

BIOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

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REVIEWED BY
Charles Wm. Thomas
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NAME Elena GARRO de Paz	NATIONALITY Mexican
PRESENT POSITION Mexican Writer	

DATA AND REMARKS

- Elena Garro, the mercurial wife of Octavio Paz, was born of Spanish parents in Puebla on December 11, 1917. She attended the National Autonomous University of Mexico and later did graduate work at the University of California (Berkeley) and at the University of Paris. She has long been married to Octavio Paz, a career diplomat who is also one of Mexico's finest poets and leading intellectuals (author of El Laberinto de la Soledad). Since her husband went to his present post as Ambassador to India, she has been separated from him, apparently with their mutual consent. Her 20-year-old daughter, also named Elena, resides with her in Mexico City.
- Having spent 17 years of her life in Europe, she has a rather un-Mexican objectivity about her native land and has a reputation for being one of its more articulate detractors. At the same time she is very emotionally committed to many aspects of Mexican life and has made an important contribution to its artistic development.
- While enjoying the reflected glory of her prestigious husband, she has become a significant writer in her own right. Hogar Sólido, El Rey Mago, La Señora en su Balcón, Ventura Allende, and Andarse por las Ramas, are plays that have had appreciative audiences in Europe, where they have been translated into German, as well as in Mexico. Two more plays, Parada Empresa and El Viaje, are in preparation. Her short stories are collected in a volume called La Semana de Colores. The Literary Supplement of the London Times has called her novel, Los Recuerdos del Porvenir, a "splendid success." One critic has said of her: "For Elena Garro, there is no frontier between reality and fantasy; in any case, the latter is a second reality--perhaps more intense--to which one may penetrate without passport or forewarning, thanks to the effectiveness of a literature fired with passion, flavor, and life." It might be added that the frontier between reality and fantasy is also difficult for her to distinguish in real life.
- A witty, urbane, and opinionated woman (she speaks Spanish, French, English, and German) with an unflagging sense of humor, she has reportedly had a stormy marriage with Octavio Paz, whose social conventionality she continually and deliberately shocked with her erratic and whimsical behavior. Although her forthright opinions and sharp wit tend on occasion to ruffle feathers in Mexico, her important social, literary, and political connections render her fairly immune from

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serious counterattack. Her plays are being currently produced in Mexico City and Zurich, and she has just had a lengthy exclusive interview with one of the large morning dailies here. Politically, she appears to be Catholic and traditionalist, and in her admiration for German culture she occasionally exhibits flashes of National Socialism. Although on domestic political issues, her views seem progressive, she often describes herself as a reactionary, because this is the term her communist friends apply to her. Her political connections run the gamut of the political spectrum. During her moments of bitter denunciation of corruption in the ruling PRI, she often threatens to join the Communist Party.

5. Miss Garro has for many years been an active worker in the Confederacion Nacional Campesina (CNC), the agrarian arm of the PRI, and is particularly close to the recent CNC Secretary General, Javier Rojo Gomez. She has been a tireless propagandist and agitator on behalf of the poorer Mexican peasants, and she is on close personal terms with and apparently enjoys the respect of peasant leaders from all over the country. Her house is a constant meeting place of peasant leaders, and she was recently paying the hotel bills of over 100 of them who were suffering delays in getting their grievances heard. She has on occasion published articles bitterly criticizing the governments agrarian policy, particularly the alleged political assassination of troublesome peasant leaders, in such leftist publications as Sicmore and Sucesos. All this demonstrates that she is somewhat fanatic on the subject of campesinos. While she detests the new head of the CNC, Amador Hernandez, she has cultivated, partly for her own protection, President Diaz Ordaz Director of Agrarian Affairs, Norberto Aguirre Palencares, who is now a frequent visitor to her home. She is also very friendly with and a strong supporter of Carlos A. Madrazo, former President of the PRI and ex-Governor of Tabasco, because of his sympathy for the plight of the peasants and his desire to reform the PRI.

6. Elena Garro's brother (Eduardo?), who also resides in Mexico City, is a construction contractor for plumbing and electrical work. He seems less emotional than Elena and is not concerned with politics. A sister, Deva, is married to a second-rate painter named Guerrero Galván. According to Elena, she is a communist sympathizer. Another sister is married to an American and resides in Cuernavaca. Three cousins, Lydia, Horacio, and Rubén Durán, are all reportedly communist sympathizers. Horacio's wife, Sylvia Durán, is employed by the Cuban Embassy here. Elena Garro is very close to her daughter, Elenita (or Chata), who echos her mother's multivarious views and has considerable influence over her. Elenita is not well educated, but unfortunately she is rather well read and has been prematurely exposed to ideas which she has not yet properly understood and assimilated. Accordingly, she can be obnoxiously outspoken.

7. Miss Garro is well disposed toward the United States and has been friendly and forthcoming with Embassy officers. Her broad range of

significant personal friends, the views of many of whom are important to the Embassy, makes her a useful Embassy contact, and she is currently carried as a target in the Embassy's Youth Program. Despite her access to much that is going on beneath the surface in Mexico, including peasant unrest, the fact that she has a tendency to romanticize developments in reporting on them makes it difficult at times to determine what degree of credence to place on what might well be useful and concrete information.

8. She lives in a modest but comfortable house on Calle Alencastre 220 in Lomas Virreyes. Her telephone number is 40-20-57.

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