

“Muy buenas noches”

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“Muy buenas noches”

MEXICO, TELEVISION, AND THE COLD WAR

Celeste González de Bustamante

FOREWORD BY RICHARD COLE



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To Héctor and Claire

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Foreword

RICHARD COLE

ANYONE WHO knows the slightest bit about television in Latin America knows that Televisa is a cultural, political, and economic force that wields tremendous power in Mexico and the hemisphere. Over the second half of the twentieth century, Grupo Televisa became the most profitable and influential media conglomerate in the Spanish-speaking world. For decades its *telenovelas* (home-grown soap operas) have been exported to more than one hundred countries. People from as far away from Mexico as the former Yugoslavia claim to have learned to speak Spanish by watching the famed 1980s dramatic series starring Veronica Castro, *Los ricos también lloran* (The rich also cry). Yet there is still much to be learned about how this company and those who created it were able to emerge as an authority that now rivals the state and other institutions as one of the nation's most influential cultural and political entities.

The casual Spanish-language media consumer might have heard of Televisa, but he or she surely would not know how the company rose to rival Mexico's most powerful political institutions. That's because little has been published from a historical perspective about the media conglomerate, especially in English. What did viewers watch during the earliest years of television? What subjects did television news executives and reporters think viewers should watch? What topics remained offscreen and why? How did North American companies influence the medium and programming? These are just a few of the lines of inquiry Celeste González de Bustamante untangles and answers in "*Muy buenas noches*."

These questions became of paramount importance in the fall of 1968, when foreign reporters and photographers converged on Mexico for the nineteenth Olympiad, the first, and to date, only Olympics held in Latin America. As politicians and media executives attempted to put the country's brightest and most modern face forward, authoritarian whims led to mass murder in a Mexico City plaza, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of students and bystanders. Etched into the collective memory of its citizens, the massacre of the Plaza de las Tres Culturas (Plaza of Three Cultures) at Tlatelolco stands as one of the nation's greatest tragedies as well as a watershed moment when civil society began to sprout and help move the nation slowly away from the strong hand of one-party rule. At that critical juncture the visions of state officials and television executives diverged, leading to a call for nationalization of the industry. Back in the 1960s when I worked for a while on *The News*, the English-language newspaper in Mexico City, Telesistema Mexicano was the octopus of Mexican mass communication. González de Bustamante's observations on Telesistema Mexicano and the political climate during that turbulent period are right on.

"*Muy buenas noches*" focuses on the history of television news from 1950 to 1970, which tells the story of Mexico and its citizens during a crucial time in the nation's development and in the midst

of Cold War international turmoil, marked by events such as Fidel Castro's takeover of Havana in 1959 and humankind's first walk on the moon in 1969. It's an epic that would be difficult—if not impossible—to tell without the help of Televisa's primary sources. Few scholars have been able to gain access to the company's rich script archive, and González de Bustamante was one of the first U.S. scholars to consult it, which allowed her to examine questions that others have written about only in broad and theoretical terms. The strength of "*Muy buenas noches*" lies in the author's ability to show how television executives presented the nation and the world to viewers and how news coverage often blurred the lines between big business interests, the goals of the Mexican state, and the lives of everyday viewers.

The benefits of a study like this are obvious for students and scholars of Mexico, but the topic of television and Mexico should also benefit Americanists in general. Why? For one, Mexico is the United States' third largest trading partner—topped only by Canada and China.¹ Moreover, Americans enjoy Mexico. It is the most popular place for U.S. tourists to vacation abroad. Additionally, in learning about what happened south of the U.S.-Mexico border, North Americans learn more about themselves. Based on the latest U.S. Census, Latinos are the fastest-growing and largest ethnic minority in the United States, and most Latinos in the United States are from Mexico. Finally, we should not forget that much of the United States was once part of Mexico, that is, until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Let's face it: historically, culturally, politically, and economically, the United States and Mexico are joined at the hip. The tensions and ties between both countries come into clear focus in "*Muy buenas noches*."

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Acknowledgments

THIS PROJECT began at the University of Arizona, in a research seminar on the history of modern Mexico. More than ten years later it is a book. Funding for the research that forms the basis of this book came from various sources, including the Tinker Foundation, American Philosophical Society, and the University of Arizona Center for Latin American Studies.

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Those homes may lack good water services, a heater, a good gas range or a washing machine but those matter less than a TV set.

Luis Becerra Celis

Introduction

PERSPIRATION FORMED on his forehead and soaked his shirt, as Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, the son of one of the country's most influential media moguls, greeted members of the news media. It had been six years in the making, and now Azcárraga Milmo was ready to unveil Estadio Azteca (Aztec Stadium). He wiped his brow, grabbed a microphone, and welcomed reporters and photographers to a press luncheon. Up until this point, Azcárraga Junior, as he was sometimes affectionately called, had walked in the shadows of his father, El León (The Lion), Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, who in 1950 bellowed that he was the "czar of Mexican radio and that he would soon be the country's television czar."¹ Yet on this sweltering spring day of May 29, 1966, the day the stadium was inaugurated, Azcárraga Milmo moved beyond his father's shadow and strolled alongside the president of the republic, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. The two men walked across a well-manicured soccer field,

through a dimly lit concrete tunnel, and into a black late-model sedan. A driver paraded the president and the emerging media magnate around the hundred thousand-ton concrete structure. Azcárraga Milmo owned the stadium, as well as its home team, Club América. He had acquired the team in 1959 in anticipation of building the stadium and his company's empire.²

At the same time, 105,000 soccer fans gathered, as television camera operators recorded the inaugural ceremony and activities.³ On Telesistema Mexicano's XHTV, Channel 4, announcers reported that four years after the then president Adolfo López Mateos laid the first stone of the stadium, another president helped to inaugurate it.⁴ One of the two television announcers remarked that "Azcárraga Milmo and the president were about to enter the car and that the president was always with Emilio Azcárraga."⁵ As the evening news began, Jacobo Zabludovsky, the best-known news anchor in Mexico City, and Pedro Ferríz Santa Cruz delivered details about the inaugural ceremonies to capital residents. Ferríz commented, "We, as Mexicans, also feel proud to have a stadium of this magnitude, and in every way it is the best out of any place in the world. I have been to Maracanã Stadium in Brazil and Wembley in England, the National in Santiago and the one in Tokyo, and, in my judgment, ours is more functional in every way."⁶

News film of Díaz Ordaz and Azcárraga Milmo walking together provide a metaphor for the close connections between the government and the media during the second half of the twentieth century. By and large scholars have concluded that Televisa, what Telesistema Mexicano would become in 1973, walked in lockstep with the government and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party), the party that ruled for seventy-one years (1929–2000).⁷ No legitimate scholar would dispute the fact that close political ties between television executives and the party help to explain the long-standing rule of the PRI, but this is only part of the picture. Just how did this occur on a daily basis and over time?

Government decisions that regulated communications and telecommunications infrastructures undoubtedly aided in the development of the television industry and enabled Televisa's success, which by the end of the twentieth century stood as one of the most powerful media companies in the world. Grupo Televisa dominated in both production and profits in the Spanish-speaking world. By 1977 the company transmitted 21,423 hours of television programming to an estimated 28 million viewers, with 60 percent of the company's programming produced domestically. The company's television advertising revenue reached US\$144 million, while revenue from all advertising sales totaled US\$184 million.⁸

Long before the first twenty years of television (1950–70), media barons and government officials had begun to develop political, economic, and social ties.⁹ The close relationship between media magnate Rómulo O'Farrill and President Miguel Alemán Valdés opened the door for O'Farrill to act as a *prestanoombre* (front name) for the sitting president in the creation of the country's first television station, XHTV.¹⁰ On several occasions Emilio Azcárraga Milmo called himself, "a soldier of the PRI."¹¹ Yet despite the cozy relationship between media moguls such as Azcárraga Milmo and the PRI, the connections should not be viewed as static and without tension. Relationships were forged over time, and on occasion they were strained. In the 1950s Azcárraga Vidaurreta had to go through the president's secretary to set up meetings with Alemán, an indication that they certainly were not the best of friends.¹² In 1968 President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz criticized Telesistema Mexicano's television news coverage of the student movement and massacre at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas on October 2, despite evidence that coverage was severely limited. In the early 1970s President Luis Echeverría threatened to take over the television industry in a wave of nationalization efforts.¹³

By the end of the 1990s Azcárraga Milmo began to criticize the PRI, and his defenders said that Azcárraga Milmo never required Televisa employees to call themselves soldiers of the PRI.¹⁴ Miguel

Alemán Velasco, son of the former president, who directed the company's first news division and who in the late 1960s and 1970s acted as a liaison between the company and the government, maintained that he never stated that he was a soldier of the PRI.¹⁵ Furthermore, longtime news anchor Jacobo Zabłudovsky admitted that he had to follow the directives of Azcárraga Milmo, but *El Tigre* (The Tiger), as he was known by his friends and enemies, never told Zabłudovsky to back the PRI.¹⁶

To continue the metaphor, when the moving image slows down the viewer notices that Díaz Ordaz and Azcárraga Milmo walked together, but not exactly in lockstep. They moved in the same direction but at a slightly different pace, and they each occupied a different space on the screen. The same can be said about the relationship between television executives and government officials from 1950 to 1970. Díaz Ordaz had a less amicable relationship with Azcárraga Milmo than his predecessors Adolfo López Mateos and Miguel Alemán Valdés had with media magnates, especially after 1968.¹⁷

STUDY PURPOSE AND DESIGN

From 1950 to 1970, that is, during the apexes of the PRI and the Cold War, television emerged as the newest and most valuable tool for those interested in winning the hearts and minds of citizens. This book aims to describe and explain the role that television executives, producers, and reporters played in that struggle. Directed by executives, television producers functioned as cultural authorities that would by and large reinforce the messages that political authorities wanted to be disseminated — but not always.¹⁸

Through five case studies that have both national and international dimensions, this book focuses on the nexus between power and culture. The case studies include (1) Mexican and Cuban revolutionaries during 1959, (2) presidential and heads of state visits at home and abroad, (3) the Space Race and the country's participation in this Cold War technopolitical competition, (4) the 1968 student

movement and the Olympics, and (5) the 1970 presidential election and the World Cup. The case studies enable an investigation of power on two fundamental levels. On the international level the book explores foreign (mainly U.S.) hegemony over the nation-state and national media. From a national perspective the study hones in on the state's influence on national media, and the national media's influence on the country's citizens.

The national and international dimensions of the selected cases make them ideal subjects to examine the central theme of the book—the limits of cultural hegemony at the height of the PRI and the Cold War. Cultural hegemony is the process through which groups consent to and assimilate the ideas and beliefs of dominant classes, in this case, those who control the airwaves.¹⁹ In a region fraught with domestic authoritarianism and strong foreign influence, it is a useful concept for understanding the complexity of how nations and ordinary citizens facing dominant powers such as the nation-state and the United States at times consented to and at other times resisted such power. T. J. Jackson Lears summed up the value of cultural hegemony for both: “intellectual historians trying to understand how ideas reinforce or undermine existing social structures and social historians seeking to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the power wielded by dominant groups and the relative cultural autonomy of subordinate groups whom they victimize.”²⁰

The recognition that both news producers and viewers have “relative cultural autonomy” informed the central questions for this book: How, and to what extent, did television news from 1950 to 1970 reflect or differ from the government's positions and U.S. interests? Or, put another way, what were the limits of cultural hegemony on television news? To what extent did viewers buy the messages being disseminated?

Honing in on the limits of cultural hegemony opens the door for other critical questions to be asked: How did producers of the media and television news contribute to the long-standing

power of the PRI? If members of the news media played a role in legitimizing the PRI among citizens, what prompted thousands of railway workers, students, and popular groups to stand up to the ruling party in 1958, 1959, and 1968? What sorts of counter-hegemonic messages did popular groups disseminate? Questions regarding U.S. hegemony in the region can also be asked: How far did the influence of foreign news agencies reach? Did television news executives act as simple conduits of information for the Associated Press and United Press International, or did domestic producers retool stories about issues such as nuclear arms and the Space Race in their own nationalistic terms? Answering these questions moves research about early television beyond the two camps of scholarship that have emerged: those that focus on state-media relations and the so-called business hero studies that overemphasize the power of media magnates such as members of the Azcárraga family.²¹ The “symbiotic relation” studies, such as Fátima Fernández Christlieb’s, concentrate on the relationship between the government and media, and the government as the “instrument” of a dominant class.²² Works based on the business-hero model stress the individual qualities of the entrepreneur as the necessary ingredient for the success of electronic media.²³ This study advances research by exploring hegemony from above and below, and from within and without, in an effort to integrate social and political history and transform both.²⁴

In answering these central questions, the book posits a three-fold argument. First, during the height of the PRI and Cold War, news coverage from 1950 to 1970 overwhelmingly favored PRI and North American interests, yet tensions did arise when news reports did not conform to the preferences of government officials and foreign investors. In other words, news producers often towed the official line, but Telesistema Mexicano and later Televisa were not simple mouthpieces of the government and foreign interests. Second, when looked at on the whole, the case studies of news coverage point to a specific form of national identity, a *mexicanidad* that

promoted modernity and consumer values broadcast from above. Third, viewers-cum-citizens did not always buy into what they saw on the small screen, and by the late 1960s a critical mass of citizens attempted to get their own hybrid messages heard.

The tensions examined in this book include those between government officials and media owners; modernity and efforts to maintain traditions or invent new ones; elite male media producers and popular viewers; political dissent and authoritarian rule; and the country's Janus-like image during the Cold War (an international face that portrayed the country as modern and peaceful, and a domestic face imbued with violence and repression).²⁵ The word "tension" is used intentionally, as it accurately reflects the relationships among television actors, both on- and offscreen.²⁶

Early television news programs functioned as microcosmic windows through which viewers could see a country in turmoil. As historical artifacts, early television news reports and images provide audiovisual expressions of political and social struggle. By the second half of the twentieth century, it became evident on the streets and on television that more than one vision for the nation's future existed, and at times these *tele-visiones* (tele-visions) competed and conflicted.²⁷

The book's focus on key domestic and international events and issues during the first two decades of television journalism allows for the discussion and examination of key debates that inform Mexican and Latin American history in the twentieth century, such as the role of the mass media and the formation of national identity; the limits of authoritarian regimes, including the PRI; and foreign influence in the region during the Cold War. Certainly, scholars have only begun to scratch the surface regarding the significance of non-super powers during the Cold War.²⁸ In this way, the book aims not to furnish an institutional history of television but instead seeks to describe and explain how television — through news programming — played an integral role in creating a sense of *lo mexicano* (that which is Mexican) at a time of tremendous political,

social, and cultural change. *Lo mexicano* should be understood as a fluid concept, constructed by various societal actors. Stated another way, national identity as part of cultural history is far from static or monolithic and is, in reality, contingent and “provisional.”²⁹ The *mexicanidad* that this book seeks to explain was forged from above by media producers influenced by high-ranking government officials. At the same time, the book embraces a negotiation between elite producers and popular viewers, who were also capable of creating images evoking their sense of *mexicanidad*.³⁰

Examining the intersections between culture and power, this book also requires a foray into discussions about cultural imperialism from both within the country and abroad.³¹ That foreign companies such as General Motors and Standard Oil sponsored and advertised on Latin American news programs was no accident. The practice emerged from a then new economic development model that privileged multinational corporations over a previous model that emphasized state control over industry.³² Yet domestic entrepreneurs and news producers made editorial decisions on a daily basis regarding what should be included or excluded from news coverage. The success of Televisa, the most profitable and powerful media conglomerate in Latin America, enables renewed debates over dependency and world systems theories that relegate “peripheral nations,” such as Mexico, to an eternal secondary position on a global economic and cultural stage. That the U.S. justice system ruled against Azcárraga Milmo’s effort to establish a Spanish-language monopoly in 1987, as he had done in his country, requires a rethinking of dependency and world systems conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Pablo Arredondo Ramírez’s and María de Lourdes Zermeno Torres’s suggestion that Televisa’s broadcasting of *24 horas* (Mexico’s longest-running news program) represents a case of “reverse cultural imperialism” may go a bit too far, but just how viewers interpret cultural products such as television news within and across national boundaries is part of a highly

complicated and contested process.³³ As a theoretical construct, cultural imperialism ties scholars' hands and inhibits them from exploring the myriad of factors involved in the development of cultural industries.³⁴

Moving beyond cultural imperialism and keeping in mind the concept of cultural hegemony, this study employs a theoretical framework called "hybridity of framing." The framework is useful for understanding the negotiation of meanings between international news agencies and domestic producers of journalism as well as the competing discourses between producers and viewers. Hybridity of framing draws on *cultural hybridity* and *framing*. Cultural hybridity holds that when two or more cultures converge, the social practices and beliefs of each group influence one another to the extent that a new distinct culture merges.³⁵ Framing, as a methodology and a theoretical construct, has gained currency among sociological and communications researchers and reflects the manner in which a news producer or writer emphasizes some elements of an event or issue over others, with the goal of making a news report meaningful.³⁶

As this book's case studies demonstrate, television news producers framed events in particular ways, sometimes in a manner distinct from the perspective of state officials or foreign interests. Additionally, news producers' portrayals of events could be in conflict with how viewers interpreted events, and those viewers may have reframed the same events in ways they deemed just and meaningful. As one example, hybrid framing helps explain how news producers may have attempted to downplay student movements, but young people often interpreted the same issues or events in different ways—a conflict of visions that in some cases may have helped foster domestic and international solidarity.³⁷ Hybrid framing allows us to view interpretations of media messages as a negotiation and process between the individual and the media that occurs over time, rather than reduce viewers to inert media consumers. The framework also is useful in understanding

the power relationship between news producers and international news agencies. The U.S. wire services Associated Press and United Press International may have described major Space Race events such as the lunar landing in way that exalted U.S. technological prowess, but Mexican television news staffs often couched reports regarding the Space Race in their own very nationalistic terms.

Former Televisa media executive Miguel Sabido's declaration that "*presidencialismo* is the key to understanding television in Mexico" is telling, but the analysis of what viewers saw on the air remains equally significant.³⁸ Yet studies about media content, especially for the early years of television, are hard to come by.³⁹ With all the theoretical works on television, there has been a certain lack of hard data, which if available would help ground existing theoretical works.⁴⁰ Part of the problem lies in the availability and accessibility of sources. Generally, private interests control scripts, television programs, images (film and video), company documents, and all the data necessary to produce systematic empirical works. The interests of private companies may or may not always coincide with those of the researcher and vice versa, so the researcher often is denied access.

Having been granted unprecedented access to Televisa's news scripts and images produced between 1950 and 1970, I have been able to analyze some hard data. Nevertheless, two factors limited my access to Televisa's archives: the *jurídico* and natural disasters. The governing body within the company known as the *jurídico* decides who gets access to what materials and how much material (in my case, scripts and images) an individual obtains. I was able to examine scripts produced between the years 1954 and 1970. The scripts for earlier newscasts had been lost as a result of three earthquakes, several floods, the transfer of documents from one archive location to another, and perhaps simple neglect. Many images that correspond to the scripts could not be located for the same reasons. With respect to images of the student movements and violence of 1968 and 1971, the governing body allowed me

to view about twenty minutes of images. None of those images included *balaceras* (shootings) involving young dissidents.

The scripts and images that I did analyze at Televisa's news archives at Chapultepec and Estadio Azteca in Mexico City are more than faded words on onion-skin paper and dust-covered film reels and videotapes. They provide clues to answering questions about cultural and social history, including the history of the television industry. By keeping in mind the three levels of media flow—content, production and, interpretation—this study puts these artifacts into their proper historical place.⁴¹ Scrutinizing the scripts and images in terms of content, production, and interpretation enabled an empirically based picture of the early television news industry to emerge and, as a result, helped to contribute to a deeper understanding of Mexican society during this crucial period.

Analyses of news programming can shed light on discussions regarding the rise of youth counterculture, popular social unrest, and the media's influence on society during the height of the Cold War.⁴² This study demonstrates how the media served to reinforce the country's strategy of dual containment—that of containing domestic dissidents to maintain control for the national government and containing communism to maintain good relations with the United States. Through televised reports, news media helped the government implement this strategy. Additionally, understanding media during this period is essential because of the increasingly significant role that mass communications played in disseminating information to citizens in countries such as Mexico, where the majority of citizens began to receive news through television. Moreover, it was through television news programs about protests and the Olympic Games that citizens began to understand the country's relationship to the world during the Cold War.

Although diplomatic historians have tended to focus on nation-states, the analysis of television programming offers an opportunity to understand the everyday experiences and the shared national experiences of the Cold War, both of which are lacking

in the existing literature.⁴³ Furthermore, as scholars have noted, Mexico's role in the Cold War has been neglected. This book helps resituate what currently constitutes a bipolar body of scholarship on a global conflict in a way that includes more than the United States and the Soviet Union. Finally, the analysis of the media and its role during this pivotal period remain useful because of the United States' involvement and financial interests in media production, including news content through foreign news agencies and transnational advertising agencies.⁴⁴

Chapter 1 details how U.S. and other foreign interests influenced the development of the medium, as well as how Mexican entrepreneurs looked beyond the country's border to establish the first television networks. Transnational interests in Latin American media began long before the official inauguration of Mexican television on September 1, 1950, with the broadcast of President Miguel Alemán Valdés's fourth national address. By the early part of the twentieth century, U.S. radio networks and wire services had formed ties with Mexican domestic entrepreneurs to sell both news programming and radio receivers. By some estimates, in the 1920s Mexico was second only to Canada in terms of the importation of radio sets.⁴⁵ Yet there were limits to U.S. efforts to influence the country's cultural industries as well as its people, just as there were limits to the government's and media entrepreneurs' efforts to influence the hearts and minds of Mexican viewers. This chapter also discusses the important first steps in establishing the industry, such as the decision to implement a commercial television system, and what that meant for television programming—including television news.

Chapter 2 analyzes the origins of television news, demonstrating that, contrary to the assumption that the first decades of TV news were insignificant, these early years determined the path the medium would take and helped to explain the unique power the industry gained by the late twentieth century.⁴⁶ Indeed, by the end of the first five years of television's development,

several *tele*-traditions had been invented, including coverage of national holidays and the inclusion of sports in newscasts, as well as the manner in which news anchors began the news by greeting viewers every evening with a “*muy buenas noches*.”⁴⁷ Anyone who watches television news today knows that these traditions continue into the twenty-first century. Undoubtedly, the decision to cover certain national holidays grew out of a much longer tradition that began with independence itself. Holiday celebrations combined both print and performance to create an imagined community composed of those taking part in the holiday everywhere in the nation, and TV newscasts promoted national celebrations to solidify a sense of nationhood among citizens.⁴⁸

Chapters 3 through 7 present and explain the qualitative content analyses of news reports regarding the five case studies in this book. The first case study is of the railway workers movement of the 1950s and the Cuban Revolution of 1959, both of which represented defining moments in the country’s modern history. Mexican and Cuban dissidents emerged as major players on television news between 1954, the start of the Mexican railway movement, and 1959, the year Fidel Castro took control of Havana. The analysis shows that in their news coverage of Mexican railway “rebels” and Cuban revolutionaries, news producers hailed Cuban revolutionaries as champions who overthrew a dictator, while they deplored railway strikers as threats to the nation. The juxtaposition presented in this chapter illustrates the country’s and media’s inconsistent treatment of national and international dissidents. News coverage of Castro’s regime would change as he aligned himself with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, reflecting a dramatic shift in diplomatic relations among Mexico, Cuba, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

The quadripartite connections among Mexico, Cuba, and the two super powers take center stage in chapter 4. The Cuban Revolution of 1959, one of the most influential events in the Americas of the twentieth century, and Fulgencio Batista’s ousting from Havana on January 1, 1959, marked Castro’s triumph as well as brought

into sharp relief tenuous relations among the four nations. News coverage of presidential visits abroad and foreign dignitaries' trips to Mexico serve as a window through which the state of diplomatic affairs in 1959 can be examined. The four visits include former president Lázaro Cárdenas's trip to Cuba on July 24–27; president Adolfo López Mateos's trip to the United States on October 8–18; U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower's trip to Acapulco on February 19–20; and Soviet vice-premier Anastas Mikoyan's trip to Mexico on November 18–28. The news reports highlight the country's contingent position during the first phase of the Cuban Revolution (1959–63). Furthermore, the chapter provides evidence of “television diplomacy,” a more popular expression of diplomacy, in contrast to political practices that transpired in formal and elite circles. As television's popularity and power rose, high-ranking political officials increasingly began to use the medium to disseminate their distinct diplomatic agendas to the public.

Aside from meetings between heads of state, the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union provided another avenue in which international and national politicians could disseminate their Cold War agendas. Chapter 5 includes analysis of how television news reporters and producers portrayed major events related to the Space Race from 1957 to 1969. Focusing on events such as the launch of *Sputnik* on October 4, 1957; the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962; and the lunar landing on July 20, 1969, this chapter reveals that news reports function as another powerful audiovisual expression of Cold War politics. Viewers also learned about the country's attempts to enter the Space Race, as homegrown scientists launched their own rockets. Whether they were documenting domestic or foreign technological endeavors, news writers tended to portray space projects in ways that promoted the nation and modernity. News programs also illuminated the political tightrope that officials such as President López Mateos walked during episodes such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, at which time the president remained curiously out of the country on a visit to the Philippines.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the country's and television executives' preoccupation with modernity were omnipresent, and this became dramatically evident in 1968 as the nation prepared to host the nineteenth Olympiad. On October 12, 1968, Mexico became the first country to broadcast the games live and in color to a worldwide estimated audience of 900 million people, the largest audience in the history of television.⁴⁹ The broadcasting of the Olympics represented a critical opportunity for government officials and television executives to beam the country's modern and economically successful face into the homes of viewers across the globe. However, ten days before the Olympic Games in Mexico City, special forces known as *granaderos* opened fire on thousands of demonstrators, killing more than three hundred students and bystanders at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. This act momentarily dashed the dreams of television executives, who stood to gain millions from the broadcasts, as well as President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, who three years before the games remarked proudly that "all the eyes of the world would be on Mexico in 1968 and that he hoped Mexicans would respond to their responsibilities in providing a warm and dignified reception for all visitors."⁵⁰

Juxtaposing news coverage of the student movements and the Olympic Games held in Mexico City, chapter 6 describes the stark contrasts between the portrayals of two groups of youth — athletes and activists. Like the railway workers of 1959, student activists were portrayed as threats to the nation and order, while Olympic athletes were glorified as model citizens. Although news programs silenced the viewpoints of young activists, participants in the movement made their voices heard through alternative means of communication such as street theater, placards, and widespread demonstrations. The book culminates as these alternative forms of public information illuminated another hybrid way of framing the dramatic political events and issues that engulfed the nation.

News cameras returned to Estadio Azteca and sports in 1970, as Mexico City hosted the World Cup. At the same time, politicians

such as Luis Echeverría, who served as secretary of *gobernación* in 1968, worked to restore PRI legitimacy after the massacre at Tlatelolco. The country geared up for a presidential election in which Echeverría was picked as the presumptive frontrunner. Chapter 6 examines coverage of the presidential elections and the World Cup in Mexico City, both held in July 1970. Thanks in part to the athletic prowess of Pelé, the Brazilian team won the cup at Estadio Azteca. While Pelé ran on the field waving a Brazilian flag, Mexican fans chanted in favor of their Latin American counterparts. Azcárraga Milmo claimed victory for having negotiated a very profitable deal for Telesistema Mexicano, for this was the first World Cup financed by private interests. A presidential campaign ensued on the airwaves along with the World Cup, but this chapter shows that election coverage paled when compared to the amount of time devoted to the World Cup. The amount of time given to opposition candidates was dwarfed by that devoted to the PRI candidate Echeverría. Once again, news producers chose to downplay the political in their efforts to let entertainment and sports take center stage.

By 1970 Telesistema Mexicano executives had severed contracts with the major capital newspapers, putting an end to the sharing of content between newspapers and TV news programs. This move ended a somewhat diverse era in television news in terms of production and content. With the dailies out of the picture, company executives sought to standardize and professionalize operations through the creation of a new corporate news division, with the son of former president Miguel Alemán Velasco at the helm. One of Alemán's first tasks as head of the news division was to design an hour-long national newscast. He created *24 horas*, a news program that aired for three decades. Although it had new features, the program carried with it many of the same tele-traditions of the earliest newscasts and solidified Jacobo Zabludovsky's position as the country's best-known news personality. It is to those earliest days of television that this book now turns.