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Nato lay the ground
eastern expansion**

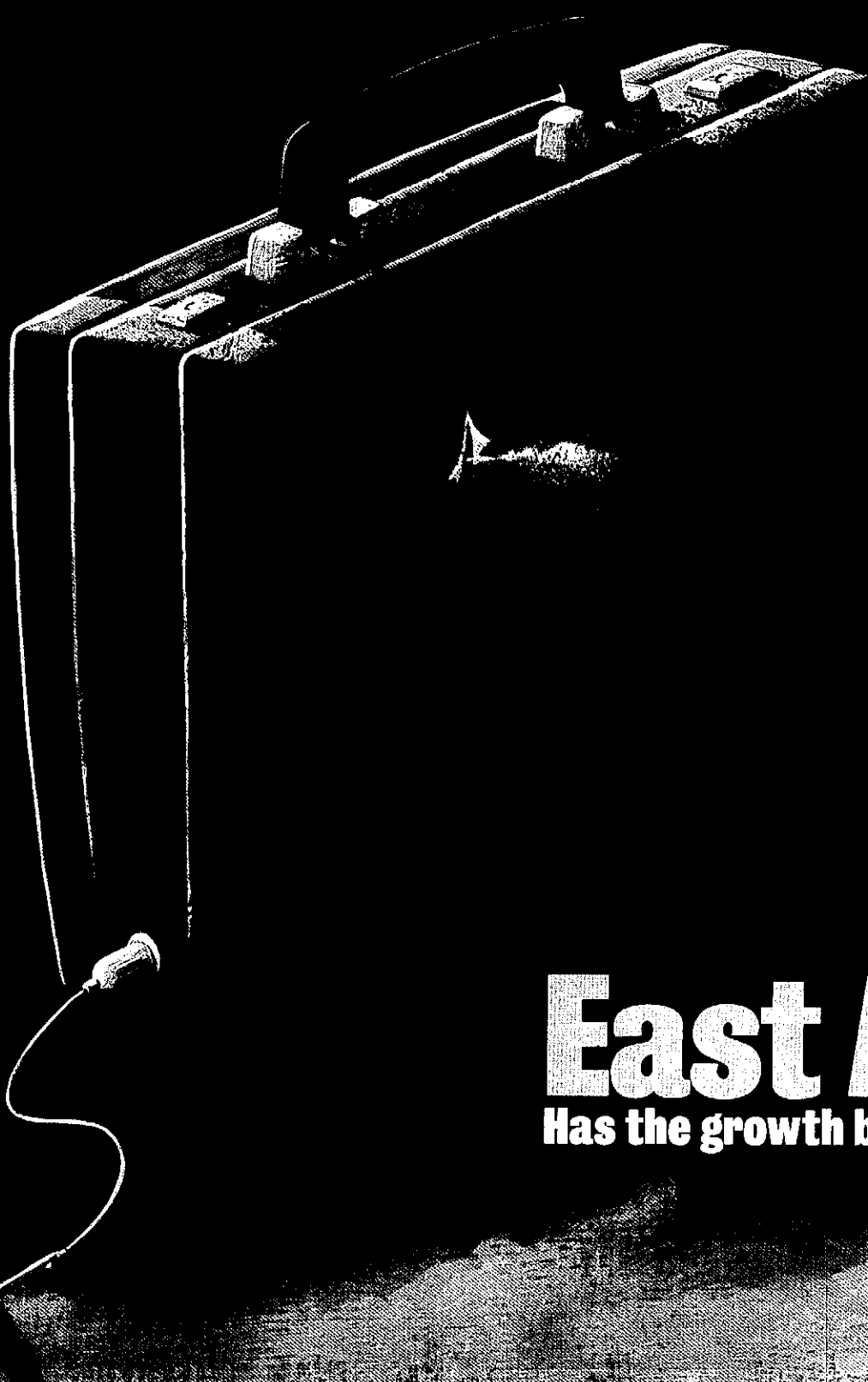
**The reforms that lifted
China's economy also
challenge party power**

**Global growth firms:
leading the way in Latin
America and east Asia**

**Consultancy is booming
but the competition
gets harder all the time**

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**MERCOSUR
ON THE
ROAD TO REALITY**



East Asia
Has the growth bubble burst?

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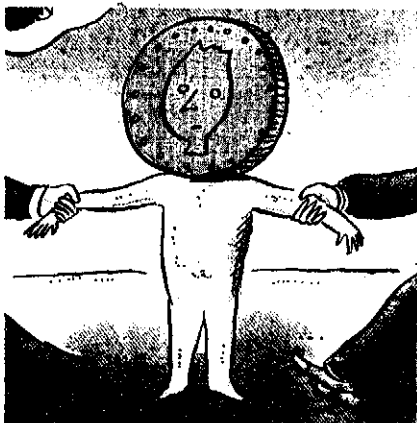
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As a deadline approaches, time slows to allow Charles Darwent to ponder Relativity and kitchen hygiene

Cover illustration by Ian Moore

He stitches together those threads within the formal framework of classic histories of Mexico: conquest, colonial stagnation, independence, the victory of liberalism, the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, revolution and the "institutional revolution" and its decline.

This framework is essential to his premise: that the minds and motives of the individuals he examines stand out for somehow extending beyond the formal limits of the historical space they occupy. They are true visionaries.

We learn that the restless hero of independence, Miguel Hidalgo, was an eccentric theologian who fashioned his frenzied appeal to the unruly indigenous mass in terms of resistance to French heresy in the Church. In captivity, a dazed Hidalgo was largely unable to articulate his rationale for revolution – and repented.

The vainglorious Antonio López de Santa Anna, who acted out a 30-year melodrama, was motivated more by gambling than by power. His impetuosity sealed the final defeat of the aristocratic creoles. He gambled on the *patria*, and lost.

It was left to the stoical Indian shepherd, Benito Juárez, the liberal reformer, to bring a semblance of order to the dismembered country. His defeat of the hapless Maximilian – a fragile, stupid man who inhabited a realm of fantasy – may have delivered Mexico its "Second Independence", but his epitaph over the body of his foe did not rise to the occasion: "He had short legs."

Krauze penetrates with great flair the character of Porfirio Díaz, the source of much of contemporary Mexico's political architecture and so often dismissed as the bad guy in moral narrative.

His analysis of the great revolutionaries is equally incisive, more so because Mexico's was an uprising built more upon personalities than ideas. Those personalities were as complex as they were colourful. Francisco Madero, the apostle of democracy, was a spiritualist steered by a militant spirit he called José. The taciturn Emiliano Zapata's revolutionary odyssey was a search for a mythical, indigenous homeland. The savage Pancho Villa trembled in the presence of books.

Such human traits can represent the missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of history. No one would have understood this better than the thin-skinned president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, whose pastime was completing jigsaw puzzles. Krauze's investigation of Díaz Ordaz's obsession with his own ugliness, and the taunts of students during the 1968 unrest, helps explain the butchery subsequently unleashed against them in

Mexico City's Tlatelolco Square.

If there is a flaw in this 872-page book, it is that the five presidencies following Díaz Ordaz are summarised in 65 pages. In so doing, Krauze strays from his biographical mission. In particular, he fails to enter the mind of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the diminutive technocrat who offered a seductive new vision of Mexico – and rudely woke the ghosts of a tortured past.

Although this weakens the book's intellectual message – that the country cannot be understood unless due weight is given to the well-worn, but invariably taken-for-granted theme of its living history – it does not detract from Krauze's own doleful appeal for the future: Mexico no longer requires the blood of martyrs for its nourishment.

Perhaps history will show that Cárdenas, finally rewarded for loyally following his father's commitment to non-violence with victory in July's Mexico City mayoral elections, understands this more than most.

The knot of India

In Light of India

By Octavio Paz (translated from the Spanish by Eliot Weinberger)
Harcourt Brace, New York, \$22.00

Reviewed by Rob Jenkins

Octavio Paz's short, quirky book defies genre classifications. It is not a memoir, although stray recollections pepper the text. Nor is it a history, although it is concerned with continuity and change. Paz also insists he is not writing for the "specialist", although a grounding in Hindu mythology might help readers.

Part of the genre confusion stems from the author's split personality: part poet (1990's Nobel prize winner), part diplomat (former Mexican ambassador to India). And yet it is this combination that redeems what, in the hands of either persona on its own, might have resulted in trite observations.

The book has four parts, the first is the anti-memoir. Part two consists of reflections on religion, caste and language, those historically divisive forces in Indian society. Paz emphasises the genius of Indian civilization at absorbing parts of foreign traditions capable of revitalising indigenous practice.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Hindu society found affinities with Islam's Sufi mysticism, and one result was the emergence of a movement among Hindus of popular devotion to a personal god, known as *bhakti*. But instead of simply recording this influence, Paz dissects the subtle differences in meaning between Sufism and

bhakti, leading to a discussion of mystic poetry in the following centuries that is revealing of lost opportunities for a Hindu renaissance.

On the surface, Paz's take on caste also displays an aversion to tidy explanations. He laments the failure of anthropologists to uncover the origins of this complex social institution. He then offers his own "handful of impressions and opinions". These, even to the non-specialist, will seem inadequate.

But more worrying for those of us who study the role of caste in contemporary politics – and for the lay-reader – is Paz's willingness to swallow whole the theory of French anthropologist Louis Dumont on the function (as opposed to the origins) of caste. He declares Dumont's theory "impeccable", without the slightest nod in the direction of Dumont's army of critics.

This is not a question of academic niceties. It has real implications, for Paz's concern is to show caste as "a model of social organisation for a static society". Sadly, he buys into the myth of changeless, eternal India. This contradicts his earlier views on the malleability of Indian tradition.

It also leads Paz, in the third section, to unwarranted conclusions about key relationships: between caste and both secular and religious nationalism, and between secularism and Indian democracy. But even here there is much to reward the reader's perseverance; for instance, Paz's comparison of the Mexican and Indian colonial experiences, an exercise that allows him to probe the contrasting roles of Spanish Catholicism and English Protestantism, the former closely allied to the colonial state, the latter being detached.

The fourth section brings all the threads together – not into a smoothly woven cloth but into a challenging, and sometimes maddening, knot. One fascinating passage intersperses snippets of classical Indian poetry with pithy commentaries highlighting the indivisibility of the sacred and profane. But it is followed by a discussion of cultural conceptions of time that again exhibits Paz's tendency not to distinguish theory from reality.

The author's dual persona as poet and man of diplomatic action make for interesting reading, but there is an annoying sense that Paz juggles his identities in a self-serving manner. He retreats to his poet persona to escape the consequences of statements made in his capacity as political analyst, and vice versa. The effect is to make him immune to criticism. But can a poet expect to be granted poetic license when writing prose? ■