ortega as General Secretary of the party from 1996 to 1999 and Zambrano in the same position from 1999 to 2002, the Chuchos were able to strengthen their presence in the party structure. The New Left was formally constituted at a 1999 congress in the city of Tlaxcala, “with the aspiration

of not being a pressure group, but a group that makes policies; we have been the only current to have a publication [*nueva izquierda* magazine] and to make political and legislative propositions at every Congress”, says Jesús Zambrano.³¹

Despite the two Chuchos, with Carlos Navarrete – current secretary general of the PRD’s National Executive Committee – being the central figures in the New Left at the national level, the faction is built around an extensive group of state and municipal *caudillos* (strongmen). The faction has become the strongest in the national party structure through negotiations and agreements with various political leaders in their own right, either already PRD members or sympathizers, or simply individuals with the ability to win elections under the New Left banner. The Chuchos are well-organized and financed, and are attempting to develop the PRD into an efficient, executive-style party (un partido de cuadros).

Ortega is currently a Senator for the Mexico City district and Zambrano is in the city administration, but neither has much popular presence in the Federal District. The local New Left caudillo is René Arce. Arce’s political origins are in the Workers’ Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, PRT), which refused to join Cárdenas’ National Democratic Front in 1988, instead running its own presidential candidate.³² However, at the time Arce was also leading an Aeroméxico strike and this initiative did cooperate with Cárdenas.³³ In the PRD, Arce and Pedro Peñaloza created the reformist Current for Democratic Reform (Corriente por la Reforma Democrática, CRD) in 1992 to weigh against Cárdenas’ policy of confrontation with the Salinas government, because they felt this could not possibly lead to a democratic transition. This faction then joined the Rainbow coalition in 1993 (Martínez

³¹ Personal interview with Jesús Zambrano, Coordinator for Civil Society Relations and Strengthening in López Obrador’s Mexico City administration, Oct. 27, 2004.

³² On the PRT’s role in the 1988 presidential elections, see Bruhn 1997b.

³³ *La Jornada*, July 3, 2003, www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/jul03/030706/mas-congreso.html

González 2003: 104). Arce has been an activist in Iztapalapa, where he has presided over the municipal PRD committee and served as head of the municipal government (2000-2003). He has also been a secretary of the PRD's State Executive Committee (1989-1994), PRD National Councillor (1993-1996), Assembly Representative (1997-2000), and Federal Congressman (1994-1997, 2003-2006). Arce and his team joined the New Left in 1999.

Due to his activities in Iztapalapa, Arce does have a high level of recognition among the citizenry in that municipality. The same is true of his confidantes Victor Hugo Círiga, present municipal chief in Iztapalapa and Arce's brother, and Silvia Oliva, assembly representative for Iztapalapa and Arce's wife. Ruth Zavaleta, municipal chief in Venustiano Carranza, is also part of Arce's political family.³⁴ This is one of the above-described local political clans that have joined the New Left faction for convenience, rather than being an outgrowth of the faction itself. Nonetheless, there is significant overlap in discourse between the local and national groups. Arce says that the objectives of the New Left are to break with the left's old dogmas; to keep fighting for the have-nots, but to do this through legal means. He explains that long-term change must be constructed through dialogues and a moderate position by a "multiclass" party that protects individual liberties as well as helping the lower class.³⁵

The New Left also places much importance on institutionalizing the internal life of the PRD.

We take very seriously the dissolution of the currents, we reject any simulation, we demand strict compliance with the statutes and we struggle for the establishment of an institutional life with governability and respect for the rights of all militants. We aim for the collective reflection, the analysis, the debate, the construction of a plural and diverse party whose challenge it is to

³⁴ That Zavaleta is Arce's extra-marital partner is a well-established political rumour.

³⁵ Personal interview with René Arce, Federal Congressman and PRD Deputy Whip in the National Congress, Oct. 26, 2004.

have in its interior the democratic life for which it has fought so hard (Nueva Izquierda 2004: 1, my translation).

According to Arce, his group tries to reinforce this type of politics through education and democratic procedures. Courses on democratic culture, the political projects of the major Mexican parties, leadership, and so on, given at Arce's Foundation for Metropolitan Studies, are intended to teach citizens – and New Left members – to view politics with a critical eye. As a result, they should be less likely to blindly follow a charismatic leader, instead learning to foment discussion and mutual decision-making. To develop democratic customs in the party, Arce is ostensibly starting by instituting these within his own faction. Leadership of the New Left in the city is cooperative. There is a board of directors made up of those faction members in official positions: local assembly representatives, federal congress people, secretaries of the State Executive Committee, and municipal chiefs. The board prepares documents and makes proposals that are voted on in meetings with forty district representatives, who are elected by assemblies in various areas of the city.

Yet, despite the discourse to the contrary, this faction also reproduces – willfully – the traditional Mexican politics of clientelist links surrounding a charismatic leader. The Foundation for Metropolitan Studies has contracted important national political personalities to hold conferences and give seminars; however, there is no requirement for faction members to partake in these. In fact, the only obligation of members toward the Foundation appears to be contributing funds. Arce claims that elected officials and bureaucrats who militate in the New Left are all affiliates of the Foundation and willingly cooperate with it by paying into its accounts.³⁶ He says that approximately 180 000 pesos are taken in monthly from these donations. According to news reports, there are complaints from employees in New Left-run

³⁶ Personal interview with René Arce, Oct. 26, 2004; *esmas*, Aug. 24, 2004.

municipalities that they are compelled to surrender 10% of their biweekly pay cheques to the Foundation.³⁷ Others have said that the Foundation is nothing more than a front for Arce's private campaign kitty.

Accounts of democracy in Arce's New Left are also not entirely positive. While it is said that, unlike the Bejaranists, the Chuchos allow room for internal debate, it is nonetheless clear that decisions are made by the leaders and the rank and file are expected to fall into line. As one member of Arce's inner circle said, the NI "is caudillismo with an anti-caudillista rhetoric".³⁸ One of the New Left's forty district representatives in Mexico City explains that decisions in the faction are made by Arce and communicated to elected officials from the NI, who then convince the bases. She describes Arce as very intelligent for holding large meetings with all faction members every two weeks to debate his proposals and strategies, thereby successfully promoting himself, while none of the attending members ever make an intervention.³⁹ In order to move up through the faction's ranks, she reveals, one needs not only to work hard, but to have a good relationship with Arce and the current's congress people and assembly representatives. "To get ahead, you need the support of those with power". This formula has worked to her advantage, since she was given the position of district representative by her Assembly Representative. She had known and worked with the Representative for many years, so when Arce asked him to choose three coordinators, she was selected. Although the district representatives' work is to organize events and report on their territories for the New Left, their salaries are paid by the Assembly Representative, using resources given him by the City Assembly.⁴⁰

³⁷ David Santa Cruz Negrete, "Inicia René Arce precampaña rumbo a jefatura de DF en 2006", *La Crisis*, Jan. 19, 2005.

³⁸ Confidential interview C, Oct. 19, 2004.

³⁹ I witnessed this atmosphere at a New Left meeting on Oct. 22, 2004. Arce presented several options for running an election or opinion poll in the faction to decide whether he or Ortega should be the faction's candidate for the party presidency. He signaled the alternative he preferred and then asked for opinions. None were given.

⁴⁰ Confidential interview D, Oct. 27, 2004.

As explained above, the New Left as a whole does not function based on the two Chuchos' leadership; rather, it is a conglomeration of state-level, regional, and sometimes even municipal caudillos. In Mexico City, a new split has developed due to Arce's personalized political leadership. The "Historics of the New Left" (Históricos de la Nueva Izquierda), are a group of long-time PRD militants in the city, including Jorge Martínez, Ruth Martínez, José Luis Morales, Francisco Parrillo, and Daniel Ordoñez. They recently formed the Broad Democratic Front (Frente Amplio Democrático, FAD), with which they intend to redevelop closer relations between the party and social struggles, as well as to counteract Arce's *caudillismo*. Of course, strong links with social movements are not part of the New Left language, and Ortega has encouraged the FAD not to return to the old style of affiliating organizations to the party, since membership should be individual.⁴¹ Though the motto of the new bloc is to re-emphasize politics in the street over elitist negotiations and the focus of Arce's troupe is to attract a greater variety of interests, including business, the military, and the church, Arce's New Left does work with social organizations.

Senior Citizens' Groups in Iztapalapa

Relations with constituents are constructed clientelistically. While Arce's New Left works with existing organizations - whose demands include housing and potable water (particularly in the municipality of Iztapalapa, which has serious water deficiencies) - it also attracts individuals and forms new groups. Individuals are drawn in in much the same way employed by López Obrador at the state level, through installation of computers at local schools, handing out vouchers for school utensils, and so on. In addition, groups are created with the goal of bringing citizens with similar interests together, in order to have a captive audience for

⁴¹ Personal interview with Senator Jesús Ortega, Nov. 9, 2004.

political propaganda. The faction's political operators canvass neighbourhoods, establishing demographics, and then launch clubs for women, children, youths, and seniors, wherever interest in such associations would be highest.⁴²

María is not only an operator for an assembly representative, she also works as a base committee and as coordinator of senior citizens' groups.⁴³ For the Representative, who pays María's salary, she goes door-to-door in the neighbourhood, passing out leaflets that list the types of transactions (*gestiones*) the Representative and her team perform. The "gestión" is at the heart of Mexico City politics. It describes the arrangements politicians and their operators make to fulfill citizens' needs for electricity, sewage, gutters, legal advice, social events, psychological counseling, and so on. *Gestiones* are what draw the interest of the lower classes to politicians – they want to know what politicians will do for them – and politicians know, or learn, how to use this tool (see Tejera Gaona 2003). These types of services should be provided by municipal governments, but often they do not have enough resources to cover all of their constituents' needs. As a result, there is both an opening and an incentive for politicians to intervene. María says that the work she does of disseminating information on the kinds of transactions that can be carried out is a method for "bringing ourselves closer to the community".

During her visits to homes in her neighbourhood, María also does surveys of the people living there. She asks how many families live in each house, as well as how many children, youths, handicapped, single mothers, and seniors are in the family. Then, when the party gives her propaganda, she knows how many copies she needs, and, when she wants to establish a group, she knows where the target population lives and has already been in contact with them.

⁴² It should be noted that not all of the New Left's operators diligently canvass their territories. This faction is better organized than the Democratic Left, but it is by no means a well-oiled political machine at the local level.

⁴³ Although "María" will be identifiable to those who know her, I have changed her name to protect her privacy. Her story is based on a personal interview on Nov. 4, as well as conversations on Nov. 24 and 27, 2004.

Since her work is with senior citizens, she uses her visits to their homes or chance encounters on the street to begin building trust before she invites them to participate in one of her groups.

María explains that it is essential to show consideration for the elderly because they need to feel important. She tells them that participation in the meetings she organizes will allow them to socialize with people of their own age, to entertain themselves in good company, and to take a break from their families and the problems they might have at home. Having formed her group, María presents herself as the coordinator, asks the people (almost exclusively women between the ages of 50 and 70) what they need, and attempts to inspire their confidence. “With this, you’ve already won them”, she says.

Not all of the people in the troupe will be PRD supporter from the outset, but it is María’s goal to change this. She proudly claims that, if at the first meeting half of the group is not *perredista*, by the end of one month of meetings she will have reduced this fraction to one quarter. Once participants begin to trust her, she invites them to gatherings with the Assembly Representative. Those who already support the party will attend, and some who lean toward other parties or have not defined their adherence will go out of curiosity or simply for entertainment. At such meetings, in their groups, and on an individual basis, María’s people are slowly convinced that the PRD is the best political option for them because it is a leftist party fighting for change and for democracy. In addition, López Obrador’s social programs - such as his subsidies to seniors - are discussed, with the explanation that López Obrador needs the support of their votes to ensure that such programs will endure and will become available across the country. “This is how you start to pull people in and after three or four months, all of them will be with you. You’ve got them in your pocket.”

From this point, María's work becomes easier. At the time of our conversations, her groups total 223 people. On those occasions when her boss asks her to bring a given number of individuals to a political event, she can, therefore, easily count on approximately 150 participants. María describes seniors' motivation to attend such occasions as driven by two factors. First, they consider any gathering to be a party and are happy to be entertained, and, second, they have a commitment to María. They feel obligated to help her because she treats them well, and even if they are *priistas*, they will change their party allegiance for her sake. She fortifies this bond with the use of the municipal government's social services, such as cultural and sports events or support programs. For example, she is inviting children and youth to go to the municipality's free showing of the movie "Shrek 2" on the evening following our interview, in the hope that talk in the home of the events organized will convince the young people's parents to affiliate with the party.

Of course, the government should not be giving special treatment to the PRD, but María declares it to be only logical that a PRD government at the state level would work with PRD governments at the municipal level, and these in turn would work with PRD social organizations. While all municipalities receive comparable resources from the state and all social organizations should be treated equally by the municipality, those with PRD affiliation do receive preferential consideration. Sometimes special treatment simply comes in the guise of receiving information before others, so that, for example, the free movie will mostly benefit *perredistas* because they have early knowledge of the event. However, preference also relates to services.

María tells me that she makes the services provided by the municipal government available to her people. When someone has a problem or needs help with a *gestión*, they come to her, knowing that she will have knowledge of or access to the resources necessary for the

resolution of the issue at hand. Sometimes she helps the reasoning process along. She recounts one experience, where she had hired a bus to take her people to a PRD event, but only a handful of those she expected to participate arrived, leaving the bus largely empty. In order to teach them a lesson, at the next group meeting she brought bags of basic foodstuffs for those members who had attended the event. She does not have the funds to do this regularly, but she does not have to, since the municipal government works similarly. Citizens between the ages of sixty and seventy (those over seventy are in the state level subsidy program) receive a basic foods package from the municipality on a monthly basis. María does not tell me this, but the assistance is not freely available to everyone. Access is restricted to those who attend assemblies of the type held by María, where they are asked to sign in as proof of presence and required to provide formal excuses, such as a doctor's note, for absences.⁴⁴ They must also supply to their leaders photocopies of electoral credentials, senior citizen credentials, and proof of address. María says that the municipality uses these documents for budgetary planning, but insists that they are never drawn on for political purposes, such as party affiliation, without the individuals' permission.

“If I have an adult and I treat them well and I provide them access to the services, their children and the children of their children see this. You're drawing them in too; you're not just getting that person, but their whole family. This is one of the ways that we, as political operators, hold up the party. This is our strategy. This is the strategy of the municipal government of Iztapalapa.” It is much more difficult for those operators who have not formed groups to bring people into the party because it is harder to work on an individual basis. “Forming groups is one of the ways in which we safeguard the party.”

⁴⁴ At one group meeting, I noticed all of the seniors lining up to sign something as they entered the room. Upon my question what this was for, one of the members explained the procedures.

Despite her assertions that she is committed to the PRD, to the New Left, and to working with the elderly, María is not entirely happy with the conditions under which she works. She says the party is struggling to bring about democratic change and that the faction has a good project for bettering conditions – creating equality and security – throughout Mexican society. Hers is a fulfilling job because she helps the community. However, the work with her groups can be exhausting because quarrels break out between members, some individuals abscond with group resources, and she always has seniors following her around. In addition, María has personal ambitions. She would like to move up in the party, and perhaps, one day, to be a candidate for election. This, she explains, is very difficult. She has worked hard in the field to mobilize citizens, but, unfortunately, “those who move up in the party forget about us.” She has been offered positions in the municipal administration, but the Assembly Representative she works for has forbidden her to go because she is needed in the job she is currently doing. If she were to accept the offer despite this prohibition, the Representative might close other doors to her, making it impossible to move around in the party and have access to necessary contacts. If María wants to have a political career, she knows that she has to do it with the Representative: “they are the ones who decide, you can’t do it on your own”. However, the Representative did agree to a pay increase, knowing that María commands enough people to be attractive to other politicians and currents and should therefore be kept content. The moment has not yet come, but María reveals that she may indeed reach the point where she becomes angry enough to find – along with her people – another patron.

The New Left signals Bejarano’s Democratic Left as a highly clientelist and corporatist faction, with few scruples regarding treatment of members or integrity in negotiations and

alliances. Arce's group may use a language of institutionalization, party affiliation on an individual basis, and development of politicized citizens, but in practice it employs methods similar to those of the Bejaranists. The New Left in Mexico City actively constructs social organizations with the aim of linking them to its faction and engages in the PRD's internal wars in the hope of taking control of the party. Key founding members of the party marginalized through the growing power of *caudillos* like Arce and Bejarano, condemn the latter as little more than gangsters who have come to power using the same methods as the PRI. Personalities such as Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Marco Rascón, Francisco Saucedo, and Rosario Robles, the critics are intellectuals or social leaders with high levels of recognition. It is difficult to judge how much their criticism is objective and how much it is tainted by their loss in the battle for power inside the party. To be sure, the secret intrigues, public confrontations in the media, and use of ethically questionable methods to gain control that are commonplace in the PRD today, are not what its founders had envisioned.

Unity and Renovation (Unidad y Renovación, UNyR, the “Roscas”) – “The Centre within the Left”

Unity and Renovation is the least powerful of the three important factions in the Federal District, but maintains a balance between the Democratic Left and the New Left through conjunctural alliances with both. UNyR has its roots in the Trisect and its successor Democratic Left as well as in Heberto Castillo's Current for Democratic Change (Corriente por el Cambio Democrático, CCD). In 1998, Armando Quintero and his supporters broke away from the Democratic Left in order to form the Democratic Left in Advance (Izquierda Democrática en Avance, IDEA) in Mexico City (Borjas 2003: tome 1, 541-5; tome 2, 268). In February 2004, former IDEA members in conjunction with a number of other perredistas formed UNyR. Those

who now count themselves members or sympathizers of UNyR have always been *Cárdenistas*; that is, supporters of Cárdenas' leadership and his policy of intransigence vis-à-vis the PRI's governments. Most of them have also been backers of Rosario Robles, who was seen as one of two possible successors to Cárdenas – the second being López Obrador – until she resigned from the party in 2004. Due to their allegiance to Robles and Cárdenas, the group of militants now known as UNyR was formerly referred to as “Roscas”. Neither of these two figures was ever formally a member of these currents, but both are considered moral leaders and their policies are followed. Thus, when Robles was involved in the videoscandals, UNyR was severely affected.

Almost one year after the scandals, UNyR has still not been publicly constituted, nor has a central leadership been established. According to Carlos Reyes Gámiz, Assembly Representative and among those at the forefront of the new faction, UNyR's leadership is made up of faction members who hold electoral positions. These individuals are influential because they have a territorial presence and social impact.⁴⁵ Reyes Gámiz and other prominent faction members also claim that their group is more a “network of leaderships” than a centralized body. It is composed of high-profile individuals – intellectuals as well as social, union, and political leaders – who all have legitimate power bases of their own, yet see the need to coordinate their actions to stand a chance in the factional fight for candidacies. Outsiders, however, point out that the leadership network image is a result solely of the UNyR's current headlessness. One journalist explains that this faction's structure was as rigid as those of the Democratic Left and the New Left before Robles resigned.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Personal interview with Carlos Reyes Gámiz, President of the Government Commission of the Assembly of Representatives, Dec. 1, 2004.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Alejandra Martínez, who covers the PRD in the Assembly of Representatives for *El Universal*, Nov. 30, 2004.

Unity and Renovation's members come from three main sources. Some of its roots lie in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM). Robles holds a degree in economics from this institution and was on the Executive Committee of its union (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, STUNAM). The current head of the union – Agustín Rodríguez – is among UNyR's leaders, and a number of the faction's members were active in the UNAM's University Students' Council (Consejo Estudiantil Universitario, CEU), famous for its political activism. The faction is also based in the old social left; in the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (Partido Socialista Unificado de México, PSUM), the Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, PST), and the Mexican Socialist Party (Partido Mexicano Socialista, PMS). Finally, UNyR includes several significant social organizations. Congresswoman Clara Brugada represents an important wing of the Popular Revolutionary Union Emiliano Zapata (Unión Popular Revolucionaria Emiliano Zapata, UPREZ), and Congressman Alfonso Ramírez Cuellar, who sympathizes with UNyR, is a national leader of El Barzón.⁴⁷

As the faction's name suggests, its adherents' objectives are to unify and renovate the party's leadership. Inti Muñoz, Congressman and UNyR member, explains that renovation of the PRD is urgent because of the party's organizational crisis, corporatism, and internal power struggle. He cautions that the party cannot "balkanize itself" in this process: uncontrolled internal competition has already made the viability of the party questionable and may lead it to disappear. "The PRD is playing with the rules of the old political culture that we criticized."⁴⁸ Muñoz describes UNyR's ideology as being a mixture of compromise and social vision, in which the social causes that gave life to the party are accentuated and pressed, while dialogue with other

⁴⁷ UPREZ is a popular organization of housing and urban services claimants. El Barzón is a largely middle class organization demanding equitable economic policies.

⁴⁸ Personal interview with Inti Muñoz, Congressman for the Federal District, District 4, Oct. 29, 2004.

interests is also maintained. “Some [the New Left] confuse a ‘modern left’ with a central position that negotiates at all costs, while we don’t see the modern left as one that makes programmatic concessions.” For example, UNyR discusses social and economic alternatives to neoliberalism, including opportunities for peasants, and also emphasizes a renewal of the liberties discourse: minority rights, rights of native peoples, and sexual liberty.

Despite the anti-faction language used by Unity and Renovation allies, this bloc plays the same game as the New Left and Democratic Left. It collaborates with whichever player offers it a better deal, allowing it to increase its power base in the party. In 2003, UNyR was in alliance with the Democratic Left in Mexico City, but the pact disintegrated when the Bejaranists did not hold up their end of the bargain. In 2004, UNyR was working with the New Left in a joined attempt to weaken the Bejaranists in the city, but UNyR also benefited more directly from this relationship. A State Executive Committee Secretary from the New Left painted the following scenario: if the UNyR members of the Committee want to increase their support staff, they discuss this with the New Left and the latter agree to vote in favour of such an increase in the Committee budgetary meeting.⁴⁹ In 2005, the Roscas are once again working with the Bejaranists in the bid for the presidency of the party at the state level.

UNyR members and leaders speak relatively openly about clientelism as an issue in the faction. Juan Guerra points out that this is a result of establishing coordination with regional movements because, in creating such links, the faction automatically harvests the movements’ clientelist practices.⁵⁰ In reality, Unity and Renovation’s clientelism is much more than the haphazard collection of other groups’ methods described by Guerra.

⁴⁹ Personal interview E, Sept. 23, 2004.

⁵⁰ Personal interview with Juan Guerra, Coordinator of Administrative Planning and Modernization in the Municipality of Tlalpan, Dec. 6, 2004.

A Unity and Renovation “Work Group”

Ricardo is Secretary on the State Executive Committee and runs his own team of political operators.⁵¹ He tells me that UNyR is no different from the other factions in trying to position itself in the party; to win enough space to undertake its actions in the way it thinks adequate. Ricardo explains that he works according to two rubrics: one institutional and one group-based. In his institutional work, he acts within the structures of the party and follows national, vertical guidelines in activities such as supporting López Obrador. The group work has little relation to the formal party organization. Every leader inside the party brings his own structure; the people Ricardo works with are *his* team. These are PRD militants and members of UNyR, but more than that, they are operators who work with Ricardo, who benefit from their relation with Ricardo, and who would most likely follow Ricardo, were he to move to another faction. They may even stay with him if he were to change parties and it is assumed that they will support him in any type of election. Ricardo says that it is the work with this group that causes a politician’s personal strength to grow – increasing his political and territorial leadership – while also increasing his faction’s influence.

Building relationships with these “comrades” is done through the above-described *gestiones* (transactions). “You approach the leaders of a neighbourhood to help them with *gestion* and they approach you because you have the ability to help them.” Ricardo is not in a government position where he would have direct access to resources, but other UNyR members and friends are in such positions and with these contacts, “the doors are open”. Once a rapport has been built, the neighbourhood or organization leaders convince their membership to join Ricardo.

⁵¹ “Ricardo’s” name has been changed. His story is based on personal interviews and conversations on Sept. 27, Nov. 26, and Nov. 30, 2004.

Ricardo and his comrades also engage in door-to-door work. He might invite his team to a meeting at which it is then decided to visit citizens at home. On the visits, the team members will offer the citizens services (the above-described *gestion*es), at the same time asking them to affiliate to the party. Later on, when there is some kind of a political action, Ricardo will suggest to his team, “let’s go and ask those people to participate and if they don’t have transportation, we’ll organize buses to take them.”

The other factions accuse UNyR of corporatism and clientelism because of these kinds of activities, but Ricardo disagrees. He sees his work as a support for necessary transactions and for the people who need transportation. “The people want to help you anyway, you’re just making it easier for them. The key is that when some, despite the help you’ve given them, don’t want to support you, you don’t stop working to help them.” Ricardo claims that the work he does is for the benefit of all citizens, not just for those who return the favour, and he insists that he does not obligate anyone to support him. Instead, he convinces groups and individuals to join him in a friendlier manner: “you keep talking and talking, you give them a t-shirt, you invite them to meetings.” Ultimately, social organizations choose the highest bidder and some even promise to support more than one politician or party, trying to maintain access to all patrons.

Like the New Left and the Democratic Left, Ricardo’s companions work with housing projects and food packages, but they use no pressure. Ricardo reasons, “the people you help will come and support you of their own accord at election time and in meetings, but if you oblige them to do things, when it’s election time, they’ll vote against you.” However, his team works with a Neighbourhood Assembly (*Asamblea de Barrios*) subgroup, and here, he says, leaders do obligate members to pay quotas and participate in political events. Housing claimants pay weekly quotas of approximately five pesos toward something akin to a salary for the leaders. If

they choose to leave the organization, they lose the money already saved for a down payment since money is turned over to the leaders in good faith, without formal receipts. In this particular case, it is as Juan Guerra indicated: UNyR is picking up its associate's practices. Nonetheless, Ricardo and his team are also benefiting from their own use of such methods, including mass affiliation strategies.⁵²

Jorge has known Ricardo for many years, but began working with him as a political operator in 2003.⁵³ He initially helped out on an electoral campaign for Ricardo, and was then offered a more permanent position on the team. Since Ricardo's sister is one of the directors of the PRD's National Council, Ricardo "owns" some of the Council support staff positions and was able to offer Jorge a job. This occupation allows Jorge to help the team from two perspectives: first, as staff for the Council directors, he has the advantage of access to the newest information on what is happening in the party and can pass this on to his UNyR comrades. "Officially, it shouldn't be like this," Jorge admits, "but it doesn't cost me anything to do it." Second, he has a good deal of spare time since the National Council does not meet very often, allowing him to organize social groups on the side.

Ricardo has provided Jorge a space in which to work. That is, Ricardo makes Jorge a recognized operator, allowing him to maneuver without risk of pressure from other *perredistas* who see him as moving in on their territory. In return, Jorge has to bring in votes. Prior to his current job, he worked with a city-wide organization of housing claimants, an experience that serves him well in his current activities. He has been able to put together a number of housing groups for Ricardo's team in the municipalities of Cuauhtémoc and Iztapalapa. Here, he helps

⁵² At a meeting of Ricardo's team on Nov. 26, 2004, a discussion on how to overcome the problem of not being able to do mass-affiliations over the internet due to the party's technological firewall ended in general laughter when someone pointed out that I was making note of the discussion and that my book would have to be confiscated.

⁵³ "Jorge's" name has been changed to protect his privacy. The paragraphs recounting his experience are based on personal interviews and conversations on Nov. 26 and 29, 2004.

social housing claimants get their documentation and savings in order, so that the state government will give them credit to build apartments. In the course of his meetings with the claimants, he requests that they participate in PRD events and vote for the party.

Jorge has his doubts about asking the people he helps to get involved in the PRD, even though he claims not to control whether they do, in fact, take part. “I wonder whether this is clientelistic anyway because they *feel* obligated.” Members of his organizations are required to go to the necessary institutions to process housing-related matters and they have a certain duty to attend political protests or demonstrations related to social housing. However, it is not at all mandatory that they vote in internal party elections. Jorge invites them to affiliate to the party and to vote, but they are free to decide whether they will do so or not. “But, here is where I am uncertain, because it could be that, even though they’re cool with going, it could be that they feel obligated.” In fact, Jorge confesses to knowing that they feel obligated.

This is not the way the party should work; Jorge feels that the PRD should truly represent the working class, rather than using it for personal power gain. Unfortunately, since the party won the Federal District in 1997 and thereby gained access to government resources, its politics in the city have revolved around “work with me and we’ll do business [hacer chamba], to the degree that all leaders are now buying consciences [...] Now, in the party, everything works in function of, ‘what will you give me if I go with you’. It’s political prostitution.” Despite his misgivings, Jorge continues to be active in the PRD because it is the only party that at least attempts to better the working class’ standard of living. Yet, his reasoning is not purely altruistic. When I ask Jorge whether he would change party allegiance if Ricardo did so, he replies that he is in UNyR because of his relationship with Ricardo and leaving the faction or the party due to his friend would be a possibility, but he would have to “see what the options are”.

In sum, Unity and Renovation functions much the same as the Democratic Left or the New Left. Those at the forefront of UNyR may pretend that their faction is a network of leaders in their own right who decry the corporatist and clientelist practices of the other tribes, but, ultimately, they engage in the same routines. The only conspicuous difference between Unity and Renovation and the New Left on one hand and the Democratic Left on the other may be that the latter has little presence on the national stage. Bejarano's team is able to ensure that Democratic Left members conform to expected behaviour because the faction is territorially confined and resources are restricted to the Federal District. UNyR and the New Left, on the other hand, encompass political and social leaders with a national presence in addition to a series of Bejarano-like characters. Thus, a René Arce (NI) or an Armando Quintero (UNyR) may set the tone for their factions in Mexico City, but do not enjoy full freedom of action inside their tribes.

Conclusions

Life inside Mexico City's PRD is complicated. It is not easy to identify all of the groups and strongmen in the party or to keep track of who is allied with whom and for what reason. The webs of influence and negotiation do, however, underscore two central conclusions: first, activists and politicians from the party's ranks concentrate as much on internal power struggles as on strengthening the party for national and state elections or on legislating. Second, much of the party's current mobilizational and electoral power is based on clientelist relations with citizens.

The section on the Democratic Left discussed its clientelist relations through description of its links with the FPFV, a social organization whose activities precede its alliance with the

PRD. The New Left and UNyR were linked in this chapter to organizations they have created and the section on UNyR describes one of its internal teams. These examples were chosen because they provide an interesting look into each faction, but they could easily be interchanged, as all of the alliances and methods described are used by all of the tribes.

Considering the various relationships inside the currents – between politicians, between team leaders and their operators, between organization leaders and members – and between currents, one can conclude that much of this activity is pragmatic positioning to increase factional and personal power. A difference in discourse appears to mark the factional fights; this difference may once have been (in the early Muñoz Ledo/Cárdenas years) among the reasons for creating currents, but it is not the driving force behind today's battles.

In sum, the city's Mayor, López Obrador, relies on the poor identifying social programs with his person and expressing their gratitude for his generosity through the vote. In addition, he searches for allies in the factions in order to use the tribes' clientelist followings. The Bejaranists, Chuchos, and Roscas have shored up their own power by establishing, and cooperating with, social organizations working with the poor, and then selling their influence with such groups to the Mayor or other powerful individuals. Social organization leaders, in turn, gain political positions and financial advantages from their jobs as brokers between citizens and the party; between voters and those with access to resources. Citizens' view of the clientelistic relations in which they are involved is the subject of another paper.

Appendix 1**Federal District Health Secretariat Expenses (with own and/or fiscal resources), 2000 - 2003***

Classification	Year			
	2000	2001	2002	2003
	<i>(values in thousands of pesos)</i>			
Scholarships to Children of Federal District Government Employees	2,495.8	3,856.1	2,947.9	2,349.2
Training to Public Servants	15,032.9	26,052.1	67,973.5	961.5
Public Medical Care¹	1,745,126.7	2,259,460.8	2,006,938.4	2,034,846.2
Vaccines	25,011.9	55,855.3	30,400.6	31,307.2
HIV-AIDS Prevention and Treatment	2,769.5	6,576.7	7,822.9	46,848.9
Transmittable Disease Prevention and Treatment	692.4	1,644.2	1,063.4	931.0
Disease Prevention and Detection	43,563.3	6,093.6	31,199.5	32,277.6
General External Consultation	70,352.4	146,055.2	309,548.8	279,372.1
Specialized External Consultation	142,998.8	187,872.9	302,896.3	330,166.7
Legal Medical Care	41,056.0	52,572.4	72,208.9	74,740.9
General Specialized Hospitalization	1,418,682.4	1,518,754.4	1,061,159.3	1,222,330.5
Pending from Previous Years	-	2,785.3	7,874.3	16,871.3
Free Medication	-	281,250.8	173,658.5	-
Pending from Previous Years	-	-	9,105.9	-
Emergency Care	290,928.6	241,348.2	514,336.1	466,874.5
Family Planning and Health Education	84,670.2	99,465.7	141,605.9	134,871.2
Family Planning Consults	5,545.7	7,096.9	11,926.7	14,441.4
Health Education Talks	9,118.3	9,976.7	42,257.1	35,750.0
Home Visits for Family Health Education	70,006.2	82,392.1	87,422.1	84,679.8
Construction and Maintenance of Buildings and Equipment	30,684.7	53,861.0	63,733.4	59,636.8
Building Maintenance	4,496.8	21,287.0	17,111.0	10,249.3
Building Renovation	-	-	-	-
Equipment	-	-	1,698.9	907.3
Equipment Maintenance	26,187.9	32,382.2	43,353.2	46,433.2
Building Construction	-	-	-	-
Pending from Previous Years	-	191.8	1,570.3	2,047.0
Senior Citizens Social Care²	-	1,213,033.2	2,061,291.1	2,545,480.8
Miscellaneous Care to Senior Citizens and Persons with Scarce Resources	-	-	1,500.0	2,716.0
Liconsa Milk Subsidy³	-	65,856.0	137,343.7	141,543.3
Preinvestment Studies for Construction and Maintenance	-	-	495.3	-
Total Spending	2,168,938.9	3,962,933.1	4,998,165.3	5,389,279.5

* Table elaborated using information from the Federal District Finance Secretariat's Annual Budgets.

¹ The Public Medical Care Rubric includes medical care and medication provided to senior citizens.

² Senior Citizens Social Care refers to the nutritional subsidy.

³ Liconsa Milk is a federally funded program giving children of families with scarce resources access to milk at lower than market prices.

Federal District Expenses on items in which the Health Secretariat shares, 2000 - 2003*

Classification	Year			
	2000	2001	2002	2003
	<i>(values in thousands of pesos)</i>			
Scholarships to Children of Federal District Government Employees	23,741.4	22,472.4	24,048.5	27,961.3
Training to Public Servants	73,716.1	62,935.1	102,433.6	31,770.7
Public Medical Care¹	2,509,240.5	3,217,191.3	3,521,786.7	3,822,064.0
Vaccines	219,968.0	307,983.2	274,795.0	288,615.5
HIV-AIDS Prevention and Treatment	12,714.2	21,218.8	22,962.2	170,817.3
Transmittable Disease Prevention and Treatment	52,560.4	23,908.7	23,351.6	51,194.7
Disease Prevention and Detection	103,392.3	102,933.1	127,252.3	126,152.9
General External Consultation	360,265.2	503,026.0	1,144,996.9	1,159,880.5
Specialized External Consultation	239,319.2	292,765.6	494,091.7	546,814.2
Legal Medical Care	41,056.0	52,572.4	72,208.9	74,740.9
General Specialized Hospitalization	1,479,965.2	1,628,747.4	1,171,489.4	1,329,113.7
Diarrhoea and Cholera Control	-	-	-	-
Pending from Previous Years		2,785.3	7,874.3	74,734.3
Free Medication		281,250.8	173,658.5	
Pending from Previous Years			9,105.9	
Emergency Care	303,303.3	256,088.7	530,073.6	483,726.8
Family Planning and Health Education	99,217.5	126,686.3	172,324.0	164,379.5
Family Planning Consults	9,394.8	21,071.9	27,001.4	30,710.1
Health Education Talks	19,471.4	22,858.6	57,900.5	48,282.3
Home Visits for Family Health Education	70,351.3	82,755.8	87,422.1	85,387.1
Construction and Maintenance of Buildings and Equipment	179,741.6	131,207.2	164,548.1	87,415.2
Building Maintenance	30,084.6	42,869.2	72,129.6	15,289.4
Building Renovation	32,473.8	-	-	-
Equipment	77,488.1	47,429.9	41,328.3	19,970.2
Equipment Maintenance	32,834.2	38,971.3	47,596.6	50,108.6
Building Construction	6,860.9	1,745.0	-	-
Pending from Previous Years	-	191.8	3,493.6	2,047.0
Sanitary Control and Regulation	-	-	12,901.2	
Rabies Vaccines for Animals	-	-	12,901.2	-
Studies	-	-	-	-
Sanitary Verification	-	-	-	-
Senior Citizens Social Care²		1,213,033.2	2,061,291.1	2,545,480.8
Miscellaneous Care to Senior Citizens and Persons with Scarce Resources		-	1,500.0	2,716.0
Licons Milk Subsidy³		65,856.0	137,343.7	141,543.3
Preinvestment Studies for Construction and Maintenance				-
Total Spending	3,188,960.4	5,095,470.2	6,728,250.5	7,307,057.6

* Table elaborated using information from the Federal District Finance Secretariat's Annual Budgets.

¹ The Public Medical Care Rubric includes medical care and medication provided to senior citizens.

² Senior Citizens Social Care refers to the nutritional subsidy.

³ Licons Milk is a federally funded program giving children of families with scarce resources access to milk at lower than market prices.

Appendix 2

Please see Excel file.

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