

# voices of MEXICO

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America

**"We Have Our Own Interests"**

**Mexico and Contadora**

**A Middle Road to Peace in Central America**

**Women in Mexico**

**Diego Rivera's Centennial**



## THE OIL CRISIS

JUNE / AUGUST 1986  
NUMBER 0 \$ 3.00

# PRESENTATION

The peoples of Mexico and the United States, together, share a huge territory. We are inter-connected in a multitude of ways, yet we hardly know each other. This is so because we have such different histories. Mexicans are the descendants of the Mesoamerican and Hispanic civilizations. The Indian was fused with the European over the course of several centuries of colonial domination that began with a violent and rapid military conquest in which the vast majority of our native peoples were bound in slavery and servitude. With this heritage, we developed very different forms of organization and social relations that those developed in the United States. Something so apparent and simple as this, is difficult to understand from either side of our long border that, at once, unites and divides us, and is the only border in the world that joins a First World country with a Third World country.

We tend to see each other through stereotypes. Neither one of us understands the other, and this lack of understanding creates mistrust and fear, adding yet another point of tension to our already confused world. The fact that we are neighbors is an irreversible geographic truth; but this reality doesn't necessarily have to be detrimental to our separate national interests. Being different doesn't mean being enemies, if we can understand the factors that underlie our differences, as well as those things that we have in common.

VOICES OF MEXICO is an attempt to undermine those differences. It seeks to put forth Mexico's view of itself and of the world. Sponsored by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where the richness and complexity of our national reality are both analyzed and synthesized, this magazine presents a variety of different aspects of that reality: how we see it, how we live it and how we confront it. This means that we will not always be in agreement with the U.S. view on some matters. In fact, it's quite likely that we won't even agree among ourselves from time to time. We are a vast country, heterogeneous and pluralist, in which diverse points of view are voiced and respected. We won that democratic right in the world's first great social revolution of the 20th century. That's why we speak about **voices** of Mexico, because we are many and diverse in our ways of seeing the world. That's why we speak so openly and honestly about those events and places that are undeniably a part of our reality and interests; Contadora is a good example.

But above all else, we hope that from this diversity, this dissonant plurality, we can transmit a harmony which reflects the richness of our nationality. And we hope that these voices will help to make it easier for us to understand each other, to build the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood that our two peoples so desperately need.

**Mariclaire Acosta.**

# voices

of MEXICO

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America

June-August 1986 Number 0

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Direct all advertising and subscriptions to Books on Wings, P.O. Box 59, Vista Grande Station, Daly City, CA 94016, Tel. (415) 467-1454.

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# THE OIL CRISIS: HOW IT HAPPENED

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**Everyone knows that oil prices have plummeted in recent weeks, but few people actually know why. Mexico has its own ideas on this matter.**

*The sudden collapse of world oil prices could not have come at a worse time for the Mexican economy. Soon after prices began to drop, it became all too clear that the careful planning by Mexico's top economic advisors to guarantee the country's international financial obligations had been for naught. But that's not all. The oil crisis will not just have devastating effects on Mexico's economy, but its long-term social effects could also transform the country as we know it today. With this in mind, VOICES OF MEXICO asked Erik Salas Klimt, an oil specialist now working for the Ministry of Energy, Oil and Nationalized Industry, to give us an analysis of what his agency believes is the evolution of events that led to the current crisis. In the next issue we will continue our oil series with an article on the effects of the crisis on Mexico's economy today. Mr. Salas Klimt's views:*



Perforation in Tampico. Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

Mexico's oil exports will continue to play a crucial role in the country's economic and financial strategy for the rest of the century. Earnings from oil exports represent Mexico's only possibility for overcoming its current crisis and moving forward on the path to development. This means that Mexico must link the problem of falling oil prices to its foreign debt obligations. It also means that any strategy for growth must take into account the necessary resources both to reactivate the economy as well as to guarantee the reestablishment of past income levels for the majority of the population

## The Main Actors

After 1973, the steady increase in world oil prices led oil companies to open drilling and extraction projects in areas that had not been profitable before. This later became a key factor in diversifying sources outside of the OPEC cartel. One of the International Energy Agency's proposed goals was to break the developed countries' dependence on OPEC producers. The new oil supplies came increasingly from non-OPEC members, mainly Mexico, Canada, Norway and the United Kingdom.

The appearance of new oil-producing countries on the world market meant that OPEC members were increasingly forced to recognize their new role as partial suppliers. For every barrel of oil the new producers put on the market OPEC sold a barrel less. OPEC tried in vain to counteract this tendency.

Discussion of this new situation was a priority item on the agenda at the OPEC Minister's Conference held in March of 1982. The Organization set a production ceiling of 17.5 million barrels a day for its members. It was also announced that the price of Arabian light crude, used as a reference point in setting prices, would be frozen at \$34 a barrel until 1985.

OPEC's problems in reaching an agreement surfaced at later meetings. In Vienna, in December of 1982, the Organization was unable to agree on production quotas for its members even though a production ceiling was set at 18.5 million barrels a day. Nor was an agreement reached when OPEC ministers met a month later in Geneva, and internal divisions and disagreements began to come to the surface. Most members felt that Saudi Arabia was keeping the lion's share of the market to itself. Nigeria, Venezuela and others threatened to cut prices to increase their share of the market. Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, retorted that if they wanted a price war they'd get one. But none of the threats were actually carried out, and OPEC members refrained from taking action against other member countries.

On February 18, 1983, the British National Oil Corporation, BNOC, took the lead by announcing a \$3 cut in its per barrel price of Brent-type crude. Norway followed suit by reducing the price of its Ekofish crude, also pumped from the North Sea. Then Nigeria, an African OPEC member, lowered the price of its Bonny light crude by \$5.5 per barrel. Bonny light has a similar quality and market conditions to North Sea oil, and the slash meant that it now underpriced Great Britain and Norway by 50 cents a barrel.

Obviously, the price of Arabian light crude couldn't be sustained at \$34 a barrel for very long. The danger of an impending price war convinced both OPEC members and their competitors that they had a serious problem on their hands. By March of 1983 everybody concerned recognized the need for changes in prevailing price structures.

The demand for OPEC crude fell to under 15 million barrels a day, and Saudi Arabia's output dipped below the 4 million barrels mark. By March 1983 OPEC was facing the most difficult situation in its twenty year history.

Falling prices had become an obvious trend from the time that overproduction began to deteriorate prices on the spot market, particularly for African light crudes. Price trends had been consistently negative since mid-1981, judging by the netback value of a barrel of refined oil in Rotterdam.

When OPEC Ministers met in Vienna in July of 1984, they outlined a new policy that took into account a diversified market supply that included large producers who were not members of the Organization. The most important result to come out of that meeting was a decision to set up contacts with independent producers to find ways and means for joint efforts to stabilize market conditions and shore up prices.

But in October of that same year Great Britain and Norway reduced the price of their oil, arguing that prices had already fallen on the spot market. This signaled the failure of OPEC's negotiations. Some observers believed that the market's situation did not warrant bringing prices down, especially since winter was just setting in and demand for fuel would be up. On the other hand, this downturn in prices contributed to further deteriorating market conditions.

This is not to say that decisions by North Sea oil producers are the only ones affecting market conditions. The lack of coherence between OPEC's decisions and the actual policy carried out by some of its members has also contributed to the situation. Nonetheless, the price of North Sea crude is a key factor in the market's stability. Pressure has mounted on BNOB crude because clients can buy the oil on the spot market for \$3 or more dollars below the official price. To this we must add the lack of discipline on the part of some important OPEC members. Both have been important factors in determining market conditions over the last several months.

### Mexico's Role in the Oil Market

There are two main lines to Mexico's oil policy under current market conditions. In the first place we have the traditional policy of defending the natural resources and raw materials that make up most of the exports of the underdeveloped countries. At the same time, our policy seeks to obtain fair prices for our main export commodity, oil. This is also a traditional aspect of Mexican policy, but it is crucial under current circumstances because we need a fair price for our exports in order to deal successfully with our financial difficulties. Thus, Mexican oil diplomacy has sought to develop a policy of dialog and cooperation among both producers and their customers. Consultation and agreements among suppliers and with buyers are a central part of Mexico's strategy in international oil negotiations.

Mexico's contacts with OPEC began in January of 1983. At the time the international oil market was undergoing a dramatic change. Control of the market was passing from producers to buyers. By then Mexico was the world's fourth largest producer, surpassed only by the USSR, the United States and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, Mexico had displaced the Saudis as the main supplier for the U.S. Relations between Mexico and OPEC moved from mutual indifference and sometimes hostility, to dialog and cooperation based on the common goal of defending national interests and stabilizing the market.

Unlike what seems to be the case for other independent producers, Mexico's oil policy contemplates factors that go beyond the immediate situation. The idea that a stable market is vital to the world economy as a whole, and beneficial for both producers and consumers, is at the core of Mexico's policy. In addition to outlining its strategy on the basis of market conditions—rationalizing production to avoid disrupting the market, upholding prices as a means of avoiding waste of a limited resource—, Mexico also tries to build understanding among producers to avoid total anarchy. Our policy calls for cordial and mutually respectful relations with our customers that will guarantee both fair prices for our commodities and the secure supply they need for their own productive activity.

Mexico has had to adapt to extreme, rapidly changing market conditions. When our country first became an important

**MEXICO: Production and exports of crude oil 1979-1985**  
(barrels per day)

PRODUCTION	1979	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985 (1)
South East zone	1 094 058	935 444	852 724	748 710	737 511	n.d
Campeche Sounder	51 744	1 082 505	1 617 406	1 673 829	1 737 908	n.d
Others	315 374	294 165	276 253	243 001	209 052	n.d
Total Extraction	1 461 176	2 312 114	2 746 383	2 665 540	2 684 471	2 718 000
Liquid natural gas	146 971	241 493	254 821	265 221	256 823	270 000
Condensed	9 854	846	1 793	22 739	114 274	n.d.
Total liquid hydrocarbons	1 618 001	2 554 453	3 002 997	2 953 500	3 055 568	2 988 000
EXPORTS						
Isthmus (34°API)	520 626	487 413	680 195	677 900	620 400	541 000
Maya (22°API)	12 209	610 608	811 898	859 100	904 200	797 000
Total exports	532 835	1 098 021	1 492 093	1 537 000		

(1) Figures for the first quarter

(2) Began production in 1979

Source: PEMEX, Statistical Yearbook.

producer and exporter, an international economic boom and an increasing demand for oil led us to believe that benefits from petroleum exports would make it possible for us to overcome underdevelopment. We would move into a period of economic expansion unlike anything we had ever experienced. Yet just a few years later we are faced with the fact that oil is just another commodity whose price is determined by the laws of supply and demand.

The difficult situation facing petroleum exporting nations, especially if they are underdeveloped, became increasingly obvious at the OPEC Conference held in Geneva in August of last year. Rumor had it that Saudi Arabia had started negotiations with its ARAMCO partners on contracts in which the price of oil would be determined on a netback basis. This kind of price structure is based on income estimates for sales on the spot market of the refined products from a barrel of crude oil. This means that standards must be agreed on as to the expected yield after refining.

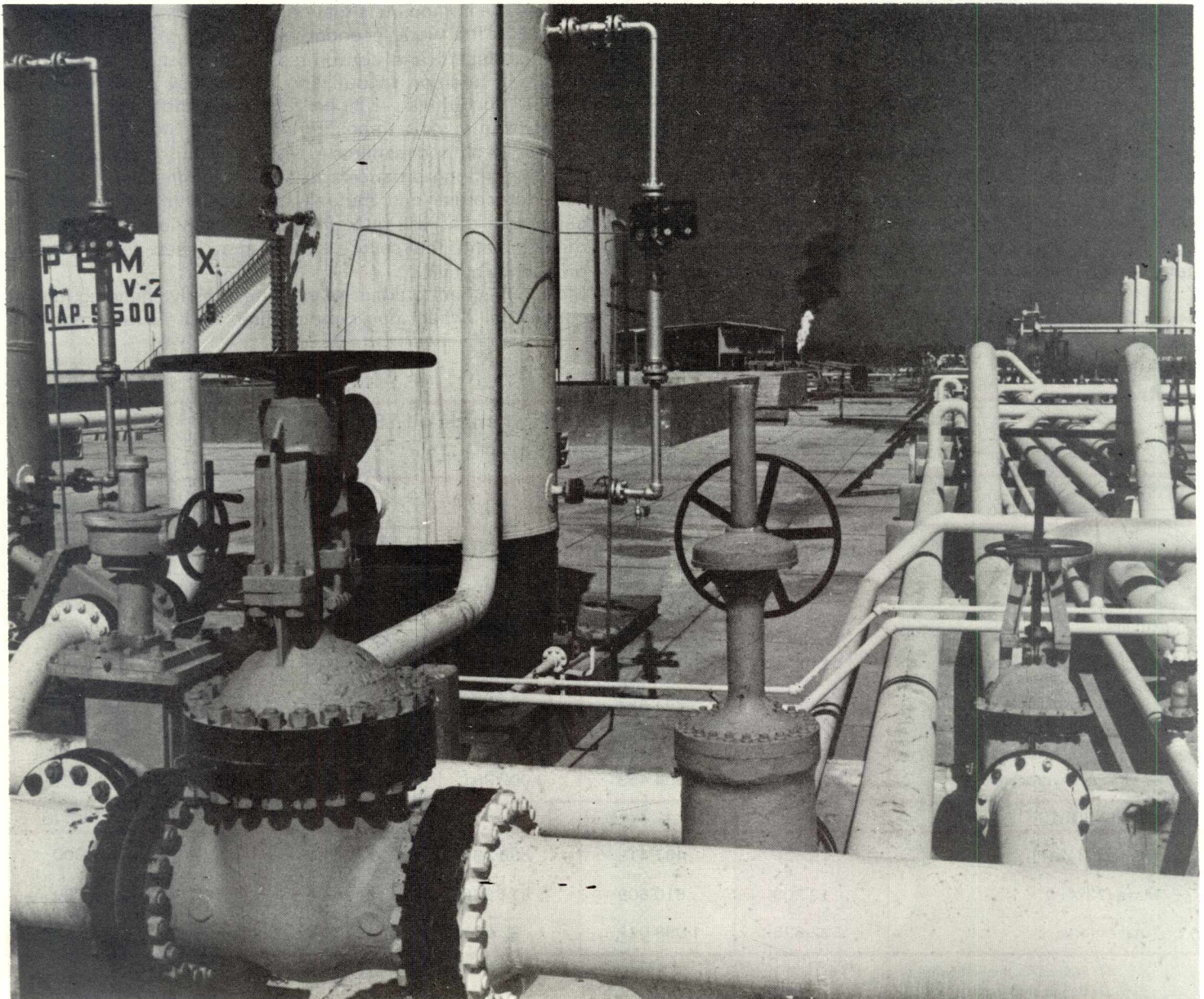
Given a specific market, spot price quotes are applied to the product structure to determine a hypothetical gross income. Then costs for refining, shipping, insurance, as well as the profit agreed on for the refiner, are subtracted. In this type of contract, the producer assumes all costs. The producer also loses any role in determining prices, a key factor in the OPEC system. At the same time, the market loses its transparency as the effective price becomes information that is only known precisely by the seller and the buyer. All of this affects Mexico's policy of strict adherence to official prices and contracts.

**PRICES FOR PEMEX'S EXPORT PRODUCTS  
JULY 1985**

DESTINATION	ISTHMUS	MAYA
United States	26.75	23.50
Far East	26.50	23.00
Europe	26.25	22.50

Price quotes: Free on Board  
Source: PEMEX

The new Saudi policy was explained by Mr. Yamani during a Seminar on Energy held at Oxford University in early September of 1985. He stated that Saudi Arabia was no longer willing or able to shoulder the responsibility for regulating world petroleum supply to actual demand. Minister Yamani pointed out that the problem had taken on global dimensions that went beyond the interests of each individual country, and that over-supply of petroleum was being used by buyers to bring prices down. He also said that producers outside of OPEC were confident that the Organization would adjust its output to keep prices from falling. In the meantime, these independent producers kept their own output at maximum capacity.



Tampico, Tamaulipas. Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

Finally, Mr. Yamani indicated that, given the situation, Saudi Arabia had decided to establish prices on a netback basis, and that this policy would remain in effect until February or March of 1986. At that point, Saudi Arabia might unilaterally lower the price of Arabian light crude to \$15 a barrel. Falling oil prices throughout February and March of this year have proven Mr. Yamani true to his word.

Market conditions since mid-1985 have led to a fall in Mexican oil exports to 800,000 barrels a day, almost half of the level of its shipments since 1979 (see Table 1). For as long as it was profitable, PEMEX, Mexico's state-owned oil company, kept up its policy of selling its Maya 22 degree API-type crude at official prices and only to final destination. Thus, PEMEX actually increased the price of Maya crude three times between 1983 and 1984, bringing it to \$26 a barrel. With OPEC output falling 1.5 million barrels below the level agreed

on by members, to 14.5 million barrels a day, refiners were actually able to choose the most convenient type of crude. As a result, Mexico lost its competitive edge, and the volume of its exports began to fall.

In 1985 Mexico's exports fell even further because of agreements with OPEC to reduce sales volume by as much as 100,000 barrels a day, in an attempt to prop up prices. Additionally, in July Mexico decided to cut the price of its Isthmus light crude, and to link prices to the final destination of the oil. Thus, the price of a barrel of Isthmus crude ranged between \$26.75 and \$26.25, while Maya type crude was priced between \$22.50 and \$23.50. These changes brought both in line with prevailing market prices.

As a result of these measures Mexico's exports achieved a substantial recovery. In a more pragmatic approach, the government abandoned the practice of setting official prices. It was decided prices would be determined on a retroactive monthly basis. This has been carried to the point where prices today are quoted according to daily market conditions.

Since petroleum exports provide 70% of Mexico's foreign currency income and 45% of the government's total intake, oil today is the only means of keeping the economy afloat. In order to meet its international financial commitments without having to resort to new loans or to more budget cut-backs, which would further deteriorate the living conditions of the majority of the people, Mexico tries to keep oil prices as high as possible.

Under the current circumstances the country faces two basic alternatives. One is to continue the pragmatic policy of keeping in close touch with OPEC's most important members, complying with the cartel's policies, and sharing the load of difficult market conditions. The other is to allow market forces to determine prices and to follow their lead in the market, struggling to keep our customers, and selling our oil at whatever the current market price.

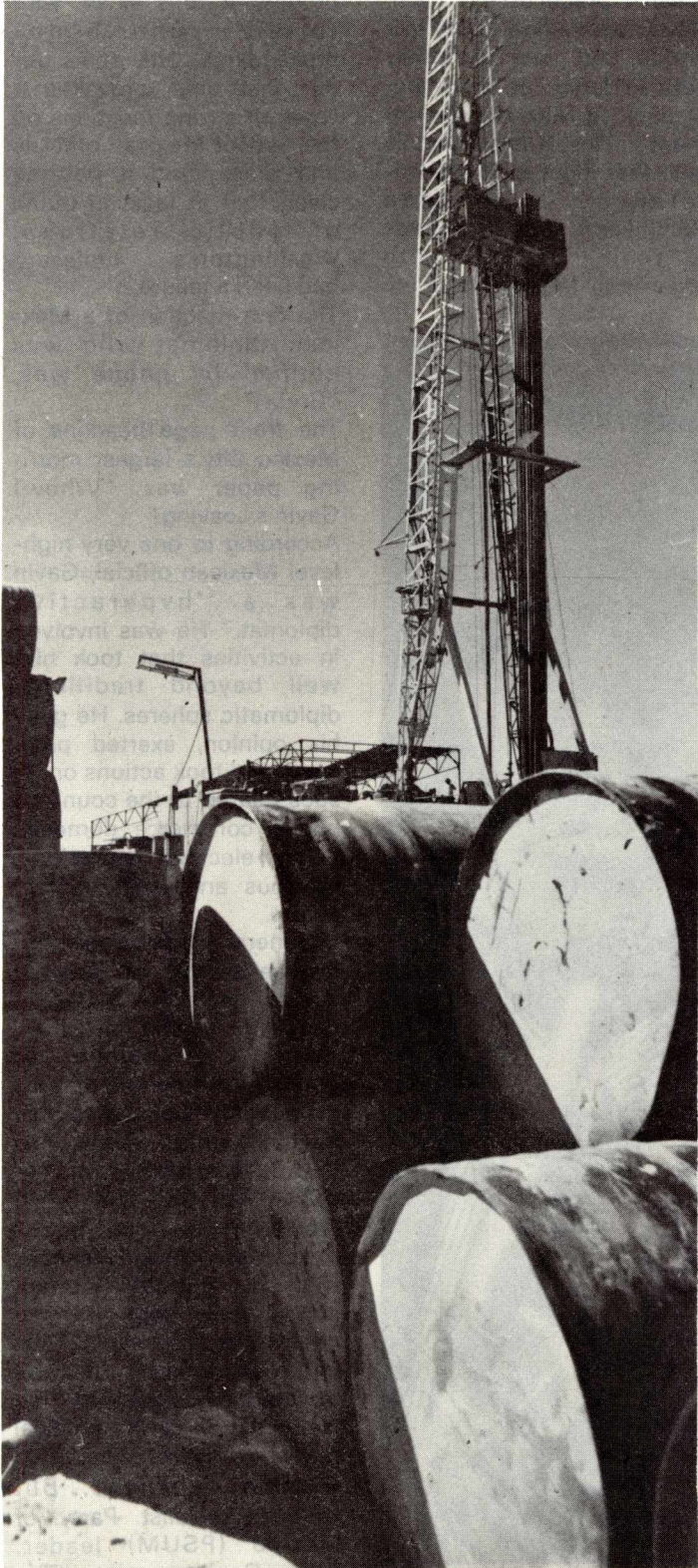
In either case Mexico has to take into account that the necessary market adjustments, and its eventual stabilization, are impossible in the short-term. Policy must also contemplate that costs and benefits of these adjustments should be shouldered by both buyers and producers.

Recent events show that there are no simple solutions to the problems of the world oil market. It is also increasingly evident that no solution is possible without the cooperation of all the concerned parties. In administering prices, independent producers' consent to reduce their output is as important as OPEC's cooperation.

The present crisis has meant sacrifices that have not been equitably distributed among producers. In this sense, it's important to keep in mind Mexico's position at the OPEC meeting held in July of '85 in Vienna. Mexico demanded effective solidarity among exporters to stabilize the market, and warned that unless there was reciprocity in the required sacrifices, unless real commitments were made, our country would be forced to take steps to defend its national interests.

Thus far the governments of the developed countries have wrongly supposed that OPEC and other Third World oil producers would continue to uphold prices even at the cost of internal sacrifices and of losing their share of the market. But the insurance policy that OPEC provided in this sense has expired, and this could have catastrophic effects even for those not directly involved in the oil trade.

Under the present circumstances, the volatile oil market can become a crucial issue for the developed economies when the time comes to pay the cost for today's complacent attitude toward falling oil prices. The bill may come due when by the end of the century the reserves of non-OPEC producers begin to decline. But even before this happens, countries like Mexico might start making unilateral decisions, such as linking the situation in the oil market to their foreign debt payments. The consequences of dealing with problems only from the point of view of short-term conveniences can be bad enough. They could be far worse if linking of the two problems takes place. ★



Oil deposit in Tampico. Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

# GAVIN'S RESIGNATION DRAWS A STRONG RESPONSE

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*When John Gavin announced his resignation as U.S. Ambassador in Mexico, the passionate controversy that surrounded his tour of office was unleashed all over again.*

There is very little information available here that helps to explain John Gavin's resignation as U.S. ambassador to Mexico. We simply do not know if the decision was made in some State Department office in Washington, or if after five years of constant frictions and misunderstandings with a variety of our government agencies, Mexican patience finally ran out after some new problem.

For those who view the situation from the point of view of Gavin's unusually long term (five years), the resignation was, in fact, overdue. These same analysts feel that Gavin should have left several months ago. For others, his resignation seemed premature, or at least surprising because it came earlier than they expected. They expressed surprise based on the widely-acknowledged gentleman's agreement between the actor and former head of the Screen Actors Guild in the U.S., and President Ronald Reagan, that Gavin would hold his post until the end of Reagan's term.

At any rate, Gavin's performance as ambassador from 1981 to May 16, 1986 demands a reevaluation of the terms of the diplomatic relationship between Mexico and the United States.

## Bad Memories

It is quite clear now that Mexico harbors no fond

memories of Gavin, despite the fact that when he took his post five years ago, it seemed that he would be popular with both Mexican public opinion, and even the Mexican government. His mother is of Mexican origin, he speaks Spanish quite well and he is a Hollywood star, which in itself is often enough to generate charisma. In addition, he had

played Pedro Paramo, the famous Juan Rulfo character, and that warmed Mexico's cultural pride. His physical attractiveness was also well-known to TV viewers who frequently saw him in Bacardi rum commercials.

Gavin also had a series of political factors in his favor when he began. For Mexicans, the relationship with the United States is vital, and the U.S. ambassador is almost always a very important public figure here. Gavin's predecessor, Julian Nava, maintained a very low profile and was extremely passive during his entire tour of duty. In Mexican government circles, it is commonly held that there is no real difference between Republicans and Democrats in their positions with regards to Mexico. Thus, no

one expected Gavin to make any big changes.

But they were wrong. Diplomatic relations underwent major changes and became strained beyond the normal tension that has traditionally marked the relationship between Mexico and the United States.

News of Gavin's resignation was announced first to the U.S. press corps in Mexico, even before President Miguel de la Madrid was advised. Thus, as he had carried out his charge, so he brought it to a close, with totally unorthodox proceedings. His style, for one last time, provoked a wave of strong reactions on the part of Mexican officials and press. And it became clear, that at least in terms of public relations, Washington's emissary had been a failure.

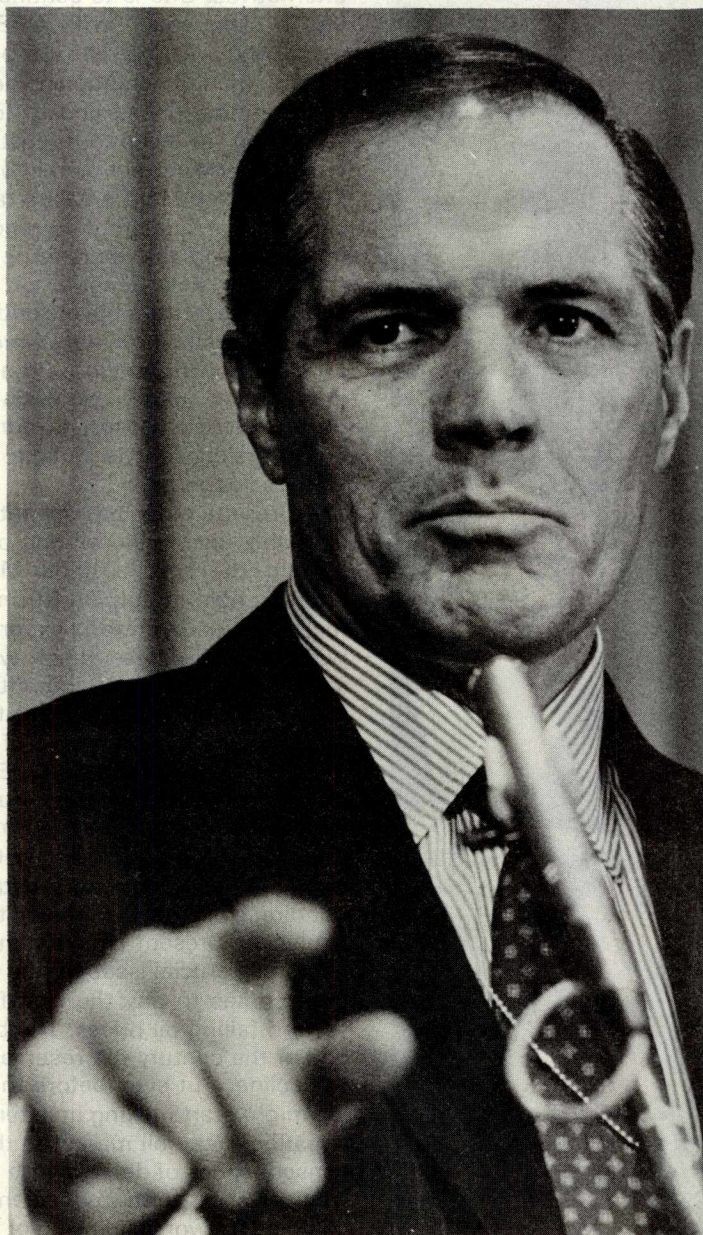
The first reaction of a Mexican diplomat who was notified by phone was, "Great!"

The front page headline of Mexico City's largest morning paper was, "Whew! Gavin's Leaving!"

According to one very high-level Mexican official, Gavin was a "hyperactive diplomat." He was involved in activities that took him well beyond traditional diplomatic spheres. He gave his opinion, exerted pressures and took actions on issues related to the country's courts, commerce, domestic policy, electoral campaigns, religious and even military affairs.

In general, it can be said that diverse sectors of Mexican society held a markedly negative opinion of Gavin. Acapulco's Chamber of Tourism commented that his resignation was "favorable for the country." Artist Jose Luis Cuevas, who on one occasion had said that Gavin would have been better directed by Alfred Hitchcock than by Ronald Reagan, stated, "We hope that he goes back to making films and commercials; he'll be less dangerous that way."

Naturally, all of the political parties on the left celebrated Gavin's departure. But Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM) leader, Pablo Gomez, wrote, "The



Gavin: "I want YOU". Photo by Renzo Gostoli.



pressures on Mexico will continue anyway, even without Gavin around." The conservative, National Action Party (PAN) that often received open displays of Gavin's support, decided not to comment on the matter so as to avoid having to defend a man who had evoked so many critical opinions.

In the Mexican press, a frequent target of Gavin's defamatory comments and irony-laden criticisms, political cartoonists responded with virtually unprecedented consensus in their cartoons on the subject. That rare phenomenon occurred on April 8th. If there was a common denominator to all of the political cartoons that day, it could be summed up as "joy." The following are descriptions of some of their work as it appeared in Mexico City's major newspapers. In *Excelsior*, Marino draws a silhouette of the Ambassador with two wounds in his back, one labeled Sonora and the other labeled Chihuahua.

In *El Universal*, Naranjo has Gavin saying, "I'll ask Ron to send you Bob Hope!" Helioflores drew a newspaperboy in the street calling out the day's headline, "Gavinete Resigns." ("Renuncia el Gavinete;" in Spanish the play on words is with gabinete-cabinet. The cartoonist substituted a "v" for the "b" so that the word becomes a pejorative form of Gavin's name).

In *La Jornada*, Magu, with his customary super-ugly style, drew Gavin with his letter of resignation in one hand and a telephone receiver in the other. He is saying, "I don't know how I'm going to get out of here. The highways are so dangerous, but it's even worse to get into an airplane." This was a reference to a recent Gavin campaign against the supposed dangers on Mexico's highways and to the recent Mexicana Airlines crash.

Fisgon, in the same newspaper, has Gavin dressed as a clown and saying, "And after improving our country's bilateral relations, I can now move on." The

audience is roaring with laughter, and one of the spectators at the show says, "Next time, send us Jerry Lewis for ambassador."

The *Novedades* cartoonist, Rossas, drew a man-in-the-street who comments, "Everyone who's going around celebrating Gavin's resignation ought to remember that better the devil you know than the devil you don't." And a street dog responds, "Joel Poinsett, Henry Lane Wilson...." *Novedades* is owned by one of the most important stock-holders in the Televisa consortium (Mexico's largest electronic media corporation). Televisa follows a very conservative line and was quite accommodating to Gavin's whims.

Gavin's tour as ambassador gave a new stylistic twist to Mexico-U.S. diplomatic relations. Previously, Washington gave relatively little importance to the ambassadorship in Mexico. In fact, during the Carter administration the State Department opened a separate office called the Mexican Affairs Coordinator that was responsible for

overseeing bilateral relationships at the appropriate official levels for trade, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, finances, tourism, customs, drug-trafficking, etc. That office disappeared when Gavin became ambassador, and he, himself, directly took over the reins on all of those bilateral matters. In addition, he began to play an active role in Mexico's internal affairs and publically defended his right to do so.

Half way through his time as ambassador, he committed what was an unpardonable sin for the Mexican political system. Gavin, in his public activities, promoted the U.S. position in favor of a two-party system for Mexico. In the midst of the electoral campaigns in the country's northern states, he attended high level meetings held in the zone by the Catholic Church and by the conservative, opposition National Action Party (PAN).

The political system mobilized against Gavin. The House of Representatives passed a statement condemning the Ambassador's intromission in Mexican internal affairs. Gavin

responded by defending his right to act publically in favor of the PAN. The Executive Branch made no comment on the matter, but it was obvious that any hopes for harmony had been shattered.

At the beginning of last year, a new crisis occurred, in which Gavin's rough style further alienated Mexican diplomatic circles. After the murder of Enrique Camarena Salazar, an agent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, Washington launched "Operation Intecept" along its border with Mexico. Gavin added spice to the already "hypertensive climate" (as it was characterized by Bernardo Sepulveda, Mexico's Foreign Minister) with his no-holds-barred comments on corruption in the Mexican police force. The ambassador's behavior by then was no longer just a product of his own personal style. Gavin was responding faithfully to the rules of the new era of U.S. international relations.

The traditional divergences between Mexico and the United States in regards to their multi-lateral relations have widened significantly



Gavin with Secretary of State George Schultz. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

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during the past few years of the Reagan administration. Mexico's vote in the United Nations is almost always the opposite of the U.S. vote. And the U.S. commitment to counter-revolutionary forces fighting against Nicaragua is a clear challenge to Mexico's efforts in the Contadora Group. Gavin used all of the means within his reach to communicate his government's disapproval of the Mexican position on this matter.

Less than a month after having packed his bags and headed off for Los Angeles, Gavin made one more decision, which was really the crowning blow to his years of heavy-handed diplomacy in Mexico. A few days after the U.S. bombing of Libya, the embassy stopped issuing visas to Mexicans who wished to travel to the U.S.

The measure affected an average of one thousand people a day. (The U.S. embassy in Mexico, together with those in London and Manila issue more visas than in any other countries around the world). Gavin defended the decision on the basis of "security concerns" and fear that there might be a Libyan attack against the diplomatic mission. Nonetheless, in other cities where the U.S. embassies would have been more logical targets for Libyan retaliations, no such drastic measures were taken. Once again the ambassador acted in the severest possible way. Today, this is one of the characteristics of the diplomatic relationship that Gavin's possible successor, Charles Pilliod, will inherit.★

Blanche Petrich

## THE WORLD SOCCER CUP IS HERE!

*During the month of June, all of Mexico's attention will focus on a soccer extravaganza that is half sport, half ritual. What is its social and economic importance for a country in crisis?*

For the first time in the 56 year-old history of international soccer championships, a country will get to host the games for a second time.\* That country is Mexico.

Teams from twenty-four countries, which have survived arduous play-offs to classify for the event, will compete in games to be held at 12 Mexican stadiums between May 31 and June 29. They will be participating in the most important professional sports event in the world, the World Soccer Championship, held only once every four years.

Unlike the first time Mexico hosted the games, this time the country is in the midst of the worst economic crisis in its history. Because of the crisis, many people are thinking about the possible social and economic consequences of the World Cup. Some critics ask whether the event will actually help the country's economy, or if it's an unnecessary luxury, or even worse, if it is a means of shifting people's attention away from the country's dire situation.

Some people believe that the international event will launch Mexico on its way to economic recovery. They think foreign investors will be very impressed with the excellent organiza-

\* Twelve World Cups have been held up to date: Uruguay in 1930, Italy in 1934, France in 1938, Brazil in 1950, Switzerland in 1954, Sweden in 1958, Chile in 1962, England in 1966, Mexico in 1970, Germany in 1974, Argentina in 1978 and Spain in 1982.

tion of the games and that the projection of this positive image will make them be willing to risk their capital in Mexico. "The World Cup will create an image abroad that goes beyond the sports arena," says Sergio Pelaez, press director for the World Cup 86 Organizing Committee.

On the other hand, others believe that "The World Cup deforms the reality of Mexico, because we are not a spendthrift country". Some positions are even more critical. "The event will do nothing to resolve the crisis we're in," says former vice-president of the National Association of Economists, David Colmenares Paramo. Even some people in the world of soccer express this point of view. "My opinion is that the World Cup 86 will not benefit the country," says



Preparations underway in the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Ignacio Trellez, a controversial figure, who for over 30 years has worked as technical director of Mexican soccer and was head coach of the country's national team in the World Cups held in Chile and England.

Some of the players also worry that the joys of being a spectator are effectively reserved only for the well-to-do. The people who traditionally flock to soccer games are often from the country's poorer strata. Nonetheless, they will be unable to attend the world playoffs because "admission prices are totally out of reach for people who earn the minimum wage," says Javier Aguirre, a key player on this year's Mexican team and who also has a degree in business administration.

But none of this means that the Mexican government is turning a profit on the people's poverty. In fact, Javier Aguirre admits that the largest profits probably won't go to the government. Over eighty percent of the organization of the event is in the hands of the private sector. One can suppose then, that the profits and benefits will be accrued in a similar proportion.

The Organizing Committee's press office said that the sale of three million tickets (60% in Mexico and 40% abroad) will bring in some \$73 million. But according to Colmenares

Paramo, the real profits are in the sale of television broadcasting rights. As of early this year the privately-owned Mexican television stations raised their price for a minute's worth of advertising for prime viewing time (between 7 and 11 pm.) from 1,200,000 pesos to 1,704,000 pesos (approximately \$3,500).\* Programs about the upcoming championship event are already being shown during this time slot. And during the entire month of June it will be the most important time for game-by-game commentary as the play-offs build to the finals.

The games will be transmitted to 122 countries worldwide. Advertising during the games will cost an astronomical three million dollars a minute! This is three times as much as during the World Cup held in Spain in 1982. Those profits will not pour into government coffers, however, but rather into those of Televisa, the corporation that owns the international broadcasting rights.

Sergio Pelaez says World Cup profits will be distributed among FIFA members (Federation of International Football.\*\* Associations), the Mexican Organizing Committee, the 24 participating teams and the Mexican teams that are providing their stadiums for the games.

Estimates are that this year's World Cup games will be viewed by some 9 billion people around the world, according to Arturo Barcena who heads the Organizing Committee's media department. This impressive number of viewers is a large part of what made Mexico want to host the games in the first place. In times of crisis, when some of the media in the developed countries insist on emphasizing the country's negative aspects, it's important to project its positive aspects, as well as the Mexican people's natural generosity. The 1986 World Cup is the ideal means for achieving this.

In addition to all that has been said, the main fear in Mexico, really, is that the national team could be a failure.

Mexico has never been a soccer powerhouse. On this occasion, though, a lot of time and energy have been put into preparing a very solid team. It is not necessarily expected to win the World Cup, but it is expected to reach the finals and at least satisfy its fans with the quality of its playing. Team member Javier Aguirre goes so far as to suggest that the country's social and economic problems could take a turn for the worse if there is a replay of the failure in the last three World Cup series (Mexico was eliminated by tiny Haiti in the qualifying rounds and didn't even get to the finals in 1974; it



People who suffered damages during the earthquake protest against the world Cup. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Pelaez also estimates that investments in infrastructure will be less than the costs involved in organizing the event. "We have enough infrastructure: highways, airports, hotels, satellites, security, stadiums. The heavy outlays were made for the 1968 Olympics and the 1970 World Cup. From here on, it's all profits..."

\* Obviously there is no comparison between these figures and the cost of advertising on prime time in the U.S. but these are the highest in Latin America with the exception of Brazil and Venezuela.

\*\* "Football" refers here to soccer. The sport is known as "football" everywhere in the world except in the U.S.

ended up in last place in 1978 following an ignoble defeat by Morocco; in 1982 Mexico was once again eliminated in the qualifying rounds, this time by Honduras and El Salvador). But the fact is that the country's present situation can't be changed by the effects of the World Cup. What can change is the nation's morale. "Maybe the Mexican people will be euphoric and take things in stride," says economist Colmenares Paramo. "But if our national squad fails you can imagine how the people will react to price increases in public services or basic foodstuffs."

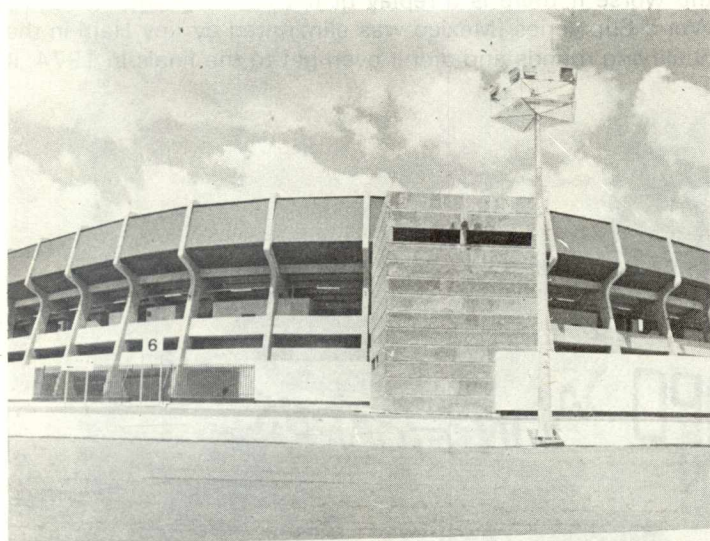
Others criticize the FIFA for what they call its arrogance and overbearing attitude. "I think the FIFA is the main threat to

the Mexican government," says Colmenares Paramo. The leeway allowed to FIFA is "a great political risk" because it has been allowed "states of exception" in monetary and fiscal matters, and even in regards to the infrastructure to be used, claims the former vice-president of the National Association of Economists.

FIFA has "demanded more than is reasonable," says former national coach Ignacio Trellez. And in the characteristic roguish spirit that has earned him more than a few enemies in the local sports world, he adds that from a sociological perspective, the World Cup will be "a kind of circus."

As the opening date for the World Cup nears, some worry about a possible social turmoil such as the one that took place on the eve of the 1968 Olympics. Arturo Barcena for one, dismisses the idea. "Nobody is trying to use the World Cup to erase the tragedy of last September's earthquake nor the effects of the economic crisis we're going through. We're all affected by the crisis...it's different from what happened in 1968."

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The Corregidora Stadium in Querétaro. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

What is certain is that Mexico will go through 30 days of yelling, tears, laughter and embraces. Mexico will once again host an international event that will put us in the global limelight and will attract millions of European and American fans whose affluence and goodwill toward our country is more welcome today than ever before. There is no doubt that as of May 31, the criticism and complaints will die down as thousands in Mexican stadiums and many millions more in front of their television sets yell "Goaaal" in an unparalleled mingling of languages.★

Adriana de la Mora



Foreign Affairs Ministers Sepúlveda and D'Escoto. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

## MEXICO AND CONTADORA

*The Contadora Peace Plan is one of the outstanding and least known achievements of Mexico's Foreign policy. Here are some of the reasons why Contadora was instituted and why Mexico defends it dearly.*

For the past three years Mexico has been an active force in the Contadora peace process and has used that forum as the most important instrument of its Central America policy. Alarmed by the potential consequences of a regional war on its southern border, the Mexican government has undertaken intensive diplomatic efforts in an attempt to bring peace to the region. Despite these efforts, the Central

American crisis has deepened and the possibilities of a rapid solution seem to be farther off than ever. Even Bernardo Sepúlveda, Mexico's Foreign Minister, has acknowledged that the Central American problem "will be with us for a long time to come."

The principal obstacle facing the policy put forth by Mexico and the other members of the Contadora Group (Venezuela, Colombia and Panama) is the U.S. position on the region. While both Contadora and Washington maintain that their objective is peace in Central America, their respective analyses of the crisis and their proposed methods for resolving it are quite different. For the



Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernardo Sepúlveda. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Reagan administration an acceptable settlement can only be reached by exerting strong military pressure on the Sandinista government through the use of counter-revolutionary groups. Contadora, on the other hand, holds that military pressure must be put aside and that a satisfactory agreement can only be achieved through political negotiations. Mexico's participation in

ilateral and isolated manner, deliberately avoiding proselytism. After May 20, 1979 when President Jose Lopez Portillo decided to break relations with the Nicaraguan government headed by Anastasio Somoza, Mexico began to implement a more active foreign policy, defining a clear political commitment and actively lobbying to achieve its objectives. The

### The Effects of the War

Mexico's intensive Central America policy is not only an expression of its anti-interventionist tradition, but is also a response to the country's very specific interests. According to Mexican scholar Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, "the reason for Mexico's involvement is simple and direct: the geographical border for counter-revolution is precisely the southern border with Guatemala." Thus, it can be said that the Central American crisis is a matter of Mexican sovereignty, interests and national security. The Mexican government fears what some investigators have called a "geopolitical cordon" established by the United States.

Mexico's notion of national security is rather distinct from the conception developed by ideologues in the United States. For Mexico, the principal external threat to its internal political order comes from its neighboring countries and not from international Communist infiltration. Thus, a regional war in Central America would reduce Mexico's possibilities of political

independence and thus, its own traditional vision of external security.

In addition, Mexico has already felt the immediate effects of the conflict: nearly half a million refugees (mostly Salvadoreans and Guatemalans), constant friction with Washington's policy and ongoing internal political debate regarding the position that the Mexican government should assume toward the regional crisis. Mexico urgently needs peace in Central America. But Mexican leaders know that there can be no peace unless the emerging political forces in Central America are recognized and integrated into the system. These new forces must be taken into account, they reason, because they arose from the real, internal conditions in the countries involved, and besides, the use of force will only push them into the Communist camp. This conception led to Mexico's decision to recognize the Salvadorean insurgency.

### A New Diplomatic Style

The Contadora Group was established in January 1983, just one month after



Guillermo Manuel Ungo, President of the FDR. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Contadora has its roots in the country's long tradition of independent foreign policy, characterized by its commitment to anti-intervention and a people's right to self-determination. Nonetheless, Mexico's growing diplomatic activity regarding Central America has produced important modifications in this tradition. Until 1979, Mexico's anti-interventionist policy was "passive, defensive and legalistic." It was implemented in specific cases as a form of protest and was presented in a un-

French-Mexican Declaration, issued in August 1981, that formally recognized the Salvadorean insurgency, was a further ratification of this new style of Mexican diplomacy. According to some analysts, oil formed the material basis that allowed Mexico to move from its previous foreign policy posture, active, but still quite limited to declarative or rhetorical efforts, to a more aggressive policy based on actions and on Mexico's effective presence in the problem at hand, especially in Central America.



The Peace March in support of the Contadora Group. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Miguel de la Madrid became Mexico's president. Making use of this regional diplomatic forum, he has promoted a foreign policy that includes new approaches and tactics, although it retains its continuity with the policies of previous administrations. With Contadora, Mexican diplomacy took on a multilateral approach and was thus obliged to negotiate even its own previously held positions. This has meant that Mexico's Central America policy has become more discreet and that the government has had to moderate its friendly attitude toward the Sandinistas. With the Contadora process, Mexico took on the role of active mediator. It became an intermediary after having been a partisan. One example of this change is De la Madrid's role as the principal promoter of direct talks between Washington and Managua. As Mexico has adopted this more neutral position it has played a very important role in urging the Sandinistas to moderate their political postures. For Mexico, the success of the Contadora peace effort would mean stability on is

southern border and with that, the possibilities of economic development, political pluralism and the exercise of the right to self-determination for Central America. Nonetheless, and despite support from the international community, Contadora has faced serious difficulties, at times to the point that it seemed likely to die. Pressures from Washington, and the intransigence of the Central American governments have impeded the Group's work. Time and again in the last three years it was announced that an agreement was imminent, but efforts have yet to culminate in a signed accord. As 1986 began, Contadora's future seemed somewhat optimistic. The fact that three new governments would be inaugurated (in Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica) opened more room for political negotiation. With the Caraballeda Message and the Guatemala Declaration, the Central American countries and the Contadora support group (Argentina, Peru, Uruguay and Brazil) revived the peace efforts. The normalization of

diplomatic relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica also helped to create a greater climate of detente and moderation in the isthmus. Nonetheless, as Secretary Sepulveda stated, there are no easy solutions for the Central American crisis. The Reagan administration's insistence on giving military aid to Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary groups pre-

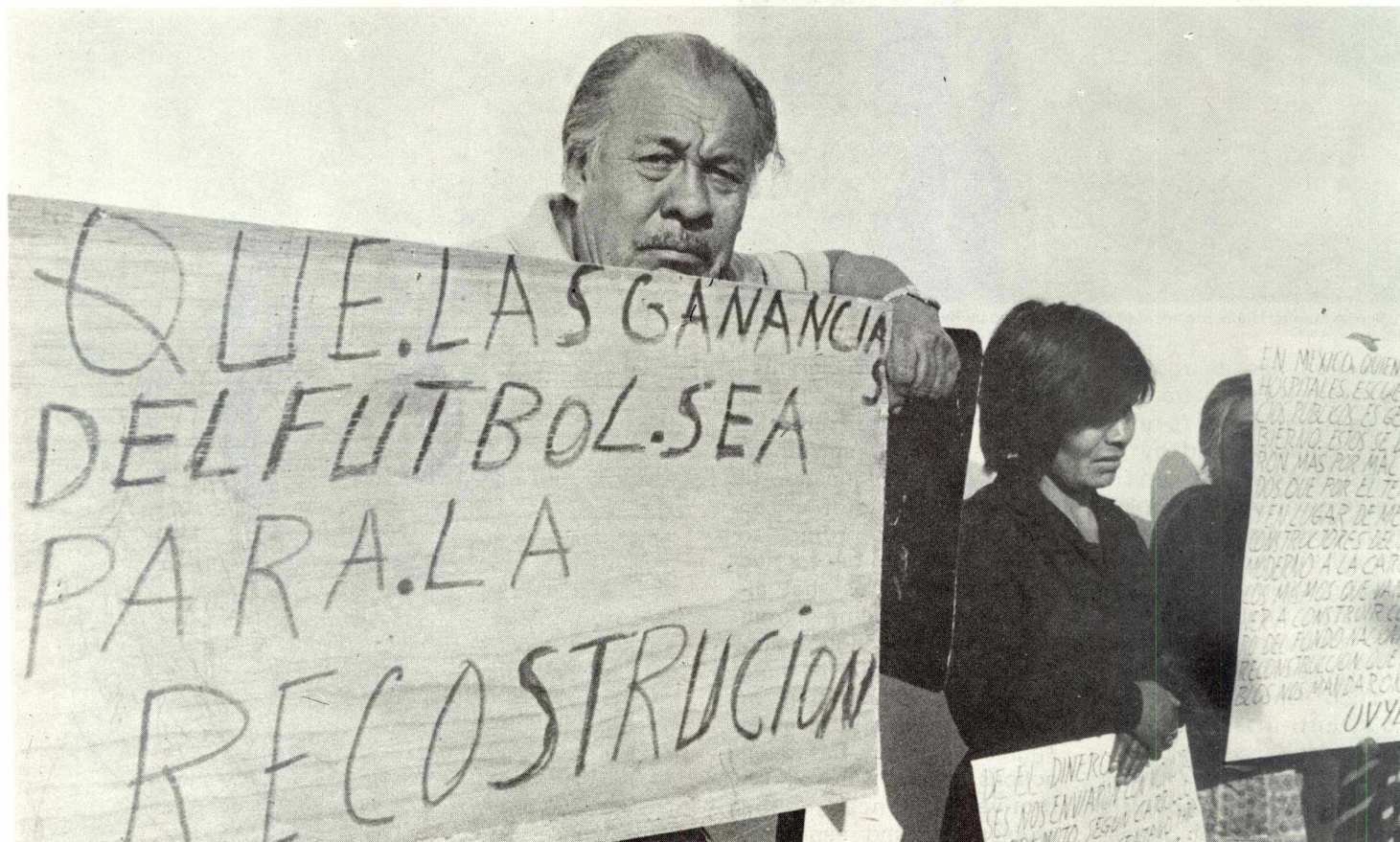
sents a major obstacle to the peace effort. Mexico and other Latin American countries fear that this policy can only lead to direct military intervention in Nicaragua, and that would surely engulf the region in flames and bring to a sudden end the course of contemporary Latin American history.★

Horacio Castellanos Moya

## AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, THE CITY REBUILDS

*Eight months ago, Mexico City was devastated by a killer earthquake that caused over 20,000 deaths and changed the city's center forever. Both its survivors and the government are rebuilding.*

The lives of people in Mexico City were tragically disrupted eight months ago. The initial feelings of impotence and despair soon turned into solidarity and concern. Essential emergency and rescue work was taken up by ordinary people on such a scale that the government recently granted the



"Profits from the World Cup should go to reconstruction". Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

September 19 Medal, created especially to reward the efforts of the city's common people during the emergency, to over 4,000 volunteers. Today, results in home-rebuilding are being achieved by the very same people who were made homeless by the quake.

The tragedy aggravated previously existing problems. The destruction of thousands of homes, most of which had been built to house Mexico City's first factory workers, was added to the effects that the current economic crisis has on the lives of working class families.

When last September many of the city's working class barrios became disaster areas, thousands of people joined in emergency work. Brigades were formed to distribute food, women cooked hundreds of meals a day, rescue teams sprang

women and children desperately combed the ruins in search of a trapped family member or of lost belongings and remembrances.

Mercedes Lopez, a young 24 year old volunteer, said last September: "In Tepito -one of the barrios in Morelos- people are desolate. They stand in front of their wrecked homes and don't know what to do. The buildings that are still standing have large cracks in the walls, and the people are out in the open. Many lost their businesses. Some were fighting each other over the aid that was coming in. When we (the volunteers) arrived in the neighborhood people would pull us into their homes. They'd ask us who was going to rebuild their houses, as if we were representing the government."

The people of Morelos worked out an answer some six

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The day after. Photo by Jesús Carlos.

up overnight, technicians shored up damaged roofs and repaired information and transport networks. The heavily populated neighborhoods of Morelos, Guerrero, Centro, Tlatelolco, Emilio Carranza, Roma, Doctores, Peralvillo and many others, vibrated with activity.

The city no longer seems to have been devastated by war, nor is the broad sense of solidarity still with us. There were still 23 thousand people living out in the open in March, and another 30 thousand live with relatives or have returned to their damaged homes although they are unsuitable and unsafe.

As in many things, there are two sides to the process of rebuilding housing in Mexico City. On the one hand, the government issued a decree expropriating over 3,000 city lots and buildings and set up a special government agency to carry out the housing renovation program. But on the other hand, many of the actual short-term solutions to the problem are coming from the people directly affected by the earthquake.

Government priority has been to restore damaged health and education facilities, and this has been an important factor in leading the **damnificados** (the people directly affected by the earthquake) to start rebuilding their own homes. Ismael Hernandez, long time resident of the Morelos neighborhood, and a member of the Popular Tenants Union, says: "We organized ourselves to clean up the rubble right after the earthquake. We decided to put our houses back on their feet ourselves because we don't want to go on being the same (people)."

Living quarters, stores and small family work shops line the narrow streets of Morelos. When it was semi-destroyed, men,

months later. "The tenants themselves are building their own housing," says Ismael Hernandez. "At the beginning of our eight-hour voluntary work day we talk and agree on a division of tasks. We are instructed by our master bricklayer and by young architects from the National University. They show us how to build a wall, how to mix cement and sand, how to lay foundations."

Juan Carlos works along with Ismael. He believes that the tenants' reconstruction work is a turning point in their lives. "We've learned bricklaying, electricity and plumbing. Women have played a very important role. They carry bricks, bring in the sand and help the bricklayers. Youngsters have also been of immense help, as many of them have stopped going to school to work full time on reconstruction. You can't go to school when you're living out on the street."

The earthquake damaged 60% of the housing in the Colonia Morelos. The Tenants Union has drawn up a series of reconstruction projects with the help of architects from the nonprofit association House and City. Housing at Relojeros 42, Pintores 86 and Tapiceria 88\* is already in the process of being rebuilt. Special attention is paid to respect for local custom, such as the inner patio that is held in common by all tenants.

Manuel Rodriguez is a leader of the Tenants Union. He talks about the consciousness-raising effect these six intense

\* These colorful names are reminders of the Colonia's origins, a neighborhood of artisans: watchmakers, painters, upholstery.

months of work are having on people. "The quakes generated consciousness on the need to help each other, a kind of solidarity which wouldn't exist in Mexico City under normal conditions. Now we can say we are going to rebuild our homes and keep our barrio."

Along with other social consequences, the 1985 earthquake gave rise to problems that have stimulated communal organization in the barrios. Instead of passively waiting for others to propose solutions or start the work, the Colonia Guerrero is another example of a neighborhood that now boasts several housing units rebuilt by their inhabitants. There is a sense of urgency in the work, both in the need to build altogether new housing and in the job of shoring up and remodeling damaged structures. The heavy rainy season

habitants of the lots and buildings expropriated by the Mexico City government shortly after the earthquake. A total of 45,000 certificates, in which the government agrees to repair damages or build new housing, will eventually be distributed. Nonetheless, the leaders of the Colonia Guerrero's Tenants Union still fear their proposals won't be entirely taken into account. Manuel Muñoz, spoke to us at the Union's headquarters, set up nine years ago when two buildings in the neighborhood collapsed. "We neighbors of Guerrero want a reconstruction project that will respect our roots in the barrio and our organized participation in the work," said Manuel.

In order to dispel such fears, last March President Miguel de la Madrid personally inspected the Housing Renovation

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Refuge for earthquake victims at Tlatelolco. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

starts in May and brings with it the danger that damaged walls and roofs may cave in.

Other Colonias, such as Doctores and Roma, managed to find funding for their reconstruction projects with religious groups and nonprofit organizations. The Tenants Union in Doctores has completed projects for rehabilitating 32 buildings which will house 357 families. The neighborhood organization said that 40 million pesos (some \$80,000) came from UNESCO, and another 31 million (some \$62,000) have been provided by a nonprofit group called Peace and Development.

The old downtown area has 1,500 affected families, and 278 inhabited buildings are in danger of collapsing. There is no registered legal owner for these buildings, so there is nobody the tenants can buy them from. This type of problem led people to set up an organization that coordinates the efforts of those with loss of or damage to their living quarters because of the earthquake. Despite the government's good will and efforts, this problem and others have yet to be resolved.

On the other hand, the General Office for Housing Renovation distributed over 26,000 certificates of ownership to the in-

Program to see how it was being carried out. "I will accept neither bureaucratic fumbling nor resistance on the part of lower level government employees to hinder or slow down the program," said the president.

The grassroots organizations also mean to act against bureaucratic botching. The Coordinating Committee is working to mobilize the Mexican people to guarantee that the president's intentions are fully carried out. They also mean to push for the dismissal of incompetent public employees involved in reconstruction programs.

In the words of Ismael, long time dweller of the Morelos barrio, "We will never be the same again." The disaster that struck the city actually opened the way for vigorous people to rebuild their homes and themselves.

There is little doubt that if it weren't for the international pressures that force the country to dedicate most of its income to paying off its foreign debt, Mexico would be completely rebuilt by now, and more vigorous than ever. ★

Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán



## IT'S ELECTION TIME AGAIN

*Mexico's local elections have generated controversial responses on the part of the U.S. press. They are viewed differently from this side of the border.*

In what could be termed a national referendum two-thirds of the way into President Miguel de la Madrid's six-year term, some 14,339,915 Mexicans will exercise their voting rights during 1986. They will elect 14 state governors, 1,154 mayors and 300 state legislators. Between July and December of this year, half of Mexico's citizens will vote to elect local authorities, choosing from among the country's nine political parties, whose politics range from the conservative National Action Party (PAN) to the Trotskyite Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT).

In view of the size of its membership and of the vote it has garnered in past elections, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has thirteen state governorships practically sown up. However, the PRI will face a strong challenge from the PAN in the border state of Chihuahua. As regards the state legislatures, the PRI will lose at least the 78 seats reserved for the losing parties according to the constitutional formula which provides them with proportional representation. In this way, minority parties are not excluded from state legislatures.

The states to hold elections this year are: Aguascalientes (293,488 registered voters), Chihuahua (1,190,670 voters), Durango (670,885 voters), Guerrero (1,093,364 voters), Michoacan (1,456,323

voters), Oaxaca (1,223,819 voters), Puebla (1,676,498 voters), Sinaloa (1,037,963 voters), Tamaulipas (1,064,695), Tlaxcala (300,028 voters), Veracruz (2,750,980 voters) and Zacatecas (580,849 voters). Since these states are located in different geographic areas and include many of the country's varied regional, socio-economic and political contexts, this year's elections could well be considered a sort of national referendum on the Mexican people's political leanings, as they face the worst economic crisis of their history.

In the North, a clear political tendency has emerged in favor of the PAN. Of the many attempts to explain this phenomenon, the most convincing appears to be the relatively great degree of social mobility experienced in the region in recent years, with the rapid emergence of a strong middle class. This social mobility was brought to an abrupt halt by the economic crisis.

According to recent polls, the rising popularity of conservative politics will have a notable effect on the coming elections in the state capitals of Sinaloa, Durango and Baja California. The PRI has to face the very real possibility of losing Culiacan,

capital of Sinaloa and commercial center for the agricultural life of northeast Mexico. The same holds true for Durango, capital of Durango state and the capital of Baja California, Mexicali, which borders on the U.S. If recent tendencies hold true, a two-party system of sorts will be reinforced, or at least maintained, in these three cities. In the last national elections, held in July 1985, the results were as follows: in Sinaloa, the PAN won 17.9% of the vote, the PRI won 70.5%, while a third party, the United Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM) won 3.62%. In Durango, the PAN received 26.22% and the PRI 66.38%, while the Socialist Workers Party (PST) garnered 1.70%. And in Baja California, the PAN received 25.93%, the PRI 46.56% and the PST 5.49% of the vote.

The primary challenge to the PRI, however, and where most of the attention will be focused, will be in the Chihuahua state-wide elections, despite the fact that the state accounts for only four per cent of the nation's electorate. The interest in Chihuahua springs from the fact that the opposition National Action Party (PAN) currently holds the mayorship in both the capital city and Ciudad Juarez, the state's most important city. Together, the two cities account for more than half of the state's voters.

Counting on support from economically powerful business groups, the PAN claims that it will win the mayoral races in both these cities, as well as the governor's seat. No opposition party has ever won a governorship in any state of the Republic. Since its founding as the bearer of the values and traditions of the Mexican Revolution, the PRI's candidates have always triumphed at the polls.

The recent electoral advances of the PAN in Chihuahua grew out of the September 1982 Presidential decree which nationalized private banking in the country. The powerful **Chihuahua Group**, a



Election day. Photo by Renzo Gostoli

veritable empire of financial, industrial, commercial and agricultural interests, resented the expropriation of its banks. The head of the **Group** and one of the country's richest men, Eloy Vallina Laguera, made his feelings public on December 2, 1982: "They took a bank from me, so I'm going to take Chihuahua from them." He certainly took important steps towards that goal when PAN candidates triumphed in the municipal elections in that state's principal cities. Since then, some 1,575,000 residents of Chihuahua have been governed by mayors from the PAN.

The economic resources of the **Chihuahua Group** have worked towards establishing an electoral beachhead in Ciudad Juarez. The PAN candidate, Francisco Barrio Terrazas, was an employee of assembly-industry magnate Antonio Bermudez. Bermudez used his economic muscle to support Barrio Terrazas's candidacy in Ciudad Juarez. Meanwhile in the state capital, the PAN candidate was party standard-bearer and ex-presidential candidate Luis Alvarez, who was backed by Eloy Vallina. Both candidates won.

Nevertheless, the panorama has changed substantially

for this year's elections. Eloy Vallina, head of the **Chihuahua Group**, has abandoned his search for revenge and has returned to the Institutional Revolutionary Party. He was named state-wide Director of the Center for Political, Economic and Social Studies, a PRI think-tank. And his money now fills the coffers of the ruling party. In Ciudad Juarez, Bermudez has also returned to the ranks of the majority party and was named PRI candidate in the city's mayoral race. His former subordinate, Francisco Barrio Terrazas, is the PAN candidate for state governor. As its candidate, for governor, the PRI named Fernando Baeza Melendez, another long-time associate of the **Chihuahua Group**. It therefore seems probable that the Chihuahua elections, despite the opposition's expectations, will have results similar to those of last year's federal elections when the PAN received 36.01% of the vote, the PRI, 56.12% and in third place, the Revolutionary Workers Party, with 2.04% of the vote.★

Pablo Hiriart



The bodies are brought in from Michoacán. Photo by Luis Humberto González.

## CONCERN IN THE WAKE OF MEXICANA AIRLINE'S CRASH

*There was widespread speculation that terrorists had brought down the Mexicana jet that crashed in Michoacan. This does not seem to be the case.*

It was a conversation that presaged death:

Guadarrama: Mexico, Mexicana 940 requests permission to reduce altitude.

Control: Mexicana 940, proceed.

Guadarrama: MX 940, emergency. Mexicana 940 requests permission to return to Mexico City.

Control: Mexicana 940 proceed.

Guadarrama: MX 940 requests lower altitude.

Control: MX requests lower altitude from 280?

Guadarrama: MX 940, emergency. Request permission to return to Mexico City.

Control: MX ACC 940, 940 is authorized to descend to 200.

Right turn directly to vor (initials of an electronic radio assistance team) of Mexico City.

Guadarrama: MX ACC, Mexicana 940, Control Mexico...

Control: Mexicana 940, can you hear me!!

These were the last words of Captain Carlos Guadarrama Sixtos, chief of the crew on board Mexicana's flight 940 bound for Los Angeles, via Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan, from Mexico City. The plane exploded 105 kilometers from Mexico City, killing all 166 people on board.

The March 31 accident shocked the entire nation. The same day, President Miguel de la Madrid ordered "a complete and detailed investigation to determine the cause of the accident" to be carried out by the Communications and Transportation Ministry.

Daniel Diaz Diaz, Secretary of the Ministry entrusted with the investigation, declared that the contents of the plane's black box would clarify the cause of the accident and that a detailed report would be forthcoming. "It is an extremely sensitive matter," he stated, "and will require an analysis of all available information."

The Airlines Pilots' Union (ASPA) sent six technicians to the scene of the crash and were able to determine that human error had not been a factor in the accident.

Congress called the director of Mexicana Airlines, Manuel Sosa de la Vega, to testify after comments began to circulate, which laid the blame for the accident on inadequate maintenance.

It was Mexicana's first accident in 17 years. The last two accidents were both in 1969. The first was on July 4th, when a plane crashed into a mountainside near Monterrey. Seventy-two people died in that crash, including Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) activist, Carlos A. Madrazo and tennis player, Rafael Osuna. The other crash occurred near Texcoco on September 21; there were 18 dead and 91 survivors. Among the survivors of that accident was Esther Macias, a stewardess who later retired to marry Pilot Carlos Guardarrama. She was on Flight 940, this time as a passenger, along with her two-year old son. They died together with everyone else on board.

There are some 1500 Boeing 727s flying around the world; the one that exploded on March 31 near Maravatio,

Michoacan, was built in 1981. It was one of the most modern planes in the Mexicana Airlines fleet.

A few days after the accident, different stories began to circulate. Some claimed that the crash was the result of a terrorist attack. Others asserted that it was the result of a mechanical failure since "Mexicana Airlines planes are not properly maintained." But, in fact, there has yet to be an official explanation of the crash.

One extra-official version indicated that there was a rapid depressurization when the plane suddenly lost altitude. People have speculated that the drop in pressure was caused by a tire exploding in the plane's belly. The tire supposedly exploded after overheating on take-off when improperly functioning brakes kept it from spinning freely. Nonetheless, no one has been able to explain yet how the exploding tire could have set off a fire.

The official silence concerning the crash has generated a great deal of mystery. The problem, then of course, is that if there are no first-hand sources of information available to the public, there is more room for sensationalism and idle speculation. That is what has happened to date in this case.

Journalists, Mexican businessmen and the League of Arab States in Mexico have all denied the stories that the crash was the product of a terrorist attack. Such versions are clearly sensationalist and have been put out by groups whose own

interests may be involved in the matter. In an interview, Mr. Salcedo asked, "How can it be that there are people who categorically affirm that it was a terrorist attack when detailed findings of the investigation have yet to be released?" At any rate, even if it did turn out that there was terrorist involvement in the accident, the treatment of the event "has taken advantage of our innocence."

On six occasions in the course of the interview, Mr. Salcedo reiterated that the accident was totally abnormal. The Boeing 727 had been very carefully checked before take-off, the weather was fine and the plane's captain, Carlos Guadarrama, had been a pilot for 14 of his 36 years. In principle, he explained that there must have been an explosion. But that doesn't mean that it was caused by a bomb. There might have been some kind of prohibited cargo on board, like paint thinner or some other flammable material that could have provoked the accident.

A further problem, according to Salcedo, is that pilots, stewardesses and passengers have all fallen victim to a kind of psychosis. Almost a month after the accident happened, not even the first stage of the investigation has been made public.

The Treasurer of the Mexican Association of Foreign Correspondents in Mexico, Renso Gostoli, claimed that in general, the authorities had made their reporting very difficult.



Mexicana flight 940 after the crash. Photo by Archivo La Jornada.

interests may be involved in the matter. It is also important to remember that it is quite fashionable right now to talk about the need to combat terrorism.

The League of Arab States in Mexico coincided with Mexican official positions regarding the possible role of terrorism in the accident. The League stated, "It is criminal to attribute false terrorist acts to groups whose very existence is doubtful, maliciously confusing them with other organizations whose struggles for liberation are legitimate." The Arab League has categorically denied versions which claim that some Arab group was involved in an attack on the plane. It condemned the political manipulation of the crash by groups interested in using the tragedy to further their own ends. And it added that the real acts of terrorism in the world are being carried out by countries that want to deny entire peoples their most basic rights, as in the case of the Palestinians, Lebanese and Libyans. Finally, the League calls on people to refrain from "irresponsible speculation regarding the supposed causes of the crash."

The "premeditated insistence" on the part of the United States that the crash was the result of a terrorist attack was the object of commentary by Jesus Salcedo, President of the Mexican Association of Airport Reporters. "It really intrigues me," he stated, "especially since Reagan has appointed

As a photographer, Gostoli complained that "we were not given access to the accident site; really we were blocked from going in." The Attorney General's office put excessive security measures into effect at the site, which was guarded by federal and state detectives, armed with USL machine guns and AR-15 and M-1 rifles.

According to Jorge Kahwagi, Vice-President of the National Chamber of Transformation Industries, the officials responsible for providing complete information on the Mexicana crash must think "that we are minors. It's like parents who think that some topic is too delicate to discuss in front of their children." He ended by saying, "I think that disinformation or incomplete information is a very serious matter because it can cause alarm and because influential people can use it to make a bad situation even worse."

Despite the fact that it has yet to be made public, the official investigation is moving forward and will soon be finished. In the meantime, all Mexicana and Aeromexico Airlines planes are being rigorously checked. The only consequences for passengers have been delays at take-off, but no one is complaining about that very much since they know that it's for their own safety and the safety of their families.★

Adriana de la Mora

# "WE HAVE OUR OWN INTERESTS"

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## An interview with Sergio Aguayo.

*Recently, conflicting points of view between the United States and Mexico on questions such as Central America, migrant labor and drug-smuggling have brought relations between the two countries to an all-time low. Here, the ensuing attacks on Mexico in the U.S. media have led some people to believe that not only are we misunderstood by our big neighbor to the north, but that there may actually be a campaign to make Mexico look bad in the eyes of the U.S. public. To assess such matters, VOICES OF MEXICO's Rafael Azuela met with Sergio Aguayo, one of the country's leading experts on Mexico-U.S. relations and a Senior Researcher at the Center for International Studies of El Colegio de Mexico. Excerpts:*

### **What are the basic characteristics of how Mexico is viewed in the U.S.?**

The U.S. regards us through the prism of its own interests, and these have undergone changes throughout the years. So, over time the U.S. view of Mexico has changed, but the constant reference point is a stable Mexico that follows a development model in basic accordance with U.S. interests.

I'd say that there have been three distinct stages in the way the U.S. has viewed Mexico during the post-war period. The Cold war was a first stage. Between 1956 and the early 60s Mexico was regarded as an imperfect democracy that would eventually evolve into a political system more similar to that of the U.S. We can take Robert Scott's book as an example. He describes a point of view regarding our economy that does not totally approve of the role of the state in the economy, or with PEMEX being state-owned. Nevertheless, there was an overall positive view of Mexico.

Rebellious minorities and the movement against the Viet Nam War in the 60s brought about changes in the U.S. view of the Third World, and Mexico. Serious doubts arose concerning the stability of the Mexican political system and the efficiency of its economic model. By the 70s serious differences had developed concerning the situation in Mexico. There are significant differences between liberals and conservatives, and the main point of conflict and misunderstanding is Mexico's foreign policy.

But when we speak of how Mexico is viewed in the U.S., we should distinguish two different levels. The first is U.S. society in general, that tends to know very little about Mexico and works from a series of stereotypes, which do not correspond with reality. But most important is what the establishment thinks, the point of view of the foreign policy elite. All of what I have been saying refers to this elite, which includes government, business, academics and the press. It's important to understand what these four sectors are thinking.

### **To what extent does the view of the press influence economic and political policy makers?**

I think it's very important and influential, particularly the major press. About ten newspapers really have an influence on the



Sergio Aguayo. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

elite, among them the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, etc. But there are some deep differences between what the press considers to be in the U.S. national interest and the government point of view. During the Cold War period there seemed to be a basic consensus on foreign policy between this elite,—the press, academics, Congress, the bureaucracy— and the executive branch. That came to an end, basically with Viet Nam and Watergate. Now the press has a considerable degree of autonomy, although it does not challenge the basic tenets of the U.S. system. There are differences of nuance vis a vis the strategy to be followed toward a certain government, a certain country. In this sense, what the press says is very important.

### **To what extent are the elites also influenced by stereotypes?**

I think there has been a clear improvement in the quality of analysis on Mexico. Nevertheless, there are still a series of er-

rors that can be attributed to the idiosyncrasy of these elites or to the very nature of their point of view. Let me mention two of these. Concerning Mexico, the main deficiency one finds in the U.S. press is that the United States itself is absent. Over 95% of the time when the economic crisis, corruption or the drug problem are analyzed, there is no mention of the U.S. as an important factor, although not the only one of course, in shaping the situation under discussion.

Let's take Alan Riding's work.\* Throughout the eleven years that Riding was in Mexico and even in his book there is a great gap in his analysis, that of the role of the U.S. in Mexico's life. Why is this? Well, because there's an ongoing process of ignoring something that we find personally painful or critical. If North Americans base their point of view on the premise that their political and economic system is the best in the world and that Mexico must follow suit, this often makes it difficult for them to consider the negative impact that the U.S. can sometimes have on Mexico.

The U.S., or the U.S. press implicitly or explicitly propose a capitalist model to resolve Mexico's crisis, and Mexican private enterprise is seen as the potential savior. But they don't realize that we are speaking of different species of animals. They take the U.S. private sector as the model, but it in no way resembles the Mexican private sector, which is as corrupt and inefficient as is the state, and this can be supported with examples.

Either their own interests, or the very strength of their beliefs, then, often lead U.S. elites to an incomplete analysis of what is happening in Mexico. But if you tell them this, they get annoyed and say you are a radical, or they react with surprise or cynicism. There's an anecdote that's worth telling. When I was working on my doctoral thesis (which will be published as a book), I did an in-depth analysis of Alan Riding's work. I interviewed him as he was finishing his book and asked him why he didn't include the role of the U.S. in the formulation of Mexican policy. His answer was, "I have no explanation for that." I think that rather than not having an explanation, Alan Riding was dishonest. In all truth, he was clearly conscious of the impact of the U.S., but he refused to deal with it. Why? He obviously had his own interests in mind. Either the New York Times wouldn't publish him or he was afraid of being seen as a radical.

**What kind of political framework does the U.S. use to judge Mexico?**

\* Distant Neighbors

I believe that since the Viet Nam War, and then after August 1971, when Richard Nixon annulled a series of agreements which had regulated the post-World War II global economic system, most U.S. authors recognized that the U.S. has been losing power. Thus, for the last ten or fifteen years the U.S. has made a series of attempts to respond to this new situation. Both Carter and Reagan came up with different responses to this crisis and designed two very different strategies to deal with it. A more liberal or more realistic one, if you like, that seeks to establish some kind of multilateral relationship with its Latin American neighbors, that would help develop more trustworthy allies. Conservatives give a hard-line response: they seek to recover the past.

In practice, both liberals and conservatives view Mexico with increasing concern. They're very worried about the possibility of Mexico becoming destabilized. They give different reasons or explanations for why this may happen. Mrs. Kirkpatrick, or even Mr. Reagan himself, might say that Mexico is being contaminated by Central America. Granted it's a poor analysis, but it's what they say. Others would say that the erosion of the legitimacy of Mexico's political system is destabilizing the country. In any case, there are a variety of explanations.

The important thing is that they all agree that Mexico is in trouble and that this can affect U.S. national security. On this matter there is total agreement. But there is no consensus on what to do about it. Here they come up against a tremendous practical paradox. For some, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party, in power for close to 60 years) no longer represents the best option for the defense of U.S. interests. But what is the alternative? Others believe the PAN (National Action Party) should be strengthened, but this implies unleashing a complex social dynamic that could easily go haywire, and they're even more scared of that than of leaving the situation unchanged.

I believe that these polarized alternatives explain why Ambassador John Gavin has breakfast with PAN leaders one day and meets with the PRI the next. There is really no conceptual clarity about what to do or what policy to adopt towards Mexico.

**What does the United States think national security means for Mexico, and to what extent is their judgement wrong?**

There is a basic problem. Most North Americans base their point of view on the premise that Mexico's national security



"We have our own opinions". Photo by Renzo Gostoli.



Not so distant neighbors, not so close encounters. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

interests are similar to their own. This is a serious problem because even though there are coincidences, we are a very nationalistic and independent-minded country. We have our own points of view, our own foreign policy and our own interests in Central America, or in the United States. Yet this is one of the issues that has received the least discussion, either in Mexico or in the U.S.

**Once again from the Political Perspective of the U.S. on Mexico, what makes the U.S. think that Mexico is heading toward a bipartisan political system, and why is this point of view misleading?**

Well, the basis for this point of view seems to be the PAN's electoral gains. From this vantage point some people believe that the system could evolve into a bipartisan one. But it is as misleading to say that we are headed toward a bipartisan system as it is to say that we are headed toward a Marxist regime. At this point I don't think anybody in their right mind, either in the U.S. or in Mexico, can really say what direction we are going to take. The truth is that we are in the midst of rapid economic, political and social change. This could lead us in a variety of totally unpredictable directions. Social change goes on constantly, but there are times when history seems to move more rapidly; we are going through such a period in Mexico.

We also need to distinguish between electoral strength and social force. This distinction isn't always drawn in the U.S. where according to the press, elections and the vote are practically sacred. They ignore the fact that in Mexico and in many other countries (including their own) social forces that are organized around specific programs are often far more important. I believe that's what is not recognized in the United States. Social forces in Mexico are beginning to mobilize around different programs. This partly explains the prevailing uncertainty.

**In your opinion, what kind of economic framework does the U.S. use to judge Mexico?**

It's simple. The conservatives who've been in power for almost six years now believe the recipe for success is based on very limited state involvement; the private sector plays the main role and foreign investment receives all the guarantees that it could ever want. The Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Baker Plan are both based on these ideas. This is their view not only of Mexico, but of the whole world. The liberal's view is less simplistic. They try to understand different regimes on their own terms. From this point of view, what they're clearly saying in Mexico's case is that perhaps the role of the state is inevitable.

**Again within the same framework, how are Mexican illegal migrant workers judged, and what are the errors of judgement in this point of view?**

I think they're pretty clear on this even though it is seldom said outright. Many sectors of the U.S. economy depend on illegal migrant labor to maintain their production levels and low prices. But at the same time, policy makers worry about the lack of control over this influx of labor, and that accounts for the different positions on the problem.

Conservatives argue that the border should be closed. There are all sorts of possible positions, some even based on astronomical figures such as 10 million undocumented Mexicans in the United States. Others argue in favor of stricter controls while simultaneously applying President Carter's amnesty plan, or support amnesty for those already in the country. I think some new type of control is likely because of the interests and perceptions involved.

But a point I want to make is that from the U.S. perspective, the problem of undocumented workers is an internal issue, not a bilateral one. So they take what, in theory, are totally ac-

ceptable, unilateral measures. Any sovereign state is entitled to decide on what happens within its own borders. What's unacceptable is to seek Mexican collaboration in carrying out their unilateral projects, which is what has happened in several cases.

**Once again on the question of images. Why do you think it is that Mexico is seen through a simplified view of specific issues such as corruption, drug traffic and insecurity for tourists?**

I guess it's in the nature of the press in the United States and for that matter, the world over. There's a tendency to simplify complex issues, working on the assumption that readers aren't interested in the fine points. It's an old pretext in the media. I think it's a process that actually shapes the readers, and that there is a problem of political culture. It's not part of a conspiracy.

Coverage on Mexico has improved since the 1940s but it's by no means 100% satisfactory.

**What is the real impact of a misleading media campaign?**

Well, you can't really call it that. In Mexico people don't like to see things in print that reflect on certain aspects of our reality. But what is a journalist who covers PEMEX and its union going to write about? The corruption is obvious. The problem is that people here are unfamiliar with the nature of the relationship between the press and government in the United States.

A campaign would imply decisions from some government master plan to influence public opinion. That happened in the United States when there was a campaign to create a negative image of President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala in 1954. The same thing happened for Chile with Salvador Allende and for Cuba with Fidel Castro. Those were campaigns in the full sense of the word. But in the case of Mexico today the press is reporting on issues that concern U.S. interests. In my opinion there is no campaign there.

**Nevertheless, don't you think these different views on the part of both governments influence their relations?**

Of course the coverage in the U.S. media on Mexico leaves a lot to be desired. Certain factors are not included and they should be. You could criticize the point of view on Mexico presented in the U.S. press as being partial and incomplete. For example, there is as much corruption in Mexican business circles and in U.S. firms operating in Mexico as there is in the government. Nobody ever talks about that. If it were mentioned it would be attributed to some sort of campaign against CONCANACO (National Confederation of National Chambers of Commerce) or COPARMEX (Mexican Confederation of Businessmen), and then, they would leap forward in self-defense, yelling at the top of their lungs. This has been common in the past.

My point is that the inadequacy and poor quality of the analysis of the Mexican situation plays an important role. It's definitely an influence. There's no sense in denying it.

**Certain influential sectors in the U.S. believe that what they think about Mexico is what Mexico should think about itself. Why do you think this happens?**

This is natural given that they have grown accustomed to success and to thinking that their political system is the best. They don't have anything special against us. They've told half of humanity what to do. This problem is part of U.S. political culture. That's where the novel, *The Ugly American* fits in. I understand it to be self-critical in this aspect. But the problem is an old one, and it is still there. ★

# A BURDENSOME DEBT THAT JUST WON'T DISAPPEAR

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**Mexico's debt is an even greater headache after the collapse in oil prices. Here is a profile on the debt and some possibilities for its renegotiation.**

As oil prices began to plummet early this year, fears grew of a possible suspension of debt payments by Mexico. The sudden plunge in oil prices surprised observers and made the government's economic goals for 1986 seem illusory.

By the end of last year the government had drawn up a budget that was even then considered austere. Estimates for income from oil exports to be sold through the national oil company, PEMEX, were pegged at \$22.50 per barrel for 1.5 million barrels a day. Based on these premises the government had planned to request \$4 billion in loans to meet its foreign debt obligations and increase the country's foreign currency reserves. Yet a few weeks later, the new situation had totally transformed possibilities for the future. The drastic fall in the price of petroleum meant that Mexico would lose about \$6.5 billion in income and approximately 12.5% of its total tax revenues, and see the value of its total exports decrease by a third.

In view of these adverse conditions, a debt service at the rate of \$10 billion in interest and \$1.8 billion in payment on the principal seems to be an excessive burden. Overcoming the consequences of the collapse in oil prices can mean either (1) greater austerity in government spending that would free resources equivalent to the drop in income from lost oil revenue, or (2) getting additional financing from foreign sources. A combination of the two may become a realistic alternative after another round of negotiations.

Following several years of cutbacks in government spending, authorities at first rejected the option of making further internal adjustments. There had already been three consecutive years of severe decline in people's standard of living, involving a drop of more than 40% in real income—the result of austerity policies the government instituted under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Thus, analysts feared that a suspension of payments would be declared.

President De la Madrid, however, in a national television broadcast stated that "creditors should make a sacrifice at least equivalent to that of the Mexican people." In the same vein he emphasized the "sharing of responsibilities in the search for viable solutions." Minister of Finance Jesus Silva Herzog had previously stated that "the limits to our responsibility to our creditors are set by our responsibility to our people."

Government authorities had apparently decided to emphasize their desire to lessen the burden of debt payments in these especially difficult circumstances, but not to go any further than that. Official spokespeople have made it clear that they are not suggesting the adoption of unilateral measures like those of Peruvian President Alan Garcia, who limited debt payments to 10% of the value of the country's exports. In other words,



Mexican Finance Minister Jesús Silva Herzog. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Mexico seeks to establish principles for negotiations and avoid confrontation.

As Mexicans perceive the situation, the U.S. government plays a key role in their foreign debt negotiations. Many analysts believe that Mexico should rely on what they see as a long-standing privileged relationship with the U.S. This position calls for the participation of high-ranking U.S. officials as a sort of pre-condition for furthering discussions with the banks and the IMF.

The logic behind direct U.S. government intervention is based on U.S. national security interests, as well as on the profusion of business relationships between the two nations. Taking as a precedent the U.S. role in coming to Mexico's financial rescue in August 1982, analysts such as the editors of *The Economist* even suggested that the Reagan administration purchase additional oil from Mexico in order to provide foreign currency for the country without further increasing its debt. These businessmen justify their position in that a Mexican default is the only serious threat to the world banking system among the indebted oil-exporting countries.

With all of this in mind, it is rather surprising that so little



progress has been made in the renegotiation of Mexico's debt, even though several high-level meetings have taken place. The talks have included Treasury Secretary James Baker, the President of the Federal Reserve Board, Paul Volcker, and Mexican Finance Minister Silva Herzog. Only minor agreements have been reached thus far. Mexico's ambitious goal is a 6% ceiling on interest rates, in order to avoid further indebtedness. Bankers thus far have been firmly opposed to this.

Even the assessments of Mexico's financial needs have been scaled down as the talks in Washington and New York proceed. The amount Mexico needed to meet this year's payments had initially been set at \$10 billion. The figure currently under discussion is \$6 billion. This reduction is mainly due to the country's decreasing demand for foreign exchange for imports as the economy's recession deepens. This, then, "saves" \$4 billion. The reduction in foreign currency needs can also be attributed to a \$500 million increase in non-oil exports and a lower than expected interest rate that reduces debt service payments by \$800 million. Finally, in this regard, Mexico seems to have given up on the possibility of strengthening its foreign currency reserves.

So, while Mexico is close to the brink of disaster, U.S. officials continue to defy conventional wisdom that calls for emergency measures, and refuse to yield to Mexico's proposals.

**CONFLICTING STRATEGIES**

Following the decision to provide \$6 billion for Mexico in 1986,\* it is estimated that at least \$3.5 billion will come from commercial banks and the rest from international financial institutions. If this amount were to be distributed proportionately, about \$1 billion would come from U.S. banks, as they are the creditors for approximately 29% of Mexico's debt. British and Japanese banks account for about 11-12% of Mexico's debt, while Germany and France hold another 6-7%. More than half of Mexico's outstanding loans with the U.S. are owed to that country's 9 largest banks, and an additional 20% to the next 15 largest.

Consideration of the strategies adopted by both parties is useful in evaluating the prospects for negotiation between Mexico and its creditors. In synthesis, Mexico's strategy for restructuring its foreign debt has unfolded in two distinct phases. The first was based on an austerity policy that assured the strict fulfillment of debt service obligations between December 1982 and April 1984. Mexican authorities met obligations for \$23 billion and obtained fresh financing for another \$8.8 billion. During this phase Mexican authorities, the banks and the U.S. government cultivated an image of Mexico as a model nation in meeting its foreign debt obligations. By September of 1984 it was possible to set up a new long term proposal.

During this second phase \$48 billion in payments due between 1985 and 1990 were rescheduled, and an agreement was reached to restructure them between 1986 and 1988. Benefits of lesser importance were also obtained. The second phase ended in August 1985, in the midst of increasing concern among bankers over Mexico's renewed economic troubles which foretold greater storms to come. In any event, the new debt schedule contained clauses that allowed the revocation of established contracts under certain conditions. In addition, the IMF was guaranteed the right to scrutinize Mexico's economic policy.

U.S. banks had adopted tactics to minimize their risks since 1982. In 1983 their loans to Latin America increased by only 0.2% and in 1984 by 2.5% -in other words, \$2.1 billion less than the average annual increases between 1978 and 1981.

\* The Institute of International Economics (Instituto de Economia Internacional) in Washington, estimates that Mexico will need roughly \$8 billion each year between 1987 and 1990.

This strong decrease in the lending rate was repeated in 1985. This trend, combined with the accumulation of primary capital (including reserves to back up non-performing loans), significantly reduces the risk for U.S. banks in developing countries. In Mexico, the 5 main U.S. banks have reduced their aggregate exposure for capital loans from 42% to 35%. Also, the 10 banks with the largest loans to Mexico have raised their primary capital from an average of 4.9% of their total assets in 1982 to 6.8% at the end of 1985. This puts them in a better position to absorb losses on their loans to foreign countries.

However, these strategies on the part of the banks are not the only reason they are in a better position to negotiate with their debtors. The general economic climate is also more favorable. The U.S. economy went through a deep recession in 1982 that reduced bank profits, but currently the economy is more solid, with about a 3.5% growth rate. The hoped-for reduction in interest rates will also help financial centers increase their profits. At the same time, falling oil prices benefit other large debtor nations, like Brazil, which even further relaxes pressure on the banks.

The risk situation for U.S. banks can be measured in Table I, which presents estimates of the maximum losses the 10 banks with the greatest risks in Mexico could have if Mexico defaulted on its debt payments.

The profits of these banks would be reduced by approximately 10% if Mexico stopped paying the interest on its debt. This indicates that a temporary suspension of payments by Mexico would not spell disaster. Consequently, the suspension should not noticeably affect the banking system either. We must also keep in mind that Mexican officials have at no time suggested they will stop meeting their obligations. Their proposal is to set a ceiling on interest rates, a goal consistent with the Mexican strategy of gradually improving payment conditions. Ironically, the Mexican proposal pulls a rug out from under its stated objectives; our country loses part of its bargaining power when it accepts the bank's hypothetically low losses if Mexico defaults on its payments.

From the Mexican point of view it doesn't make sense to go deeper into debt in order to meet interest payments. Limiting interest payments, or at least capitalizing, them seems preferable. The bankers say it is not worth their while to loan money that rapidly returns to the same place via capital flight. Morgan Guaranty Trust has estimated that between 1983 and 1985 net loans to Mexico were around \$9 billion. During

TABLE 1

DECREASE IN BANKER'S PROFITS IF MEXICO STOPPED PAYING INTEREST ON ITS DEBT	
FIRST CHICAGO *	33
MANUFACTURERS HANOVER *	27
BANKERS TRUST *	21
CHEMICAL BANK *	19
WELLS FARGO BANK *	19
CITICORP *	16
MELLON BANK *	16
CHASE MANHATTAN *	15
MORGAN GUARANTY TRUST *	9
BANK AMERICA *	*
AVERAGE	19
* no profits	

NOTE: The decrease in profits refers to 1985 before taxes.  
SOURCE: Keefe, Bruyette

this same period \$16.2 billion left the country in capital flight. Under these circumstances, why not accept Mexico's proposal? There are two main reasons. One is that accepting the proposal would establish a precedent that could rapidly be followed by other debtor nations. A second reason has to do with banking regulations. In terms of money flow it makes little difference whether you capitalize interest with a pre-set

## mexican profiles

rate and pay later when the loan has matured, or if you authorize new loans that turn over quickly in the form of interest payments. But an important difference does exist because of accounting procedures and regulations in the U.S. banking system. The difference is that deferred interest payments cannot be considered current income by the banks. So, bank profits decrease. This partly explains American bankers' opposition to the idea of capitalizing the interest on the Mexican debt.

It is also important to note that European banks have significantly different procedures. Germany, for example, would prefer to extend the loans in this way because banks can obtain tax exemptions on capitalized interest. German banks must also have reserves on hand for new loans to troubled debtors. These differences between the creditor banks makes it difficult to arrive at a satisfactory agreement with debtor nations because the banks in each country defend their own goals and their particular way of operating.

We should also keep in mind that banks defend their interests quite fiercely. Bank bonds and shares are still being negotiated with a strong discount on the stock market. This

has been so since 1982, even though banks now appear to be in much better condition. The situation on the stock market is such that dealings with the Mexican debt in the secondary market are quoted at only 80 cents to the dollar. While this makes it clear that banks can stand to suffer strong losses due to problems with debtor nations, it also points to the mistakes the banks made in their loan policy during the 1978-1981 period. Given the magnitude of these mistakes, it would seem better to acknowledge the situation, rather than to maintain a stubborn attitude regarding the foreign debt problem in developing countries.

### RENEGOTIATING THE DEBT IN THE CONTEXT OF MEXICO-U.S. RELATIONS

As we said before, the scant progress made by Mexico at the negotiating table in Washington defies conventional wisdom. This was especially apparent when, after the first rounds of discussion, the United States government rejected the possibility of a bridge loan to temporarily alleviate the problems

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The Forgotten ones. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

due to the fall in oil prices. The U.S. government seems unwilling to make concessions unless Mexico adopts an economic policy that fully satisfies U.S. interests. What the United States wants to see in Mexico is the all-out application of a neo-liberal economic policy. This would mean significantly opening up the national economy, liberalizing foreign trade, rapidly reducing the public deficit, selling state-owned enterprises and abandoning regulation of direct foreign investment.

Miguel de la Madrid's administration has implemented all of a these policies, from formally requesting membership in G.A.T.T., to relaxing Mexican policy regarding foreign investments, to selling many public enterprises. These measures have recently accelerated as a result of U.S. pressure.

tioning in the discussions regarding foreign debt, which is that any idea of altering a liberal economic order seems foreign to U.S. sensibilities. This is especially true when the negotiators have strong neoconservative leanings and believe that this type of economic organization is the only natural one. On the other hand, Mexico's revolutionary nationalism calls for strong state intervention in the economy.

These differing conceptions make it difficult for one party to understand the other in relation to what each can consider acceptable or will regard as excessive. Whereas from the U.S. point of view it would be "logical" to include the state petroleum monopoly PEMEX among the public sector firms to be sold, from the perspective of the Mexican government, this is entirely unacceptable.



Demonstration protesting government budget cut-backs. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Nonetheless, in the opinion of U.S. officials, what the Mexican government has done so far is not enough.

Three powerful political reasons help explain the lack of understanding and the contrasting visions and desires of the two governments. The first is that within the logic of the U.S. political system and its conflicting internal interests, there's always something more that needs to be done before their demands are satisfied. The second reason is that, in the perception of U.S. officials, a good part of Mexico's economic problems are associated with its political system. This line of reasoning holds that it is necessary to limit the margin of freedom of Mexican executive authorities in order to avoid these problems. There is a final aspect that seems worth men-

Today we can't help but note that strong pressures are being exerted on Mexico to reshape its economic structures and organization to make them both more compatible with U.S. interests. In addition to the limits of Mexican tolerance in this situation, one must take into account the failure to date of orthodox policies in resolving the problem of the foreign debt. With the fall in oil prices, the shortcomings of this strategy are even more apparent. This situation calls for unorthodox alternatives in order to save the country's productive plant, to stem and reverse the deterioration in the people's standard of living, and to preserve national sovereignty and autonomy.★

Mario Dehesa Dávila

# A MIDDLE ROAD TO PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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*Newly elected governments in Central America seek a fresh perspective on the region's problems. President Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala may hold some keys to future events.*

War and peace are the key issues in Central America. The region has been in-turmoil since the late 70s, as the area's social and political climate became increasingly polarized. Conditions of extreme poverty, repression and outmoded struc-

speaking out for peaceful regional coexistence. Nonetheless, the United States seems intent on completely eliminating the region's revolutionary forces, despite the fact that they are a natural product of existing social, economic and political conditions. It appears that only through all-out war and eventually the use of U.S. troops would it be possible for the Reagan administration to achieve that goal. Thus, the



Trapped in poverty. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

tures made it possible for armed revolutionary movements to grow in several countries. Local struggles have threatened to become a regional war as the Reagan administration becomes more deeply involved in the conflicts. War means uncertainty, suffering, prolonged crisis. Peace would open the possibility of renewed stability and economic growth.

New forces have appeared on the scene, demonstrating varying degrees of willingness to sit down and discuss their differences. The Church, labor and middle class sectors are becoming increasingly vocal in favor of a negotiated settlement, especially in El Salvador. In Guatemala, moderate Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo is playing an important role by

new forces seeking peaceful solutions have found rather limited opportunities to advance their positions.

In 1979, in a matter of months, but after years of struggle, the Sandinistas led a massive uprising against Somoza to victory. The war was rather short, in comparison to many other revolutionary struggles, but close to 50,000 lives were lost and much of Nicaragua's infrastructure and industry were damaged. Shortly thereafter, in January 1981, the Salvadoran revolutionary movement launched what they called their final offensive, in an all out effort to seize power. At the same time revolutionaries in Guatemala enjoyed broad grass-roots support and, thus, were able to extend guerrilla warfare throughout the country.

A tidal wave of revolutions seemed about to engulf the region, as Honduras and Costa Rica looked on with a mixture of fear and sympathy. Today, the situation is quite different. Although stability is by no means around the corner, the chances of another revolutionary takeover in the near future are quite remote. Nicaragua is defending itself, not exporting its cause. The war in El Salvador seems to be at a strategic stalemate, in which both sides have proven their capacity to match each other's advances. The Guatemalan movement suffered serious setbacks in 1982-83 and will not become a serious threat again for years. There are no short-term revolutionary victories in sight.

Actually, there don't seem to be short-term victories of any kind in sight. Almost everyone agrees that the contras fighting a border war against the Sandinistas are far from becoming a serious military threat, no matter how much aid they receive. The Salvadoran army is

predominant factor in keeping the fires burning. By the mid-1980s the FMLN had scaled back its program for revolutionary change, adopting a power-sharing, democratic, gradual-change platform. But even this moderate position was considered unacceptable. In Nicaragua, on the other hand, the contras have been kept alive artificially, as their own military failures and internal divisions would otherwise have brought their demise long ago.

Honduras and Costa Rica have been drawn into confrontations with their neighbors, and this in turn has produced internal frictions in both countries. Always a region of interdependent countries, Central America is being forced to divide itself into blocks, going not only against the grain of its own history but against the tide of its present day social and economic reality. Obviously this strains relations and creates increasing tensions.

Now that revolutionary takeovers no longer pose an



Honduran fishermen at work. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

expected to receive \$136.3 million from the Reagan administration this year alone. This amounts to close to one fourth of total U.S. military aid to Latin America in 1986. With U.S. aid, the Salvadoran military has modernized its equipment and streamlined its fighting force. Nonetheless, it has yet to gain an upper hand over the remarkably resilient FMLN. On the other hand, the Guatemalan army used massacres and scorched earth tactics to pacify its country, at a tremendous social cost in lives lost and communities destroyed. Although it was victorious, the army is racked by internal divisions and widely hated as a result of its dirty work.

The Reagan Administration's policy seems to be the

immediate danger in El Salvador or Guatemala, nor do those struggles threaten to spill over into Honduras and Costa Rica, a trend towards a negotiated settlement has slowly gained force. This trend has been spurred on by the Contadora countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama) and their support group (Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay). Ninety percent of all Latin Americans live in these countries; all favor political negotiations and fear a full scale war and direct U.S. intervention. Local businessmen, politicians, workers and people in general, are increasingly calling for dialog, political agreements and peace.

Three newly elected presidents in the region—Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala, Liberal José

Azcona in Honduras and Social Democrat Oscar Arias in Costa Rica— have all gone to Washington to say they don't want war. All are political moderates, and all can be swayed by Washington with the carrot of military and economic aid, since the three countries are in dire economic straits. Yet last March when Phillip Habbib, presidential envoy to Central America, said that all the area's governments approved U.S. aid to the contras, the Guatemalan government denied his statements—a rather brave stance, coming from a former banana republic. Even before Arias took power, he reached an agreement with Nicaragua to set up an internationally supervised, joint border patrol to avoid activity along the Costa Rica-Nicaragua border. Although Costa Rica has publicly proclaimed its neutrality, it is common knowledge that forces work within its borders. Costa Rica has also pledged its support of Contadora, though its explicit political positions don't necessarily coincide with what actually happens. Recently Honduras' new Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that "Our territory neither is, nor will be a sanctuary, nor will it be used to channel aid to insurgent groups which mean to use Honduras for their own ends." Yet it's public knowledge that they operate out of Honduras and that the U.S. relies on that country to channel their aid to them. The question is whether they can continue to do so without further upsetting the delicate balance of internal forces and generating increasing internal opposition. In this regional context Guatemalan President Cerezo, "Vinicio" as he is referred to by most Guatemalans, holds a special position. Since its armed insurgency is basically under control and Guatemala is not in conflict with any of its neighbors (the country doesn't share a common border with Nicaragua and doesn't harbor camps), it is the only country that doesn't figure directly as part of the regional problem. Guatemala appears as a part of the solution, a sort of referee or experienced older brother with advice, suggestions and proposals for everyone. Guatemala is Nicaragua's largest regional trading partner, the only country in the area that has not entered into the U.S. sponsored confrontation with the Sandinistas. On the other hand, no one could be less

leanings than the Guatemalan regime. So, as a local saying goes, Guatemala is on good terms "with both God and the devil". Why is Guatemala, staunchly anticommunist for the last thirty-odd years, on good terms with the revolutionary Sandinistas? One would expect it to be the first in line with U.S. policy in Central America. The country known for its extreme right-wing positions (General Romeo Lucas, president

down a rebellion, but the social cost was too high to continue paying it indefinitely. Now, instead of defending the existing order as it is, many officers see the need for government programs that would improve the lot of the impoverished masses. The Guatemalan army waged its campaign without U.S. aid, which was cut off in 1977 because of the regime's human right record. As a result, Guatemalan officers developed

In accordance with his regional policy, president Cerezo has promised internal reforms, an end to government-sponsored political violence and overall economic and social modernization to speed the country's development. The guerrilla organizations that make up the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, the URNG, issued a statement saying that they would not oppose Vinicio's democratic programs, but would continue their strug-



The difficult task of reconstruction in Nicaragua. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

between 1978 and 1982 called Jimmy Carter "Jimmy Castro" for his policy toward the region) is now the swing vote in the area, swinging towards political agreements and away from armed conflict, proposing a regional parliament and the revival of the Central American Common Market. And all of Guatemala's proposals include Nicaragua on an equal footing. In the early 80s the Guatemalan army waged an all-out war against the growing rebellion in the country. It massacred entire Indian villages, scorched the earth, destroyed homes, crops and animals, all to deprive the guerrilla movement of its base of support. The price was high. One of the results is that the dominant position in the army today is that as an institution it should not be involved in government or politics (the army was in power for over 30 years), and that the country needs to change in order to deprive the revolutionary movement of followers and support. The army understands that it can't wage war against its own people indefinitely. It succeeded this time in putting

an independent and self-sufficient mentality, as well as a mistrust of the U.S., the ally that didn't come to their aid in a pinch and that publicly criticized them. In addition, the army doesn't want to leave its home front unguarded and is very much aware of the dangers and implications of a regional war. Thus many in the military reached the conclusion that it was better to negotiate with Nicaragua than to fight it. In fact, it was the army, while still in power, who designed and began to develop the regional policy that Vinicio is now carrying out. The Guatemalan business community is divided on the regional issue. Ideological zealots support U.S. and want the Sandinistas overthrown. But many others, especially those whose business interests need a Central American regional market, tend to take a more moderate stance and are opposed to military solutions. For the most part, they don't particularly care for the Sandinistas, but they are against a war, U.S. intervention and the long term instability that all of this implies.

gle until those promises became a reality. According to local observers, Salvadoran president Napoleon Duarte would much rather be in Vinicio Cerezo's shoes than in his own. A moderate with a progressive political record, Duarte came to power in El Salvador as part of U.S. policy and committed to waging war against the FMLN. Duarte would much rather have been the president who put an end to war and violence, modernizing his country in the process, than one who will be remembered by history for sustaining a war without end. But politics is the art of the possible, and peace and modernization seem well beyond the reach of tiny El Salvador. Whether Vinicio Cerezo will be able to actually move in that direction is an open question. Vinicio has asked for time to carry out his much promised reforms, and time seems to be counting against him in the regional context. Yet only time will tell if he comes through on his promises and proposals. ★

Blanca González

# LATIN AMERICA'S ECONOMIC WOES: TOWARDS A DEBTORS' CLUB?

*As payment of Latin America's vast debt becomes increasingly difficult, a search for a common strategy is quietly emerging.*

"Without ignoring other real and concrete dangers, the worst threat to peace in Latin America is the foreign debt. When the millions of dollars for paying interest are not to be had, poor countries lose their sovereignty and their political independence."



The future overlies the present. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

This statement was not made by an extremist, but by lawyer and politician, Radomiro Tomic, who in 1935 was co-founder of the Christian Democratic Party of Chile. Twice senator and as many times congressman representing his party, he was also the presidential candidate who lost to Salvador Allende in 1970.

In fact, the posture adopted by Tomic is one which gains adherents daily among moderate sectors in this continent, and at times even elsewhere. Recently, the U.S. Under-Secretary of the Treasury, David Mulford, admitted that there could be no solution to Latin America's debt without some stimulation to economic growth in the region. In effect, despite the optimism expressed in certain financial circles in industrialized

countries regarding the apparent success of case-by-case renegotiation strategies, the strengthening of regional joint action is still essential for reaching a viable and lasting solution to the debt crisis. Although some relative progress has been achieved as regards the treatment of the debt since 1984, the external factors of instability which provoked the financial crisis in mid-1982 still persist: high interest rates, falling prices for

most Latin American exports and the reduction of net capital flow towards the region. In order to adapt their economies to these adverse external conditions, the countries of Latin America pursued a process of intense internal adjustment with strongly recessionary consequences. This situation is reaching its limits as the fulfillment of the region's financial obligations will depend on the availability of sufficient foreign exchange. This, in turn, will require greater access to credit and an expansion of export potential. According to Tomic, "It is the international economic order which really generates the foreign debt." He points explicitly to the Bretton Woods accords signed following World War II, without listening to, nor allowing any participation

for developing or underdeveloped countries." In fact, in the opinion of numerous Latin American experts, that pact perpetuates unequal trade relations because it enforces the notion that the market is the best regulator of goods and services and of the prices of manufactured goods and raw materials. The experience of the past forty years has shown that the industrialized countries, by controlling 99 per cent of industrial

discover that now they have lost their political independence." Since 1982, Latin America has become a net exporter of capital, for a total of approximately \$40 billion. The region's economic growth, therefore, must be stimulated. Nonetheless, this depends not only on the productive capacity of each country, but also on the lowering of protectionist barriers erected by the industrialized countries.



The dream to struggle against?. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

patents, 98 per cent of the scientists and 99 per cent of technological and scientific research monies, run roughshod over the countries of the Third World when competing with them. Several Third World experts thus feel that the time has come to introduce rational and ethical factors to correct the mechanical effects of the market which, in reality, is never free for poor countries. "When \$370 billion are already owed, and \$40 billion a year must be paid in interest and there is nowhere to find the money, what poor countries have lost is their sovereignty," insists Tomic. "When such extremes of indebtedness have been reached, they suddenly

The primary goal must be to achieve a reduction in debt service costs to reasonable levels. Latin America cannot continue to allot 64.6% of its export earnings towards the payment of its financial obligations. To modify this critical situation, efforts have been increasingly focused on seeking joint, concerted action to improve the conditions for renegotiation. Such efforts have grown out of the fact that the foreign debt is no longer simply a financial matter. It has become a political issue, as well. These initiatives are also based on the Latin American conviction that more viable and definitive solutions to this problem must be found within a framework that

provides mutual benefits and advantages to both creditors and debtors.

When the crisis erupted in mid-1982, Latin American countries adopted a plan of action which included the following elements: a) debt renegotiation, particularly of the short-term debt contracted with private international banks; b) adoption of a set of domestic policy adjustments, under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and c)

the region's nascent democracies.

Finally, the evolution of the world financial and monetary crisis, highlighted by the overvaluation of the dollar and high interest rates, has curtailed hopes for revitalizing Latin American trade in the short- and medium-term, while worsening the debt-servicing problem for the entire continent.

Following the Latin American Economic Conference held in

reaching a new understanding in order to properly analyze the political implications of the debt.

To a large extent because of this type of initiative, the governments of Sweden and France and the president of the European Economic Commission, have recognized the political dimension of the debt issue, and have noted the need for including a discussion of the monetary and financial system in any negotiation regarding the international trade system.

Latin American countries share the same basic process of debt accumulation and the same crisis in their capacity to make debt-service payments. And they have joined together in the search for a lasting solution to the debt problem. Although the terms and conditions of negotiations are different for each country, all have reached similar conclusions. Latin American countries have also assumed responsibility for finding solutions which can offer a minimum of stability for economic planning, as well as assuming the social and political costs implicit in those solutions.

A strategy of regional cooperation, born of a common vision and diagnosis of the problem and its possible solution, has been undertaken by the countries of Latin America. This strategy calls upon the industrialized countries to reach an international consensus based on Latin America's diagnosis of the problem.

The proposals that have grown out of the common strategizing have not been extremist or idealist. They have not proposed canceling the debt, for example, nor treating the debt exclusively on a case-by-case basis. What the countries of the region have proposed is a more equitable global framework so that the renegotiation of their debts does not preclude their continued national development on solid bases.

In sum, it is a middle-ground position that seeks to reconcile the need for a global framework with the individual renegotiation needs of each country. At the same, the position is clear that renegotiation cannot replace another equally necessary process of more general political discussion with the industrialized countries.

The facts have shown increasingly that in the case of the debt, as well as in many other areas, solidarity and joint action in Latin America are the best means for reducing the region's vulnerability to external factors and strengthening its own economic security.★

Compiled by **Arturo Arias**, based on information in an article by Sebastian Alegrett, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and on an interview with Radomiro Tomic done by Luis Suarez.



Extreme necessity. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

the notion that the crisis would be overcome once the world economy recovered its traditional dynamism.

The results noted to date, however, have not been hopeful. Renegotiation with the private international banks proved to be much more costly than expected due to high interest rates that generated even greater indebtedness. This in turn, has worsened the conditions for external financing, as well as the general economic situation for Latin American countries.

The short-term focus the IMF gave to the continent's economic problems has also been proved inadequate. It has endangered the political and economic stability of several countries, and has become an obstacle to the strengthening of

Quito, Ecuador, at the beginning of 1984 with the participation of high-level delegations from 30 countries in the region, some sort of joint action has been called for as a viable alternative. The second meeting of the Cartagena Group at Mar de la Plata (Argentina) in mid-September 1984, and the third, held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) in February 1985 continued this process.

The Cartagena Group managed to define the positions of debtor countries before important meetings of international monetary and financial institutions, at which issues related to the debt were to be discussed. Thus, the points of view of Latin American countries were not to be ignored. Finally, the Group emphasized the necessity of

## HAITI, THE CARIBBEAN CALDRON

*Duvalier is gone, but most Haitians doubt that real change has actually come their way.*

"Managing the hopes and expectations stemming from the end of the Duvalier era will require great political ability," says a Western diplomat. True and understated. Many observers doubt that despite Baby Doc's downfall, the 29 year old Duvalier era has really come to an end.

Jean Claude's regime was

finished in a matter of weeks, and he was quickly replaced by a governing council dominated by his own loyalists. No organized force overthrew the dictatorship, mainly because none existed in the country. Close to 20% of the six million Haitians are in political or economic exile. Thus far, liberal and progressive exiles have not been allowed to return to their homeland, and neither have many of the thousands of Haitians who over the years

migrated to neighboring Santo Domingo. There are no jobs for them, and the political vacuum is such that both local moderates and Duvalier's own cronies fear that in the midst of economic crisis and widespread poverty, as well as in the existing political vacuum, the left could have a mass appeal. So, better to keep them out.

The National Council of Government did little more than try to keep the people off the streets during its first weeks in power; it has been unable to do so in later weeks. Many Tonton Macoutes, Duvalier's personal para-military force, were lynched by enraged mobs. Everyone, including the Reagan administration, feared an upheaval that would sweep away the delicate balancing act of keeping the same regime without a Duvalier-type-individual at the head.

### Why now?

Political unrest had been brewing in Haiti over the last few years as the economic situation worsened. Corruption was rampant and the world economic crisis struck an economy that was already in the red. World Bank figures for the late 70's showed that some 3,800 families owned 80% of the national wealth; 87% of Haitian children were undernourished;

the literacy rate was an appalling 18%, and 61% of the population had an annual income of \$60 or less. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere.

In addition to this overall situation, in 1984 a plague struck the countryside affecting the 85% of the country's population which is rural. The disease affected the peasant's hogs and the government ordered all the animals destroyed. They were never replaced, nor did the peasants receive any kind of economic compensation. Haiti does not produce enough food for its population, and the cost of imported foodstuffs went from \$16 million in 1970 to \$77 million in 1983. Wages are the lowest in the Caribbean.

Between 1971 and 1984, the real value of urban worker's wages fell by 62%. Government employees saw their purchasing power shrink by 45% between 1971 and 1977. Yet Jean Claude Duvalier's personal fortune is estimated at between \$400 and \$450 million, while his mother's is thought to be as high as \$1.15 billion. Which is to say, more than the country's gross national product in 1979.

Jean Claude's wedding to Michelle Bennett is reported to have cost \$5 million, his yacht cost one million, the memorial he built for his father Francois,

two million, and so on. Like the deposed Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, Duvalier also sold his people's blood, exporting plasma to blood banks in the U.S. The regime's corruption and increasing inefficiency were beginning to affect sectors of the business community who were not part of its inner circles. Opposition, thus, ran across the social spectrum.

In 1985 Jean Claude called a referendum vote on his status as life-long president of the country he inherited from his father. Official results showed 99.98% of the population had voted in favor of keeping Jean Claude on as president for the rest of his life (he's only 34, and had been president since 1971 when his father invested him). The referendum was a farce and apparently abstention won the day. But it inadvertently fed into the national debate on the question of lifelong family rule vs. democracy.

In May, 1985, fifty youngsters sent an open letter to the Haitian legislative assembly stating what was starting to become a widespread sentiment: "You contributed to turning our country into the poorest in the American Continent, the pariahs of the Caribbean, the boat people of the oceans, the planet's beggars... You deprived us of our basic rights and became accomplices to state

terrorism... You should have called on us to say NO to the lifelong presidency, YES to presidential elections through universal and direct vote..."

Following the killings of four students last November during a march in the city of Gonaives, the movement against the regime began to take on a national dimension and was becoming increasingly violent. Seemingly all of the powers involved in running the country, i.e. the Duvalier regime itself, the military and the U.S., decided Jean Claude had to go before the movement began to run out of control, radicalized its demands and became impossible to put down without resorting to widespread violence.

Everyone was so sure that Jean Claude had to go that White House spokesman Larry Speakes announced his departure a week before it actually took place. The United States had suspended \$26 million in economic aid the day before. Washington's support was pivotal to the regime throughout its 29 years in power, in exchange for which the Duvaliers guaranteed a staunchly anticommunist U.S. ally in the Caribbean directly facing Cuba.

### What now?

At present Haiti is governed by Duvalier loyalists who are probably interested in preserving the regime, and at most in introducing some improvements for the sake of stability and appearances. Yet most Haitians view the National Council of Government with suspicion because of its ties to the former order. The population remains in an upheaval and the NCG has had to make concessions, such as a promise to capture and bring to trial known torturers, and to extradite Jean Claude from his exile in France. All Duvalier family property has been confiscated.

The steps taken by the new government are formal and symbolic, but nonetheless important to the people. The Haitian national flag is flown again instead of the Duvalier family insignia imposed on the nation in 1965. The Duvalier constitution was abolished and the legislative assembly, which one opposition member referred to as "an assembly of sorcerers", was dissolved. So were the Tonton Macoutes. A nationwide literacy campaign was announced but has yet to get underway. It is a measure that now seems a basic step in the



Demonstration against Duvalier at the Haitian Embassy in México City. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.



direction of democratic credentials. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the lid will be kept on the situation with only the cosmetic changes enacted thus far.

The Catholic Church played a central role in encouraging the people to demand their basic democratic rights and will probably continue to do the same until measures are taken to improve the lot of the millions of impoverished Haitians. When Pope John Paul VI visited the island in 1983 he said "Things must change in this country." Hundreds of priests and nuns, and as of last year the hierarchy as well, took his words to heart. Catholic **Radio Soleil** was pivotal to the opposition, providing a means of mass communication which other media denied the movement.

The Church today is probably the most solid organization in Haiti. Bishop Francois Gayot is considered the political brain in the hierarchy. The Church, he says, "is free to criticize those who exploit the people and violate human rights." But he denies that the Church has any kind of political interests or aspirations.

As part of the legacy of 30 years of dictatorship opposition parties in Haiti are few, weak and disorganized, and for the most part tainted by their association with the Duvalier regime. Some demand immediate presidential elections, while others have called on the junta to form a provisional

government that includes opposition groups. Another position seeks to enact a peaceful, orderly transition toward political and economic modernization, but this is a tricky proposition in the present unstable situation. At any rate, everyone seems to be extremely conscious of what the U.S. will tolerate and what it will not, and this is part of Haitian political reality.

The liberal and progressive opposition is scattered in exile in Montreal, Miami, New York and Paris, and seems to have little chance of returning to the country unless more in-depth changes take place. Eugene Gregoire, self-announced presidential candidate for the Christian Democratic Party, says: "Most exiles who are members of opposition organizations disguised themselves as progressives but really supported violence. I don't think they should return until total political stability is achieved in Haiti." Meaning, probably not until the question of power and of the succession is resolved, and meaning that no left position can have a role in the process.

Whatever the final outcome, the words of Andre Peluquin, professor of economy and finance at Haiti's national university, still ring true months after Duvalier's fall: "If Dante had seen Haiti as it is today he wouldn't have had to go to hell to write the Divine Comedy." ★

Blanca González

by centuries of poverty and inflamed by the indifference of the wealthy nations toward a situation for which they are partly responsible, Palme's presence and policies signaled the rebirth of hope in the possibility of non-violent change. Olof Palme sought disarmament, he multiplied alliances, held out a helping hand and tried to quench the flames of discontent. These are all desirable policies in a continent under international pressures that are not of its own making. This is why in the early 70's Olof Palme began to take on the stature of a prophet in Latin America. His activity seemed an endless search for understanding, a negation of violence, a promotion of peace. He didn't condition his attitudes to the interests of his own country, but rather tried to really understand the poor countries' legitimate concerns. In this sense he was unique among the rulers of the developed nations.

Many Latin American countries have had to nationalize important sectors of their trade and industry as a means of

defending national sovereignty and maintaining control over their economy when faced with voracious multinationals. Yet despite these groundings for their policy, international financial institutions have tried to force these nations to return government owned businesses to the private sector. These institutions ignore the fragility of Latin American democracies, and have resorted to all sorts of pressures in their unilateral concern for the economic interests of the developed countries.

Olof Palme came to the defense of Latin America in his last opening speech to the Swedish parliament. "The neo-liberal economic policy followed in Europe has not led to economic progress, but rather to increasing injustice and insecurity for most peoples, as well as to the squandering of their resources."

Palme's democratic stance vis a vis the most important international conflicts and issues of our times is another factor that made Latin Americans love and respect him.

## LATIN AMERICA MOURNS OLOF PALME

*Not since John F. Kennedy's assassination has the death of a northern hemisphere's head of state been as sad and meaningful for the Latin American people.*

Olof Palme loved peace, literature, poetry and modern art. He was both a qualified statesman and a simple man. He also cared deeply for the Third World in general, for Latin America in particular. This is why all of the Latin American

nations —with the sole exception of Chile, where Pinochet played down his death—reacted strongly to Palme's assassination. The reaction has been comparable only to the events that followed the death of President John F. Kennedy 23 years ago.

Latin America understood early on that Olof Palme was a peace-loving man. From every possible forum he called out for agreement and reconciliation. In our continent, violently torn



Olof Palme. A.P. Laserphoto.

A year before he became president of his party and Prime Minister of Sweden in 1968, Palme walked at the head of a march in Stockholm to protest the "dirty war" in Viet Nam. As Prime Minister he was one of the staunchest critics of apartheid, and Sweden's policy in the United Nations was belligerent in favor of measures that would isolate the Pretoria regime.

Palme was a severe critic of the military dictatorships that were prevalent in Latin America in the 70's: Lucas Garcia in Guatemala, Romero in El Salvador, Somoza in Nicaragua, Stroessner in Paraguay, Pinochet in Chile, Aparicio Mendez in Uruguay, Videla in Argentina, and so on. His country opened its doors to thousands of political refugees. In more recent years, Palme maintained his country's economic and political support for Nicaragua. More than any other world leader Palme supported the Nicaraguan elections and called them "absolutely honest". In fact, Swedish specialists served as advisors for the elections in which Daniel Ortega was elected president.

Just a year ago Palme spoke to Swedish youths and criticized the policy of support for Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries: "The Somocista guards and the mercenary soldiers are neither freedom fighters nor democrats. The so-called crusade against communism in Nicaragua is no more than the unleashing of outlaws who attack poor peasants and brutally rape women who are really only young girls." He was one of the first and firmest European allies of the Contadora Group.

Palme always knew he was speaking from that privileged part of humanity that lives in the industrialized northern hemisphere. He was sensitive and conscious of that privilege and always spoke out on behalf of dialog with the South, for a New International Economic Order and even in favor of cancelling the underdeveloped countries' foreign debt.

In October of 1985, Palme joined five important Third World leaders in addressing a joint message to Soviet Premier Mijail Gorbachov and to President Reagan. Together with Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid, Argentina's Raul Alfonsin, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu and Rajiv Gandhi of India, Palme called on the leaders of "the superpowers to take

concrete steps" toward peace and disarmament and to agree on a one year moratorium on nuclear tests.

But perhaps the most important step in Palme's activity in international affairs was the creation of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security, which is named after him.

Just a few weeks before his death Palme delivered an important speech at Stockholm's Institute for Foreign Policy. He repeated some of the same ideas when he spoke at Indira Gandhi's tomb in New Delhi, during what was to be his last trip abroad. The emphasis he placed on the problem of the Third World's foreign debt still bears witness to his struggle for a different, better world. "The dialog between the developed and the underdeveloped countries during the 70's had as its central theme the New World Economic Order and long term evolution, in the broadest sense of the term. Today, for the most part, the central theme in that dialog is how to best collect the interest payments. The banks, the IMF and the governments of the developed countries are demanding harsh and rapid internal readjustments in debtor nations. This is meeting with increasing resistance on the part of the underdeveloped countries who regard this policy as further proof of the injustice of the international economic system."

Palme ended his speech with the following statement: "This (the foreign debt problem) may lead to direct confrontation between the industrialized and the developing countries. Such a contingency would serve nobody's economic interests. The political costs would be unpredictable. The threat to international stability and security would be even more direct."

In several of his last interviews Palme voiced his concern over the dangerous directions the world was moving in. "What most worries me is the development of violence and the influence of imported violence coming from the United States through television and movies."

In the eyes of Latin America Olof Palme stood for the best of the democratic West. Swedish democracy became a kind of ideal: public officials truly in the service of the people, and whose basis for prestige is intellectual honesty; officials who carry out a foreign policy devoid of boastful vanity, personality cults or cosmetic foolery. The seriousness of Palme's mes-

sage was the mature fruit of years of experience.

Olof Palme first visited Mexico as Prime Minister during the administration of President Luis Echeverria (1970-76). From then on our country sought dialog and exchange with European Social Democracy, and particularly with Palme and his party. Palme became a frequent guest of the Mexican government. But he had often visited Mexico since the 1940s; part of his family has lived in our country for over fifty years. A contemptible act of violence ended the life of a good man and a great statesman. It's possible that the killer was in some way conscious of the fact that he was eliminating the main model Latin America had of an

honest politician whose sense of purpose was to generously serve the people in the tasks they had entrusted to him.

The world has lost a citizen dedicated to the noble task of peace. Shortly after the shooting, rustic signs in Spanish began to appear in Stockholm, bearing witness to the gratitude of the thousands of Latin Americans who found refuge in Sweden thanks to Palme's policies. Olof Palme left a universal legacy to all people of good faith on how to stem the plans and instruments of barbarity.★

Compiled by Arturo Arias based on articles by Juan Jose Hinojosa, Miguel Bonasso, Tomas Gerardo Allaz and Anne Marie Mergier.

## NICARAGUA'S SEVEN YEARS OF REVOLUTION: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?

*Passions often prevent an objective view of Nicaragua. South of the Rio Grande, most analyses differ from traditionally-held views in the U.S.*

On July 19 the Sandinista Revolution will celebrate its seventh anniversary. Pressured on all sides, caught in a costly war with the contra, victimized by a severe economic crisis and opposed by the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the Sandinista leadership is getting ready to evaluate their government's achievements and failures. Their program of mixed economy, political pluralism and non-alignment has been put to severe tests. The eyes of the international community are fixed on the events that unfold in the country. Nicaragua, against its will, has been converted into one of the hottest spots on the globe.

The Reagan administration's disproportionate aggression against the Sandinista govern-

ment has been the most important external factor in determining the course of the revolution. Washington has used military pressure, an economic boycott and political confrontation against the Nicaraguan government. Until now, the Sandinistas have been able to resist the assault, but the social costs have been high.

By the beginning of 1986, the Sandinistas had been able to turn back the armed counter-revolutionary forces. According to Western press reports, the contras have now retreated to their Honduran base camps. U.S. military analysts and European diplomats assigned to Central America believe that the contras have already been defeated in strategic terms and that even with U.S. aid, they would need at least two years before they could represent a real threat to the Managua government.

Sandinista troops have been successful thanks to their implementation of irregular warfare tactics and the use of air support from some 24 Soviet-made helicopters. But even more important than these factors, no doubt, has been the fact that the contras have not been able to gain massive support from the population or to create the supply networks they need to be able to develop their forces. One important indication of the setbacks suffered by the anti-

Sandinista forces was their inability to interfere with the country's most recent coffee harvest (coffee is Nicaragua's principal export crop), after having been successful in such an effort in 1984.

While in military matters the Sandinistas may have reason to be optimistic, in economic affairs things look pretty bleak. According to official figures Nicaragua's 1985 inflation rate was 213% (independent estimates put the rate at about 400%) and the balance of pay-

ments deficit was \$400 million. At the same time, industrial production was down 6% in relation to the previous year, and the value of manufactured export goods fell by 30%. Only agricultural production held to 1984 levels, which was extremely important since agricultural products bring in 80% of all of the country's foreign exchange.

Without a doubt, the war is the single-most important factor in Nicaragua's negative economic growth. According to govern-

ment statistics, 38% of the national budget is devoted to defense—although other sources insist that it is really more than 50%—and losses due to contra attacks each year represent one-half of the value of all exports (in 1985 Nicaragua exported \$350 million worth of goods). Last May the Reagan administration also declared a trade embargo that affects 95% of the country's productive infrastructure and 15% of its foreign commerce. Currently, 30% of Nicaragua's trade is with Western European countries, 25% with the Soviet block, 21% with Latin America, 12% with Japan and the rest with other countries.

A financial blockade promoted by the United States meant that in 1985 Nicaragua did not receive a single loan from the World Bank or the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB). In early March of this year, the situation changed slightly when the IDB approved a \$50 million loan thanks to mediating efforts on Managua's behalf by Brazil.

At the same time, President Daniel Ortega acknowledged that part of the responsibility for the country's economic crisis lies with the government. Excessive bureaucracy and inadequate planning have worsened economic problems. All of these factors together make it harder and harder for the Sandinista government to maintain the achievements of the revolution, especially in the areas of nutrition, health and education.

In this context the Sandinistas can have no illusions about the future and what they call a survival economy. President Ortega clearly stated that his government cannot aspire to economic growth in 1986, but rather must adapt to the limitations imposed by the war and the blockade.

In the political arena, the Sandinista government has its weakest flank in its relationship with the Catholic hierarchy, led by Cardinal Miguel Ovando y Bravo. Relations between the Church and the State are extremely polarized. Government officials accuse Ovando y Bravo of following CIA orders and of being the political head of the counter-revolution in Managua. The Catholic hierarchy, in turn, denounces alleged human rights violations by the Sandinistas and shares the Reagan administration's accusations that the Nicaraguan government is following the path to totalitarianism, under orders from Moscow and Cuba.



Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

## latin american issues

What is certain is that with the restoration of the State of Emergency last October, the confrontation has intensified. Just in January, the government closed the Church's official radio station and accused Father Oswaldo Mondragon, director of Managua's Catholic Seminary, of belonging to a contra cell involved in planning sabotage actions. Mutual accusations between Ovando y Bravo and priests working with the government fly back and forth with ever greater frequen-

cy. People even speak of the existence of two Churches. Some bishops have been denounced because they are arbitrarily removing priests and nuns who sympathize with the revolution from their parishes. The situation has developed into a major political and ideological conflict in which the Catholic hierarchy has become the spearhead of the internal political opposition. In spite of these difficulties and the pressures on them to negotiate with the contras, the

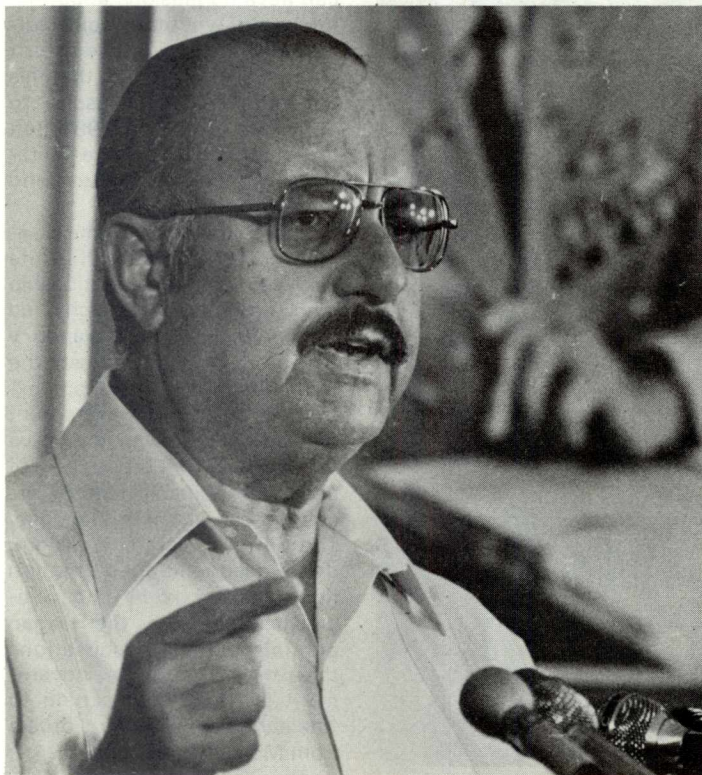
Sandinistas have moved forward with their project of mixed economy and political pluralism. A new constitution is being written by the National Assembly with the participation of opposition political parties, and *La Prensa*, a daily newspaper with ties to the counter-revolution, continues to publish, notwithstanding the permanent censure. While spaces for political activity have been reduced—because of foreign aggression according to government officials—they

government, and they have begun to institutionalize the revolutionary process. The question is how long can they hold firm with their commitment to a mixed economy, political pluralism and non-alignment, given that the position of the Reagan administration actually lends support to the arguments of the most radical sectors within the Sandinistas. Since it is clear that the counter-revolutionary groups, by themselves, will not be

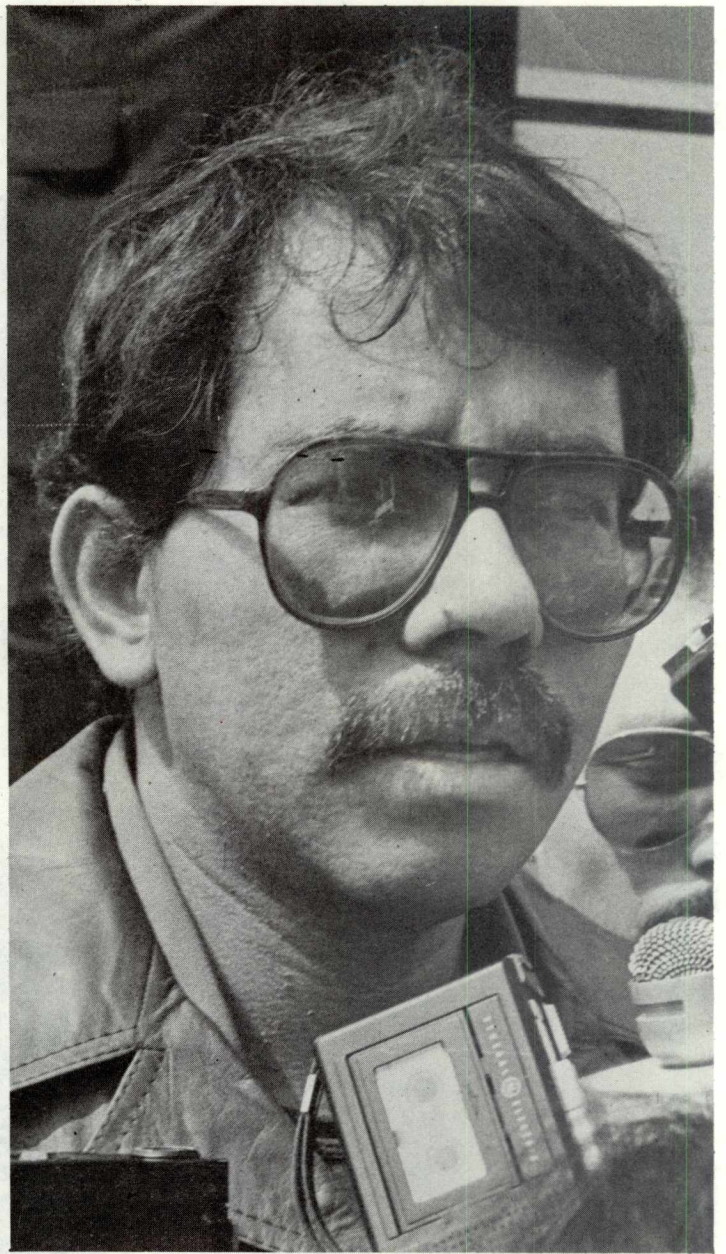
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Picking coffee with arms at hand. Photo by Agencia Nueva Nicaragua.



The Somoza Dynasty. Photo by Pedro Valtierra.



President Daniel Ortega. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

have yet to be closed down completely.

The Sandinistas believe that despite the economic difficulties and the multiple pressures on them, they will be able to continue in the consolidation of the revolution. Their principal base of support comes from the peasant masses, who make up the majority of the population. In addition, they have gained a great deal of experience in their seven years of leading the

capable of overthrowing the Managua government over the next several years, a further question of fundamental importance for Nicaragua's future must be raised. Will Washington choose to acknowledge the need to dialog with the Sandinistas, or will the administration opt for a direct military invasion?★

Horacio Castellanos Moya

# THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN OUR COUNTRY

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## President De La Madrid explains to a worried nation the meaning of the oil crisis and the National Government's plans for how to best confront it.

*This February 21st, President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado went on TV and radio to address the Mexican people and explain how the oil crisis had destabilized the government's plan to salvage the economy without defaulting on the debt, as well as the government's plan for dealing with the dramatic, new situation. Excerpts from the Presidential speech:*

### FELLOW MEXICANS:

*Our national economy today is facing one of its worst challenges of this century. The world petroleum market has plunged into chaotic competition and a generalized price war. The situation severely affects many petroleum exporting countries, above all the developing nations like ours and, though it seems to offer certain immediate advantages to oil consumers, it also has negative repercussions within the industrialized countries. Consequently, we are experiencing a worldwide problem of extraordinary dimensions.*

*Mexico has acted responsibly on the world scene, seeking concerted remedies to prevent the extreme worsening of the problems. Within our borders, we have calmly and objectively evaluated the effects of this situation. National public opinion has been analyzing the situation as well, and understanding is better. We have all seen that the situation is changing so much and so quickly that uncertainty prevails and the ability to foresee events is very limited. Nevertheless, we cannot wait for the vistas to clear to take decisive action.*

*I am speaking to my fellow countrymen today to tell them of the nature of the government's attitude and its action at both the national and international levels, as well as what I require of Mexicans at this difficult moment in our history.*

*According to current estimates, the drop in oil prices may result in the loss to our public finances of approximately three trillion pesos, the equivalent of 12.5% of all public revenues. In the balance of trade, this means that some 6 billion dollars may not be entering the country, which is equivalent to the loss of one-half our income from petroleum exports, one-third of the value of the country's total exports, and almost the same amount as that represented by total income from non-petroleum exports. That is the magnitude of the problem we are facing.*

*This international challenge takes place after three years of enormous efforts on the part of the Mexican people to solve both their internal and external problems. In October of last year, when oil market perspectives were in gradual decline, but did not show signs of collapse, various policy options for 1986 were analyzed. A strategy was devised which aimed to take up with renewed vigor the process to put our economy*

*on a sound footing and reduce inflation, as well as to continue with the in-depth measures for structural change that the nation has demanded to solve its problems at the roots. An so the turn for the worse on the international scene is taking place within the framework of an economic program for 1986 whose severity, even before the drop in oil prices, already demanded an unprecedented effort.*

*The international oil market is in disarray. During the last decade, high oil prices encouraged technological changes to replace petroleum with other energy sources, thus reducing oil consumption and causing an excessive oil production capacity. The lack of international agreement between producing countries as well as the absence of dialog with consuming countries has resulted in disorder and chaos in the international oil market. The persevering and constant efforts that Mexico made during the last three years to avert this situation achieved some results in the first two years, but beginning in the second half of 1985 they were confronted with the insurmountable problem of lack of understanding and willingness to achieve stability and order in the oil market. This situation occurs at a time when there is already a generalized downward trend in the prices of the raw materials we export, and when there are difficulties in obtaining financial flows that are adequate in terms of volume and interest rates.*

*In view of this situation, it has not been possible to achieve sufficient exchange and international cooperation in economic matters, on which Mexico has insisted systematically in international forums and in bilateral relations.*

*The international disorder and its unprecedented impact on the domestic situation call for a firm but serene response. Various groups, both national and foreign, have proposed that in view of this problem, the Government should radically alter the course of its economic policy.*

*To foreign groups holding this opinion we have indicated that we ourselves will decide which actions are necessary to confront this challenge and when and how they will be taken. We shall not permit the course we will follow to be imposed on us from abroad. We will not allow ourselves to be subjugated in conducting our affairs, nor will we allow ourselves to become pawns in a confrontation for the convenience of interested parties in the international conflict.*

*Internally, the discussion frequently centers on a proposal to take action on one single instrument of development: public expenditure. There are those who propose that it should be drastically reduced in order to totally compensate for the drop in oil income; and on the other hand, there are others who recommend that the budget should be increased in order to further stimulate economic activity.*

*In reply to those who ask us to reduce spending to totally compensate for the drop in oil income, we point out that this option, or any similar option that seeks to make Mexicans absorb the greater part of the external disequilibrium, is not feasible. Budget cut backs of such magnitude would imply risking basic food security and the supply of drinking water; suspending works for the country's communications; leaving just demands in education and health unattended and noticeably affecting the performance of the country's strategic*

companies. This would not be compatible with running the economic apparatus and meeting minimum social needs.

At the opposite extreme, other groups propose a reactivation of spending in order to attend to unsatisfied but legitimate demands, and the stimulation of economic growth, even on the basis of creating the necessary money artificially. Out of context, the idea might seem attractive. But a responsible state must reconcile the attention to inescapable needs and its fundamental commitments with the acute insufficiency of means. A reactivation of public spending under the current circumstances would create a problem more serious than the one we now must resolve.

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Despite these views, the government of the Republic has decided to persevere, for the most part, in the internal development strategy outlined for 1986, though it is necessary, because of the changing circumstances, to make tactical adjustments in matters and means.

The strategy implies defining the basic ways to achieve our goals; the tactics consist in the means or instruments to follow the strategy.

The domestic strategy now in place is the correct one. It is not an easy or comfortable option, for it implies great decisions, efforts and sacrifices—but it is based on reality and offers viable courses of action. To persevere in it is the only thing that the government of the Republic can responsibly offer. Our domestic economic policy cannot change, neither in its fundamental goals nor in its strategy. Both before and after the oil “shock”, the basic problems of our economy remain the same. The additional difficulties that we now face do not change the nature of those problems except to make them worse. That is why neither the goals nor the fundamental strategies can change, even if we must act flexibly, using the different instruments of economic policy and seeking further room for action.

However, my fellow Mexicans, in spite of all our internal efforts, we cannot expect that the impact of these fiscal, financial and trade measures will suffice to counteract the decline of oil revenue in the short term. This is why it is necessary to reexamine, in the light of our new circumstances, our policy on foreign debt, additional financing and trade relations.

The positions that will be presented to the international financial community in the next few days will be put forth in a context of dialog and negotiation. We do not want confrontation, but rather an honorable and realistic arrangement. We wish to continue being reliable and respected members of the international community, but this attitude gives us the right to fair and objective treatment.

Mexico has been exceptionally responsible in its financial relations with other countries. It has not resorted to confrontations, which benefit no one, and it has refused to engage in unilateral solutions. Mexico now expects that this attitude will be accorded its true value by other countries.

We shall revise the financial terms of the debt service, adjusting them to the country's capacity to pay. The foreign debt policy will have to ensure that the schedules agreed upon with creditors not only consider the short-term liquidity problem, but are also consistent with the net requirements for funds in future years, favor the operation of our economic system and the essential recovery of our capacity to grow and generate employment. Permanent stagnation is unacceptable for Mexico and is not advantageous to the international economy.

The net effect of the loss in petroleum income on the 1986 balance of payments cannot be compensated for solely through increased foreign indebtedness via new flows of credit. This would take us into an endless vicious cycle. The adjustment also calls for sacrifices on the part of the international creditors who have been jointly responsible for the process of indebtedness.

In the handling of negotiations abroad, the prevailing criterion must be that any lasting solution to the problem of the debt requires the solution of the following questions:

- Adjustment of the service of the debt to the country's actual capacity to pay;
- Sufficient financing mechanisms and reduction of their cost;
- Opening of markets that will allow us to export in order to strengthen our capacity to grow and to pay, and
- A favorable international climate that will contribute to effective and prompt solutions for cooperation in the different areas of the world economy.

Given the nature and magnitude of the problem it is impossible at this point, and without the participation of our creditors, to lay out a definitive plan. Based on the foregoing criteria, this will be worked out during conversations with the parties involved.

Consequently, we shall make an in-depth restatement of the situation regarding the service of the debt, in accordance with the country's capacity to pay and taking into consideration the uncertain fluctuations in our petroleum income and the vital interest of keeping our economic system operating and recovering our growth and employment capacity. We shall not ask the international community to solve all our problems, but rather to complement the far-reaching and strong efforts we Mexicans are making here at home. We hope that these negotiations will be marked by realism, equity and absolute respect for our sovereign rights.

MEXICANS:

Today is a time for responsibility, for clear identification with the values and institutions of the nation. It is a time for



Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid. Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

*courage, for staying calm in the face of adversity, for firmness in carrying out decisions, and for steadfast perseverance in the efforts to be made.*

*I have always spoken truthfully during my administration. I have told the people what can be done and what cannot. I have governed realistically and in accordance with our principles. Now more than ever, I am governing for all Mexicans, for those of today and those of tomorrow.*

*My commitment is indestructible: it is to the campesinos, to the workers, to the middle classes, to businessmen, to intellectuals, to members of the professions —to the men and women of Mexico, and to its youth.*

*To aid us in confronting the harsh adversity of our times we have the strength that stems from what we have achieved and, above all, the great nation that we Mexicans have built in the course of our history. Every memory of the great undertakings of our past gives strength to our unity and guarantees our progress.*

*I have pointed out that I will not change the domestic policies under way, though I will be capable of adapting tactics to the new circumstances. Given the dimensions of the problem that we are facing, its solution within our borders lies in pursuing the strategy of structural change that we have set up for ourselves and that was defined in the 1983-86 National Development Plan.*

*It is now up to our creditors to make an effort at least commensurate to the great task and sacrifices undertaken by the Mexican people.*

*I will not deal with the enormous challenge now threatening us from abroad by such means as lowering the living standards of Mexican campesinos or cutting the real wages of my country's workers.*

*The priority today, more than ever, is to defend the vital interests of the Mexican people.*

*I repeat that I will not make any economic concessions that undermine our national sovereignty.*

*We Mexicans have been imaginative and firm in devising formulas for dealing with our domestic problems; laying aside any spirit of confrontation, the international community will now have to share the responsibilities and join us in seeking solutions that are viable both from the point of view of Mexico's vital interests and from that of the harmonious relations that should exist among the diverse economies of the world.*

*The initial strategy for 1986, prior to the collapse of petroleum prices, already implied an unprecedented effort on the part of the Mexican nation. To attempt to accommodate the drop in oil income solely by increasing domestic austerity measures could have an unacceptable effect on the working of the Mexican economy and the living standards of its inhabitants. No one is obliged to do the impossible.*

*As President of the Republic, I undertook a commitment to the nation to govern in such a way as to preserve and strengthen national independence and to respect and enforce respect for the system of laws emanating from the Mexican Revolution; to safeguard and add to individual and collective freedoms; to enrich the political, economic and cultural aspects of democratic life; to seek the brotherly and harmonious coexistence of all Mexicans, and to maintain and reinforce the peace of the Republic. That is my obligation; I have carried it out during these three years, and I shall do so throughout my administration.*

*In view of this unprecedented effort the Republic requires of its citizens, I pledge that I shall follow as my only guide and purpose the defense of our national integrity, respect for the law, the safeguarding of our freedoms and the protection of our social rights. I shall defend the national economy up to the limit of the traditional ability for negotiation and political clarity of the Mexican people while trying to avoid confrontations which would harm us all.*

*We must enhance our national renewal —these are times for decisive action. Let's set aside our quarrels and let us concentrate our efforts on the solution of this major problem facing us. I call on the nation to participate united and to join*

*together to defend the basic principles which we Mexicans have upheld throughout our history. Nobody can stand aside from this great struggle in which we are engaged. Every sector of society has a commitment in the face of this challenge: they must take their place in the battle for the nation. For my part, I reconfirm my personal, moral and political commitment to serve the nation to the utmost limit of my capacity, bearing no other interest in mind than that of our homeland, which we must all love more now than ever before. Long live Mexico! ★*

## MEXICO'S POSITION ON THE LIBYAN CRISIS

*Shortly after the U.S. bombing of Libya, Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a communique stating the country's official position on the issue. Because of its importance, VOICES OF MEXICO reproduces the full text:*

Mexico City, Mexico  
April 16, 1986

PRESS RELEASE  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Mexican government continues to observe with great concern the situation of violence in the Mediterranean, which threatens international peace and security.

This unfortunate situation has caused anxiety and consternation in the international community as the efforts to find a political solution, that could prevent an escalation of the violence, have not prospered.

Mexico has persevered in its position that force must not be used to replace peaceful means to resolve the kinds of controversies which are covered by international law, or instead of taking a case to the appropriate level of the United Nations. The function of the United Nations is to prevent violations of said international law, and when necessary, to determine what measures must be taken to sanction illegal actions, such as terrorism.

On numerous occasions, the Mexican government has energetically condemned terrorist acts. Today it insists that the international community must adopt effective measures to combat this odious crime.

The Mexican government deplures acts of war or of terrorism since, in addition to violating the obligations assumed by member nations of the UN as stated in the San Francisco Charter, they represent a grave danger to international peace. By resorting to force to settle controversies, individual rights, as well as the possibilities for diplomatic negotiation are thus, affected.

At the same time, the Mexican government calls on those involved in the conflict to put an end to retaliatory acts of force, which can only worsen the situation and cause more loss of life. ★

# FRIDA: SENSUALITY IN FILM, SENSUALITY THROUGH FILM

**For the first time in years, a Mexican film is a smashing, critical success.**

*For a long time, the Mexican film industry had been submerged in an extremely difficult situation. The old glory days of the 1940s and the early 70s were long gone and forgotten; only film buffs remembered them with nostalgia. At last, a film finally emerges that stirs the viewers' imagination and, despite its artistic complexity, becomes a box-office success; as well. Painter Frida Kahlo, whose life is portrayed in the film, was a leading figure among the Surrealist school. Her unconventional relationship with Diego Rivera has become the stuff of myth and legend. VOICES OF MEXICO decided to give the outstanding film and this outstanding woman its first space in the "Faces" section. Film-maker and critic, Manuel Sorto, provides us with some of his views:*

**Frida, the Lively Spirit**, a film by Mexican director Paul Leduc, opened recently in Mexico City. For months we had been reading about and hearing of the praise the film was receiving abroad. Coverage in the Mexican press was notable because of the critic's opposing points of view.

Reviews were even more contradictory after **Frida** was nominated for nine Arieles, the Mexican equivalent of the Hollywood Oscars. Some considered the film to be one of the most beautiful and important in the history of Mexican cinema, while others argued that it's "a lot of fireworks" and the "pièce de resistance of the crisis". Since very few in Mexico had actually seen the film, others began referring to it as "mythical". All in all, **Frida** won 8 Arieles.

Very few films have had the aureola that surrounded **Frida** before its debut. Few have received such contrary reviews. I believe a lot of this has to do with the fact that the film deals with characters whose politics and artistic work are still pertinent in Mexico today: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros. The controversy also has to do with Leduc's atypical direction and structuring of the film in a style unprecedented in the Mexican cinema.

**Frida** is not the conventional type of film biography. There is no portrayal of glorious deeds and unwavering virtuous personal conduct. Nor does the film follow the official history on its subject. Incidents of Frida's political involvement are treated on equal footing with everyday moments; some critics refer to this as "major trivia".

The artist in her wheelchair taking part in a left demonstration is as significant as watching her listen to a record. In one scene she attends the funeral of slain Zapatista peasants and in another she smokes while her husband Diego Rivera sits in the bathtub. Frida distributes leaflets calling on the Mexican people to support Sandino's struggle in Nicaragua and is convulsed in laughter as she imitates an opera singer that Rivera listens to as he paints one of his famous murals.

Therein lies much of what Leduc is proposing in this film: treating historical monsters as if they were everyday people. The character's importance stems not from their spectacular

## WHO IS FRIDA KALHO?

Generally considered to be Latin America's best surrealist painter, Frida Kahlo was born in Mexico City in 1910. She was the daughter of a German immigrant and fashionable model photographer, Wilhelm Kahlo, who changed his name to Guillermo after he moved to Mexico. Frida (originally Frieda, she dropped the "e" from her name in 1933 to make it more hispanic and to emphasize her rejection of all things German with the rise of the Nazis there) received a privileged education, first in the Coyoacan neighborhood where she grew up and later at the National Preparatory School, at that time considered to be the country's finest high school. It was also there that she first met Diego Rivera, when he began to paint his murals at the school in 1923. Nonetheless, she didn't start her tempestuous relationship with the famous painter until much later, in 1929.

At the age of 16, riding home from school one day, Frida was in a bus that was hit by a trolley. A piece of iron punctured her abdomen, broke her pelvis and damaged her spinal column. She survived miraculously, but the after-effects of the accident stayed with her throughout her life. At a very young age, she was confined to a wheelchair, and in her thirties, she had a leg amputated below the knee.

The 1920s in Mexico were years of particular political frenzy and feverish creativity. The country was being rebuilt after a decade of revolution that left great destruction in its wake. Social issues were very much in fashion and the possibility of bettering the lot of

mankind was very much on the horizon. Frida embraced these noble causes at an early age. It was, in fact, through her political activities and not through her painting that she met Diego Rivera again. Once together, they would never be separated again until her death, although theirs was not a traditional relationship in any way. Two free spirits with strong personalities and a strong dose of individualism, Frida and Diego shared a tumultuous love life, in which other lovers came and went, and in which separations and reconciliations were the norm; one year —1940— they even married, divorced and married again.

Frida and Diego were very much at the center of all things artistic and political throughout their entire lives. They not only met and befriended many leading figures of the first half of the century, but also became emotionally involved with some of them. Such was the case with Frida and Bolshevik leader-in-exile, Leon Trotsky.

Art critic Raquel Tibol has said of Frida's works, that they represent the only case in which "subjectivity is objectified." Tibol continues, "With a lucid and receptive mind, she established a commitment to herself and became her own active subject, one which she had to penetrate from all angles in order to capture it for ever in her paintings."

In Mexico, today, Frida is popularly seen as a symbol of liberation, as well as an example of how someone with talent and perseverance can overcome even the greatest of obstacles.

actions but rather from the combination of apparently unimportant everyday events with the moments that eventually do go down in history.

Trotsky is shown at the Rivera's dinner table playing the trick of making a glass disappear from under a napkin. The scene takes place before another great Mexican muralist, Siqueiros, following Stalin's orders, makes an attempt on Trotsky's life. Frida strokes the pistol she hides under her skirt with the same ease as she sings with her washing lady as they hang up the clothes to dry. Just as Frida is straightforward in observing herself in the mirror or sustaining a lesbian encounter with a friend, Diego Rivera playfully asks Trotsky why he and Stalin didn't settle their differences by going out whoring together. Contrary to what some would have liked or expected, Leduc's film is no eulogy to Frida or Diego Rivera, nor is it a painful

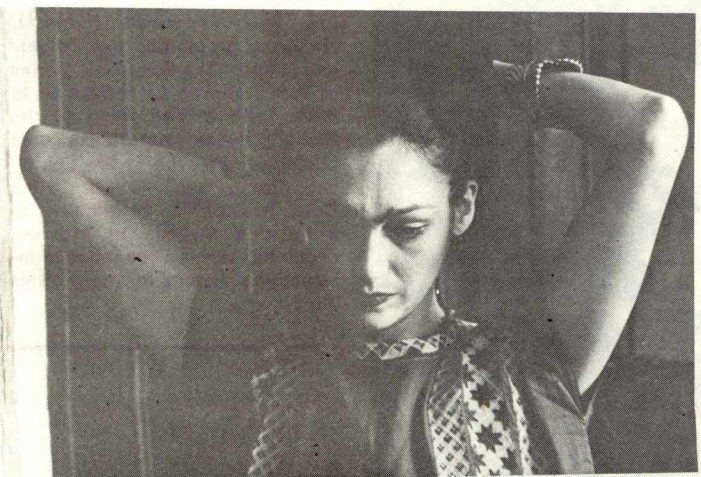


and heroic account of their struggles. Rather, Leduc demystifies historic characters so that they become the everyday people we can relate to, anonymous human beings caught up in daily life.

The director does not attempt to enter the world of their painting and of artistic creation. Nonetheless, each scene is a homage to the character's artistic work because of the lighting, warmth, movement and composition of the film.

From one scene to another the movie glides slowly through different moments in Frida's life, from childhood to death. Instead of telling a lineal story, Leduc uses flashbacks in what some consider a total "false disorder".

The camera's movements are gentle and steady, giving each sequence a silky smoothness. Each scene is beautifully rendered through the use of lighting, form and composition. The effect is one of maximum pleasure, though we are often shaken out of our complacency aesthetically, morally and politically speaking.



Transfiguration. Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

Leduc has reduced dialog to a minimum, and what there is of it is simple and direct. The words are mostly the simple, common speech of everyday Mexico.

From the point of view of how action unfolds in most commercial films, **Frida's** pace is slow. But the internal rhythm in each scene is overwhelming, as baroque as Latin American literature. There are so many details and nuances that we barely have time to take them in.

In the usual Mexican and Latin American film-making tradition, the slow pacing of each scene, the scarcity of dialog and action, the absence of jazzy commercial setting and killings or shootings every thirty seconds can seem senseless, even foolish. But the beauty of the images and the simplicity of events are fascinating. "Film as a cascade of images," wrote Leduc in 1982.

Some of the scenes seem to be excessively synthetic, such as the killing of the Zapatista peasants. Others, such as when Frida as a child has a pillow fight with her father and sister, we could do without. But none of these take away from the overall effect.

If one word were to define **Frida** it would be sensuous. Colors and forms are sensuous, as are the characters and their speech, the photography and composition.

**Frida** reveals the heights of film as an art form: photography, acting, sound, atmosphere, editing, production and direction come together in such a way that none of the parts imposes itself on the whole. Ofelia Medina plays Frida brilliantly; acting like hers had not been seen in Mexican film in a long time. Valentina Leduc, Paul's daughter, is excellent in her role as the child Frida. Juan Jose Gurrola as Diego Rivera, Max Kerlow as Trotsky, and Claudio Brook as Frida's father are all up to par.



Ofelia Medina plays Frida. Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

The quality of Angel Goded's photography finally achieves official recognition in Mexico and is proof of how new generations of cameramen are following in the tradition of quality, beauty and effectiveness rendered by Gabriel Figueroa with "Indio" Fernandez. In his time Figueroa was awarded the Cannes Film Festival's Golden Palm award. The settings by Alejandro Luna are also extraordinary .

But this is not a film to attract spectators because of the stars it features nor because of its director's fame or the exquisite quality of the photography. No Mexican movie theater will have a full house because of Angel Goded's photography or Ofelia Medina's acting. At any rate, only a very select audience has had access to Leduc's films simply because he has never made a 35mm. film. Even *Frida* is a blowup from 16mm. This means that Leduc's films have never reached a broad audience, the run of the mill people who simply pay for their ticket and spend their free time at the movies, whatever is playing.

Producer Manuel Barbachano Ponce continues taking risks, as he once did with none other than Buñuel. But the credit for bringing everything together into this jewel of a film goes to Paul Leduc. And he has done it at a time when the Mexican film industry is at an all-time low.

It has been many years since any movie had the type of impact *Frida* is having on our film industry. The prestige of Mexican films has been declining steadily for many years now, both in international film festivals and with the public. These times are a far cry from the glories of Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez or from the hopes for a better future that opened up for the industry during the presidency of Luis Echeverria (1970-76). It's also fair to say that the times are not the same as far as money is concerned.

The movie industry swallows up a lot of money while at the same time, as an art form it requires talent. During the early

70s there was ample funding for a whole new generation of directors, but it is also true that this was an extremely talented generation, more so than any other in the field previously. Working on government funding, this generation of film-makers helped raise the prestige of Mexico's motion pictures. But six years\* is not enough time, and the policy enacted by the following administrations tended to favor co-productions with foreign directors.

Paul Leduc has a history of his own. In adherence to his principles, he refused to become part of the establishment's industry and stubbornly continued to strive for space as an independent film-maker. This may have affected the continuity of his work, but he has accumulated dignity for Mexican cinema and today he is probably our most prestigious director in international circles.

*Frida* is life, she is part of the social struggles of her time and she is tenacious creativity, despite having suffered from polio and an automobile accident that eventually confined her to a wheelchair. *Frida's* contradictory life was full of the important and the inconsequential that embody life for all of us. Kahlo's example calls for political involvement free of dogmatism and prejudice, freeflowing and without sadness or false moral stances. She was capable of intense joy despite the pain and limitations that her illness imposed on her.

Additionally, the film seems to be achieving one of its main objectives: to get the Mexican public to accept hearing their stories about Mexico told in new ways. *Frida* is living proof that not only conventional box office forms (violence, sex and narrow mindedness) are effective with the broader audience. ★

\* The period of time for which a president is elected to office in Mexico.



Juan José Gurrola as Diego Rivera.

## PAUL LEDUC

Paul Leduc was born in Mexico in 1942. He first studied architecture and then theater, specializing in directing. Later he studied film-making at the ISHEC in Paris. His first full-length film was *Reed, Mexico Insurgente* (1971), based on the book of the same name, by U.S. journalist and writer John Reed. In France, the film won the George Sadoul award and was included among the films shown at the Cannes Festival. In Italy, it won the Pesaro Festival, and in Mexico it won the film industry's awards for best director and best film.

Some of his most outstanding films are *Mezquital, notas sobre un etnocidio* (1976; "Mezquital, Notes on Ethnocide"), *Estudio para un retrato* (1978; "Study for a Portrait"), *Monjas Coronadas* (1979; "Crowned Nuns"), *Historias prohibidas del Pulgarcito* (1980; "The Forbidden Stories of Tom Thumb"), *La cabeza de la hidra* (1981; "The Head of the Hydra"), *Frida, naturaleza viva* (1984; "Frida, The Lively Spirit") and *Como ves?* (1985; "How Does It Look?"). In addition to numerous awards in Mexico, Leduc has won a wide range of international awards for many of his films.

## WOMEN: NEW PROTAGONISTS ON THE SOCIAL SCENE

**Women have a difficult struggle everywhere, but perhaps it is most difficult in Latin countries. Nevertheless, there are signs of change.**

*The emergence of women as protagonists in shaping their own futures and their countries' destinies is one of the most significant social transformations that the world has experienced in recent years. Most analyses, however, tend to emphasize the development of the feminist movement in industrialized countries. Latin nations, and Third World countries in general, have been stereotyped as hopelessly "machos." But things are also changing in Latin America, despite the label. VOICES OF MEXICO asked Elizabeth Maier, well-known feminist and social historian, to write about her view on the advances achieved by Mexican women and the challenges that still lie ahead.*

If Gertrude Stein had written "...a woman is a woman is a woman..." she would have been partly right and partly wrong. Right, because historically in almost every culture around the world, women have been put in second class roles, confronted with economic, social and political discrimination and oppressed by the mystification of motherhood. And wrong, because this abstract, universal condition of women takes on different forms in different cultures and countries. She becomes Mrs. Jones or Señora Perez whose lives have very little in common. A woman, then, is not only a woman; she is also a nationality, a religion, a culture, a race, a history, a way of working and a social class.

Mexico is a predominantly Catholic, multi-ethnic society. Its present day situation is fundamentally the result of three important heritages: its very rich pre-Columbian cultures, Spanish colonization and a contradictory modern development as a Third World country. For the majority of Mexican women, their femininity is fused with poverty and long hours of hard work, without the aid of many electrical appliances to lighten the burden of housework. Family structure is patriarchal, and the man is definitely the household head.

Gradually, however, with the emergence of a growing middle class and particularly during the past 12 years, Mexican women have begun to demand equal rights and to move into new spheres of activity. Slowly, they are changing the old ways of thinking that valued women as a function of the number of children they'd brought into the world. And slowly, too, they are becoming protagonists in modern society.

Yet, Mexican women's struggle for real—not just formal—equality must be analyzed within the context of Mexican reality, as a developing Third World country. For developing countries, the world economic crisis means a continuous reduction in the market prices for the raw materials that they produce and an exorbitant deficit due to financial dependency. For women in developing countries, the crisis affects their daily lives in ways that make their liberation extremely difficult.

When your energy is taken up in simply trying to survive, the struggle for sexual equality can easily take a second place behind the immediate needs of working class families. Thus, it is not surprising that the consensus among Third World women at the 1985 international conference in Nairobi was that the achievement of women's equality is conditioned by the possibility of achieving peace and social well-being in all nations of the world.

In Mexico, women's inequality dates back to pre-Columbian times, to the development of diverse autoctonomous groups and the expansionist activities of The Aztec empire. Although women played an important role in pre-Columbian society, with rights to own businesses and property, their major social value was nonetheless judged in terms of their maternal capacity.

Coatlicue, the principal goddess and mother of all the gods in the Aztec religion, may represent the passage from a non-patriarchal society to a patriarchal one. Coatlicue, the dual goddess, the great birth-giver and goddess of death, the principal beginning and end, achieves her true importance when she gives birth to Huitzilopochtli, the Sun and god of war. The story of Coatlicue is, then, the story of Aztec women.

"One day, Coatlicue, the mother of all the gods and all the stars, was sweeping a mountain named Coatepec, when a feather slowly floated down from the sky, and pierced her breast. The feather imbued her with new life, but when her children realized that she was pregnant, they became furious and decided to kill her. Coyolxauqui, in particular, thought that his pregnant mother disgraced the family, and incited his brothers to join him in matricide. Coatlicue was terrified, but her unborn child spoke to her from the womb. He told her not to be afraid and to trust in his protection. Just as her other children, armed to kill her, came close to Coatlicue, Huitzilopochtli was born. He killed Coyolxauqui with the help of a snake, and then assassinated almost all of his other brothers, ignoring their pleas for mercy."



With her charge out front. Photo by Ruben Pax.

## life and culture

The birth of the Sun, Huitzilopochtli, in Aztec mythology, most likely symbolizes a very definite moment in the development of a society of warriors, in which patriarchal structures became institutionalized, and women were relegated to, and venerated for, their capacity to procreate.

With the Spanish conquest, native social and economic structures were radically transformed, along with ancient religious beliefs and practices. Coatlicue and Tonantzin, the goddesses of life and maternity, became Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus Christ. Christianity introduced the concept of original sin to local ethnic groups. Hand in hand came the idea that there are just two kinds of women, good ones and bad ones.

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Since the conquest, Mexican folklore also includes the story of Malinche, Cortez' natives wife, portraying her as the symbol

symbol of the struggle for freedom from Spain. Father Hidalgo, one of Mexico's founders, gave the cry of "death to the Spaniards, long live the Virgin of Guadalupe" and with that gave the signal to begin the insurrection. Thus, Guadalupe is not only a religious figure. She is also a symbol of Mexico, itself, and is the epitome of Mexican femininity.

For the dominating criollo class, independence from Spain brought enormous changes in the country's economic and social structure. But for the vast majority of the population—the impoverished native peasants—liberation from Spain brought no significant changes to their lives. The men continued to work the land, planting, tending the fields and harvesting the crop. Yet they could only keep a part of the harvest; the larger part of what they reaped went to the lan-



Students. Photo by Fabrizio León.

of female betrayal and immorality. Malinche is the opportunist woman who prefers foreigners to her own people, who gives herself to the conquering enemy because she is weak and lustful. Oddly enough, in Mexican folklore there are no native male figures who represent a similar form of betrayal, although there must have been many examples of similar behavior.

In contrast to this historical symbol of the "bad woman," is the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the most important of the Mexican expressions of Mary. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the sweet, patient, infinitely loving and submissive woman. She is both the mother of Christ and the symbol of the Mexican spirit, who during the Independence War became the

downers as payment in kind for the right to use his fields. The women did the household chores, cooking on a rustic fire, walking long distance to get water and wash clothes and tending the family vegetable garden. Of course, they also raised the numerous children, which for a peasant family represented more hands to help with the work, and they worked one or two days a week in the main house of the hacienda as part of the services to be rendered in exchange for the use of land.

The population was composed mostly of poor, landless peasants whose hard work earned them only the most meager subsistence. Medical attention was non-existent for peasant families and the infant and maternal mortality rates were ex-

tremely high. The elevated child mortality explains why couples had so many children: they could expect three of four of them to die in the first years of life.

The private educational system was only for the upper class, and in particular, for upper class men. Neither peasant women nor wealthy women were permitted the benefits of a formal education. The belief, which still persists in many parts of Mexico today, was that education is wasted on women because their only future is marriage, housework and raising a family.

A few upper class women raised their voices in protest against the discrimination that was formalized in the new Civil Code of 1884. Their objection were not shared by many other women, however, and men took them as a sort of social folly, just a few local rebels without a true cause.

The 1884 Code, based on the Napoleonic code, considered women to be minors, dependent for life on one man or another. A woman was only legally considered responsible for herself if her husband and her sons were mentally incapable. The husband was his wife's legitimate representative, and she was obliged to obey him in domestic matters, in relation to their children's education and to the administration of any property. Women needed written permission from their husbands to testify in court, even if the event in question took place before they were married. An unmarried woman under 30 years of age was not allowed to leave her parents' home without their permission. Any infraction by a woman of the accepted monogamous marriage relationship was cause for legal separation, if the husband so desired; however, women could get a separation because of a husband's infidelity only if the husband had committed the act in the household shared by the couple, exhibited scandalous behavior and publically insulted his wife.

The Civil Code wasn't really a male plot to keep women in their place. Rather it reflected the ideology of the dominant Mexican classes, accepted by men and women alike. It had very little to do with the masses of Mexican peasants, who had no property to administer, rarely were legally married and didn't know what the inside of a courthouse looked like.

During the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship, the everyday lives of rural peasant families became increasingly difficult. The big land owners expanded their own holdings by taking over the smaller properties of well-off peasants, forcing them to become wage laborers. Poverty and misery were synonymous with the human condition of the majority of the population. At the same time, the country's elites were building luxurious, French-style houses and spending enormous sums on extravaganzas and foreign travel. The Mexican revolution grew out of this situation of profound contrasts; of unfilled human needs and a population kept down by state-sponsored political repression.

It was not only men who participated in the social effervescence. Women began to organize, sometimes together with men, sometimes in their own political organizations. In 1904 Maria Sandoval de Zarco and Laura Mendez de Cuenca formed the Society for the Protection of Women, the first feminist organization in Mexico, dedicated to changing the second-class image of Mexican women. In 1907 women union members participated actively in the famous strike at Rio Blanco, Veracruz. Carmen Serdan, together with other members of the Female League for Political Propaganda, continually voiced their opposition to Porfirio Diaz' reelection.

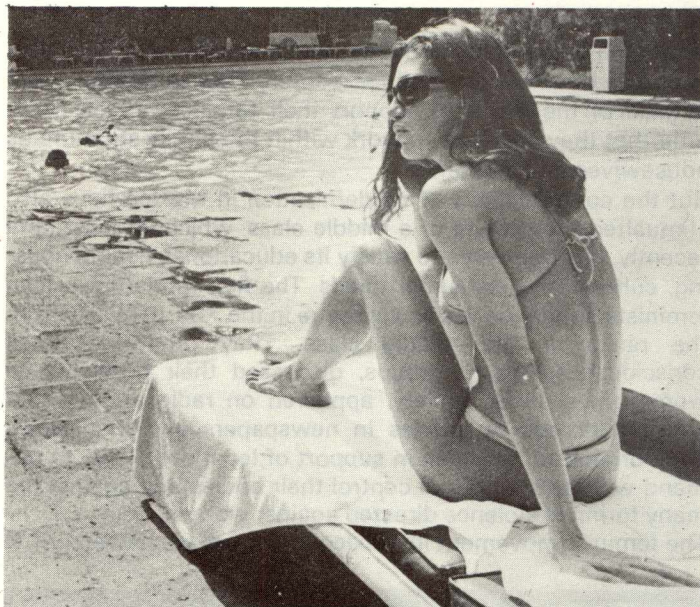
Along with these names that have become part of history, many women, whose names are now forgotten, formed organizations to protect their rights as workers, particularly in the growing textile industry where women have always been the majority of the labor force. And many women joined the Mexican Liberal Party, led by the Flores Magon brothers, demanding a more just society, fair labor conditions, and agrarian reform. Still other women organized to demand legal rights, including the right to vote.

By 1913 women were incorporated into the revolutionary movement, carrying out a great variety of tasks. The widely

accepted notion that the Mexican women who participated in the revolution were just the faithful followers of their menfolk, cooking, washing clothes and in general, making the war easier for the men, is not true. Many women were organizers, messengers, hospital workers, propagandists and soldiers, and a few even became generals.

At the end of the revolution, however, women returned to their homes and to their traditional roles as mothers and housewives, or in the case of peasant women, to their roles in the integrated peasant family unit.

The Constitution of 1921 partially reflects women's demands from the period of revolutionary fervor. Women gained in social benefits and achieved equal rights with men in the areas of education and labor (except for certain restrictions



due to protective clauses). Nonetheless, according to the law, they had yet to come of political age; the right to vote was not granted to women until 1953.

The revolution in and of itself did not bring an end to the discrimination of women in Mexico. Nonetheless, through the agrarian reform and growing industrial development, women, as members of peasant families, and as salaried workers, did receive the general benefits of this new stage of social and economic development. In most cases, however, discrimination remained unchanged.

The end of the revolutionary war marks the real take-off of industrial development in Mexico. Yet industrialization in Mexico did not follow the same path that characterized the process of industrialization in the already developed countries. Mexico continued to be fundamentally a producer of raw materials, dependent on the prices fixed for its products in the world market. Industrial development in Mexico was also dependent on the technological know-how of the advanced countries (especially the U.S.) and generally only accessible with foreign currency.

Home made products, such as clothing, dishes and pots, furniture and tools, have generally been replaced by manufactured goods. Other items, such as radios, stoves, televisions, refrigerators and sewing machines are now coveted commodities. These changes have created a greater need for cash among the rural population, at levels far higher than their subsistence farming could ever produce. This, in turn, has fed into a growing process of rural proletarianization and or rural-urban migration.

Nonetheless, industrial growth has not been sufficient to absorb the number of people who have migrated to the cities looking for jobs, and as a result, an under-employed sector of the urban population has developed rapidly. For women from poor families, industrial growth has brought changes in their traditional roles, but more than anything else, it has meant an even greater work load for them. In rural areas, men often

## life and culture

migrate alone to the cities looking for work. The women are left to take the man's place in agricultural production, at the same time that they continue to keep up their homes and raise their children.

In the 60s and 70s a new migrational phenomenon was detected. Young women accounted for the largest percentage of rural-urban migration, as they sought jobs as domestic workers or in the informal sector (as street vendors, for example). Despite the fact that these young migrants usually send part of their earnings home to the family, their absence is often greatly felt by their mothers. In traditional rural families, a woman's daughters are her principal helpers and the only hope for retirement. When the daughters leave, the mother's work load increases, and she may also face a longer lifetime of work since her traditional substitutes are no longer in the household.

Urban male unemployment and under-employment have also implied a double work load for women. They must seek work outside of the home to support their families, at the same time that they continue to work within the family structure as housewives and mothers.

But the contradictions of modernization in Mexico have also stimulated the growth of a middle class, which, at least until recently, has been able to satisfy its educational, health, housing, cultural and consumer needs. The first modern Mexican feminists appear on the social scene in the 70s, precisely from the ranks of the middle class. They organized small consciousness-raising groups, discussed their problems as women in a sexist society, appeared on radio and TV and wrote hundreds of articles in newspapers and magazines. They organized activities in support of legal abortions, to demand women's rights to control their bodies and against the many forms of violence directed against women.

The feminist movement in Mexico is not a mass movement. It

has had, nonetheless, an enormous impact on the consciousness of most political leaders, the mass media and to a lesser extent, on the population, in general. Perhaps, its most serious limitation has been its middle class character.

Constitutional reforms in 1974 eradicated all remnants of legal sexual discrimination. While it would be difficult to attribute these modifications solely to the efforts of Mexican feminists, it is undeniable that they greatly influenced the changes in the law.

The specific effects of the current world economic crisis on Mexican women's lives has yet to be studied; however, they are not difficult to deduce. The drastic reduction in oil prices (Mexico's principal export product), the high interest rates on the foreign debt, the imposition of specific conditions—among them, cutbacks in social programs and reductions in federal spending, with serious implications for employment possibilities—for continued foreign financing, the spiralling inflation and the constant loss of buying power all contribute to a social mosaic in which daily survival is the foremost concern for the majority of the population.

Under these conditions it is difficult to imagine that sexual equality can be achieved. Senator Guadalupe Gomez Maganda de Anaya, representative of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), put it this way: "It is not possible to advance toward the objectives suggested by the United Nations for women unless a New International Order is established based on equality, sovereignty, interdependence and common interests; it is impossible unless new, realistic and responsible criteria for meeting foreign debt obligations are agreed upon by debtor and creditor nations, alike, and it is impossible unless we eliminate areas of international tension through political negotiation."

In countries like Mexico, women's equality is intimately tied to the possibilities of national development. ★

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Middle class women's role. Photo by Fabrizio León.

# WHEN DIEGO RIVERAS'S WORK PRODUCED A STORM

**This year Mexico and the world commemorate the Centennial of one of its leading 20th Century artists. But his work hasn't always enjoyed the acceptance it has today.**

*The festivities to commemorate the centennial of Diego Rivera (1886-1957), —one of Mexico's three leading muralist painters, along with David Alfaro Siqueiros and Jose Clemente Orozco— are underway in Detroit, Michigan. Rivera painted one of his greatest masterpieces at the Detroit Institute of Arts: "Detroit Industry", completed in 1933. At the*

*time, the renowned mural wasn't exactly welcome by all of the automobile capital's society. Nowadays, of course, its greatness is no longer in question, and the city's museum was chosen as the first stop for an international exhibit that will tour the U.S. and Mexico to commemorate the artist's centennial. In this context, VOICES OF MEXICO asked art critic Alicia Azuela to write about the 1933 controversy over Rivera's work, in an attempt to convey some of the difficulties that even the best of Latin America's artists have had to confront in their quest for broader international acceptance. Ms. Azuela, who has written a book on the subject, tells the following story:*

Diego Rivera left Detroit in March 1933 several days before his mural was unveiled at the Detroit Art Institute. To his surprise and that of the museum administration, the work unleashed a scandal that would reach far beyond the city's limits.

It all started with a protest filed by Reverend H. Ralph Higgins, Episcopal minister of St. Paul's Church. Besides considering the mural to be in very bad taste, he found it to be irreverent and laden with Communist propaganda. The panel dealing with vaccination had triggered his anger because in his opinion, it made direct reference to the Nativity and satirized Christianity. Reverend Higgins also claimed that the mural's materialistic and atheistic interpretation of the spirit of Detroit was highly offensive. It gave the impression that the city's "gods were sex and science" and "the brutality of the punchclock, the only virtue to be found in our beautiful city." And he contended that "realist murals are as appropriate for our museum as a jazz band for a medieval cathedral."



South Wall

Ironically, Rivera had not sought to scandalize anyone with this particular mural. He maintained the form of traditional iconography and altered only the content. Certainly for this reason, the figures of the child, the nurse and the doctor correspond to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The three scientists behind them could well be the Three Wise Men. And the whole scene, including an ox and a cow, clearly represents the Nativity.

Contrary to Higgins' views, the artist considered this to be his most important work in the United States. Rivera believed that he had applied the best of his talent to create a typically American artistic expression based on the aesthetics of the 20th century machine. It was the workers of four continents who had created that aesthetic, according to Rivera, and who were the creators of the truly authentic culture of the United States.

But Rivera's intentions were not understood by many conservatives who sided with Higgins and reinforced his positions. Eugene Paulus, a Jesuit and former English professor at Loyola University, agreed that the mural was Communist inspired. The raised fists, he charged, were an unmistakable symbol of the Third Communist International. He considered the dissection scene to be "pornography of a kind that I had never seen before, not even in my travels to India."

He expressed his views to the 300 members of the Detroit Review Club, as well as to the Catholic Daughters of America, and received their full support. They added the charge that the nudes that symbolized agriculture were "a direct affront to American femininity." Complaints were also lodged on behalf of the city's Christian youth by the President of Marygrove College for Girls, Dr. George Hermon Devry, the Catholic Students Club of Detroit, the Detroit Catholic Student Conference and the Knights of Columbus. All threatened to boycott the Institute as long as "such an offensive work" remained on exhibit.

Even some members of the Art Commission objected to the mural and suggested that not only did it attack basic principles, but that by distorting the industrial reality of the city it was also a direct affront to Edsel Ford. Apparently Edsel Ford did not share that opinion; he fully supported the mural's defenders during the entire controversy.

After meeting several times and organizing protest demonstrations, critics formed a united front to request a

court order to have the mural destroyed. On March 23, 1933 the official complaint was filed with the authorities.

The entire city became involved in the controversy, reflecting the spirit of civic involvement that characterized that period in U.S. history. Supporters of the mural reacted as vigorously as did its critics. The museum administration adopted a courageous and committed position in defense of the mural and launched a multi-media campaign to save it from destruction. They did radio shows and gave lectures to explain the true meaning of the mural and wrote pamphlets and articles to defend themselves from the attacks. William Valentiner, E.P. Richardson and Clyde Burroughs, directors of the Detroit Art Institute, played the most active role in the campaign. They aroused so much interest in the matter in Detroit that one Sunday afternoon, some 3500 people viewed the mural in just 4 hours. Within the next few days, they managed to collect 10,000 signatures to present to the courts in defense of the work. They wrote to major art centers, museum directors and art societies around the country, as well, to appeal for support of their project to save the mural.

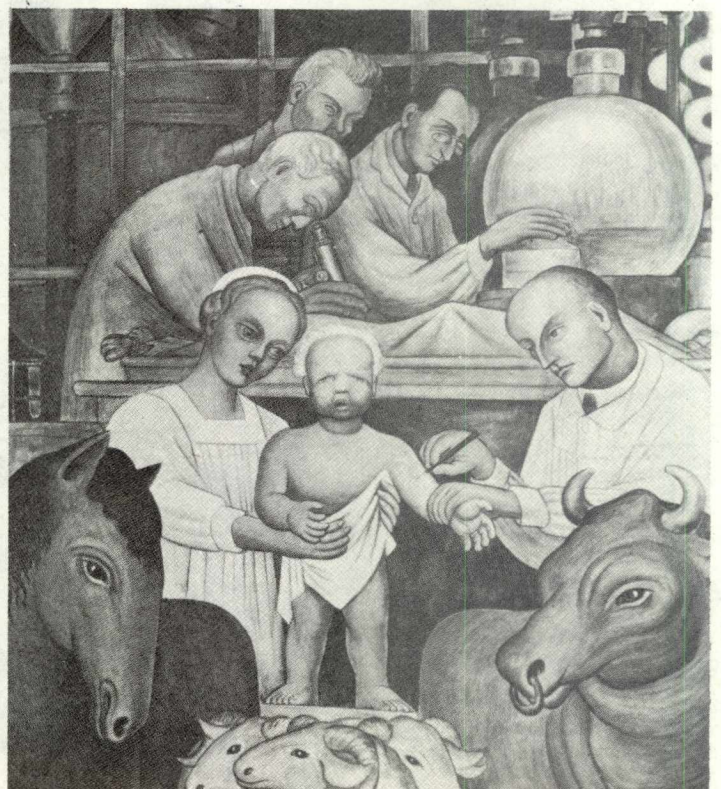
Valentiner was the first to respond to Higgins' attacks. He published an article attributing the Pastor's anger to an "attack of religious fervor" that had nothing to do with the artistic value of the mural. He explained that the museum could not share Higgins' objections because its criteria for evaluating the artistic and historical importance of a work of art were totally different. He also raised more personal questions about Higgins' credentials as an art critic. He pointed out that Higgins was hardly an art connoisseur; despite the fact that Higgins' church was only a few blocks from the Art Institute the Pastor confessed that he had never toured it. His first and only visit was to determine whether the mural, and most specifically the vaccination panel, fit within the canonical guidelines established by his church for the portrayal of religious themes. Valentiner objected to Higgins' false standards and further claimed that as a minister's son, himself, he knew that no such church canons existed. And finally, he argued that the real issue was the mural's artistic value, that in the end, this would be the only valid justification for preserving it for future generations.

E.P. Richardson gave a series of lectures at the museum in defense of the mural, aimed at responding to those who called it Communist, pornographic and materialistic. "Rivera

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The nudes that symbolize agriculture



The vaccination panel



simply believes," he affirmed, "that there is something wrong with our economic system, but that does not make him a Communist. He is humanitarian and rational and seeks greater protection for the common man." In a tongue in cheek manner, he suggested that "spending several days a week at the gym would help those people who find obscenity in the painting."

Richardson claimed that Rivera had not misinterpreted life in Detroit. "Rather he shows the common people, skilled and modest, who take part in democracy and give great importance to the business world, the executive at his desk and the mechanic in his shop...He believes that our science goes beyond our democracy and feels that science and technological development have created a new civilization."

On his radio program, Burroughs used similar arguments: "The battle over the Rivera murals is not being waged on artistic grounds, it is a personal attack by the establishment against Diego Rivera because of his understanding of and sympathetic attitude toward workers and the masses. They resent his creation of a disturbing work of public art." He further claimed that the attacks formed part of the long-standing battle by the establishment, which "has never considered workers or the common man to be apt subjects for understanding art, nor worthy of being represented in artistic expression." Rembrandt and Millet, he explained had also suffered rejection for having portrayed the dignity of the common man and his work.

Burroughs correctly emphasized the importance of the controversy's impact on Detroit's heterogeneous population. Vir-

tually everyone reacted in one way or another to the vitriolic attack on the work by conservatives and to its equally energetic defense by the museum's directors. Detractors and supporters, alike, responded strongly. Those who were satisfied with the mural expressed their support to the local papers and to the museum directors.

Among the archives concerning the case, we found the petition with 10,000 signatures from visitors to the museum who approved of the work. The text included the following statement: "The undersigned believe that the Diego Rivera murals in the closed courts of the Detroit Institute of Arts are a sincere expression of the spirit of Detroit and an honest representation of Detroit's workers. For this reason we feel there is nothing sacrilegious in these murals." The signers came from all walks of life and included housewives, engineers, workers, teachers, students, doctors, nurses and even a couple of physicists.

The arguments put forth by private individuals generally coincide with those of the museum directors. One such line of reasoning was a defense against localism and asserted that Rivera should be able to consider himself an American citizen, as capable as anyone else of understanding the United States. The country, they argued, was still very much a melting pot, made up of the many cultures that have come together here, and still without a single, unique culture of its own.

Others said that it was precisely because Rivera was a foreigner that he was able to depict Detroit so truthfully. Mrs. Isabella Holt Finne wrote in a **Free Press** editorial, "Rivera's work expresses the impact of our scientific civilization on an



South Wall detail

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ingenuous, virile, foreign and deeply poetic mind. Rivera is a master of painting and therefore, his use of color and design allows us to perceive our daily life as if through the facets of a prism."

Rabbi Leon Fram considered the representation of the spirit of Detroit to be truthful, respectful and profound. He wrote to the **Free Press**, "Rivera came at a time when he could see the wonderful machinery of production and presence its current state of paralysis. He could have painted kitchens with no kettles, bank closures, men sleeping in Grand Circus Park and many other things...But apparently he respected Detroit and revered its mechanical genius to such an extent that he chose not to express anything else on the walls of the Courtyard...- Furthermore, the frescoes relate a deeper religious lesson: that common man has the potential for brotherhood."

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Many denied that the work distorted the reality of labor in Detroit; to the contrary, they felt that this criticism was actually the result of the discomfort produced by the veracity with which the situation was depicted. A Mr. James M. Murray wrote to Burroughs, "As a former Ford worker, who was employed there for over ten years, I wanted you to know that I found the murals very interesting because they represent the life and labor of the worker in the automotive industry." There were many other people who also recognized in the mural a respectful representation of the truth. They pinpointed the origin of the conflict in the narrow-mindedness of the dissenters themselves and not in the mural. The destruction of the mural was vigorously opposed, not only because of its value, but also because many felt that the nature of the attacks on the mural represented a serious threat to the democratic and liberal spirit that many Americans were struggling to preserve.

Some argued that the historical moment in which the events occurred determined their intensity. We quote another letter from the archives, from a Mrs. E.H. Althaus: "I think this irrational and childish show of hate and intolerance would not have transcended under normal conditions, but many of us are feeling neurotic because of economic pressures, and these disgraceful demonstrations of hatred for the murals are a misguided release of our repressed emotions."

Thanks to the initiative of the museum directors, personalities and institutions related to the American art world also became involved. Some came forth in response to the petition formulated by Richardson, Valentiner and Burroughs in defense of the work, and others simply spread the news and

spontaneously contributed to its conservation.

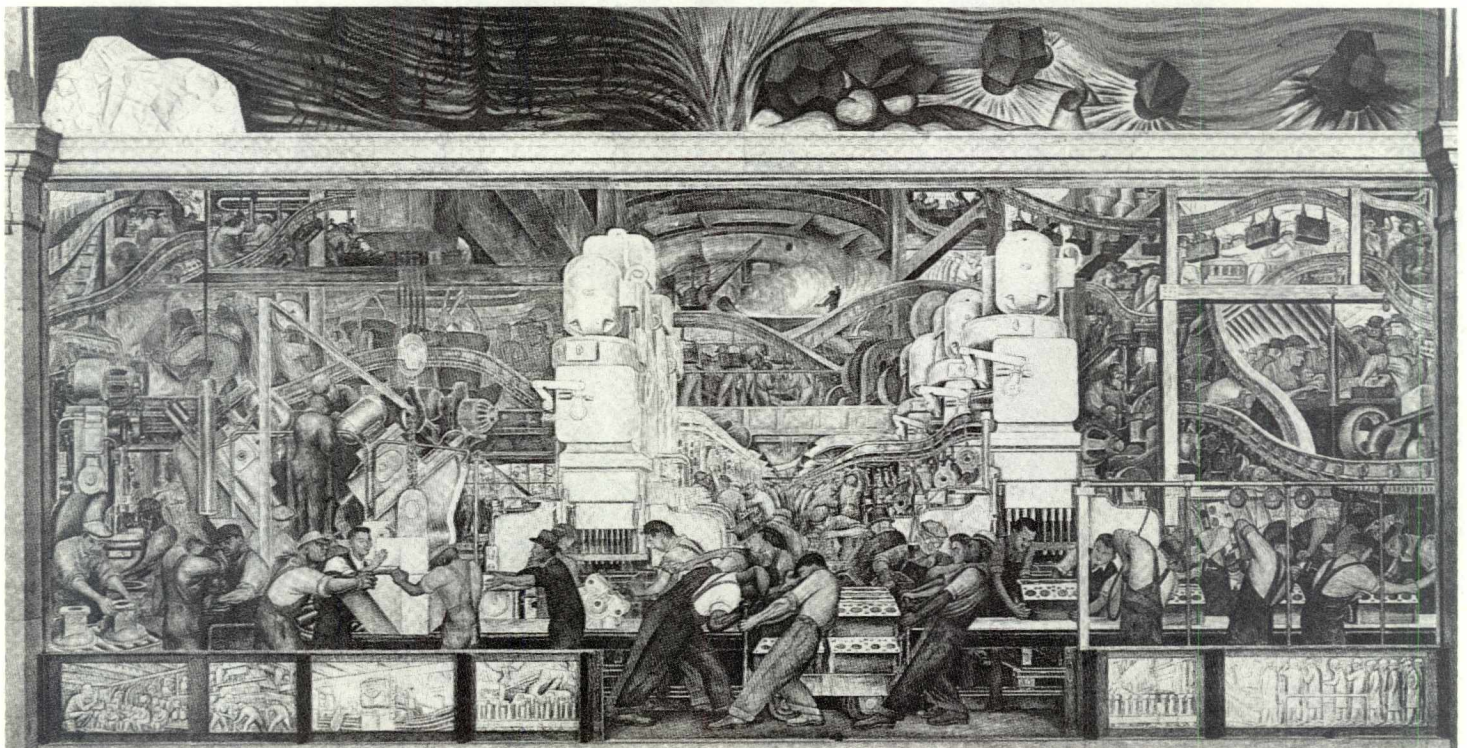
There were also dissenters, however, within the art community; their arguments centered on the fact that Rivera was a foreigner and that therefore, he had quite logically misinterpreted the American spirit. He aroused discontent among Detroit's citizens, they claimed, because he used an artistic language alien and disconcerting to their sensibilities. The fact that he had been commissioned to do the work also provoked resentment. In a period of great unemployment, Rivera had taken the place of an artist from the United States.

An essential part of the plan to conserve the mural consisted in obtaining letters of support from art associations, museums, schools, specialized journals and art critics and historians. The museum directors were successful in submitting this material to the court and offered it as irrefutable evidence that the artistic value of the mural went beyond any ideological conflict that it might have aroused.

In response to the localist arguments voiced by many of the work's critics, the discussion moved to the question of the nature of art. Defenders of the murals maintained that art is timeless, that it transcends any single place, that it is really a part of the patrimony of all nations and of all future generations. Art, then, must be defended from vandalism. Some critics considered Rivera to be the finest muralist in the Western hemisphere, and his artistic merits were clearly reconfirmed in the Detroit murals and in many other works.

The conflict, itself, was given as proof of the importance of the murals because "no superficial work would have produced such a storm." In fact, a part of the essential function of the murals was to evoke a response, a strong reaction on the part of the viewer. A majority of people felt that its destruction would make a fool of the United States in the eyes of the rest of the world. Walter Patch stated, "If these paintings are white-washed, it will not be possible to cleanse the United States."

Despite the importance of the defense organized by its admirers, the strongest arguments for its preservation were to be found in the mural, itself. Its content largely coincided with the basic beliefs and values of middle-class America: recognition of the value of hard work, respect for the common man and the notion that the economic and industrial success of the United States was the result of the combination of the first two principles. The general public, then, could identify with the work because, as individuals and as a nation, they could see themselves reflected in it. ★



North Wall

Books

dealing with her subject matter allows the author an overall view of each group's artistic creation. De la Fuente wrote: "Among the technical activities of art historians, one that is often forgotten or pushed aside is the definition, classification, description and organization of the artistic creation of a given culture."

In **Olmeca Colossal Heads** and **Men of Stone** the author combines the catalog form with an iconographic method similar to the formal analysis of Erwin Panofsky's



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**PATHWAYS TO CONSCIOUSNESS**

Beatriz de la Fuente, **Pathways to Consciousness**, U.N.A.M.

**Pathways to Consciousness** is prehispanic art researcher Beatriz de la Fuente's tenth book. Her first work on the subject, **The Sculpture of Palenque** was published in 1965.

In this book De la Fuente developed two basic lines that have been present throughout her work: a systematic inventory of the material she is analyzing, followed by a series of aesthetic deliberations on the same subject matter.

In **The Sculpture of Palenque** the author began outlining a series of hypothesis on Palenque art, using material from archeological research carried out at the site. Through analysis she established a series of stylistic features specific to Palenque culture. Some of her published material is in catalog form, such as **Olmeca Monumental Sculpture** and **Huasteca Stone Sculpture**. This means of

to approach the cultural content of her subject matter.

In **Pathways to Consciousness** De la Fuente's research unfolds in catalog form and then the material is analyzed from a philosophical perspective. The method seems effective in that it allows her to reach the essence of prehispanic creativity.

Beatriz de la Fuente used the title **Pathways to Consciousness: Faces in Prehispanic Art** to conjure up an image of a mounting stairway where man becomes gradually conscious of himself and of the universe through the images of other human beings. "In the faces we see not only subtle expressions of consciousness but also the artistic expression of the culture in which they were shaped."

De la Fuente starts out on her path of study with faces in which there is a will to represent a human figure even though the design still doesn't show intent to represent a specific individual. The author places Mezcala and Chontal masks at this point of the path because of

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their use of the abstract, with geometric lines that combine to portray a great variety of outlined faces. Taken together the common essence of these masks is abstraction. This is the first step in man's self-consciousness, "in the midst of a world that is just starting to become comprehensible." In the second step on her path, De la Fuente analyzes the sculpted faces of Mexican highland preclassic cultures as well as those from the western part of the country: Teotihuacan, Oaxaca and the

Huasteca. There she finds "the same intent not to show man as an individual entity," but rather as a member of a group that has the stylistic features that correspond to the regions in which these cultures developed. Man has historical significance as part of a community, not as an individual. "The level of consciousness through which man relates to the world around him is based on the common experiences of the group he belongs to." The author analyzes portraits as a

third step toward consciousness, because "a fundamental development is expressed in portraits. Man finds himself, and recognizes the self in both its essence and its changes." De la Fuente considers the Olmeca colossal heads, some of the sculpture from central Veracruz, certain figures from Xochipala and an abundance of Mayan sculpture in this category. She includes both stucco and clay figures, as well as some individual figures in the mural of the battle of Cacaxtla.

Deities such as the Cocijos, Ehecatl, Tlaloc or Chac are placed in this category. Even though their shape is still modeled on the human form, their fantastic features are emphasized in an attempt to grasp the non-visible, that which has no real features because it is divine. At this level of consciousness, "man starts out on his path towards the spiritual. Man finds that his own nature is a changing one, and he goes beyond it." This is where Beatriz de la Fuente's



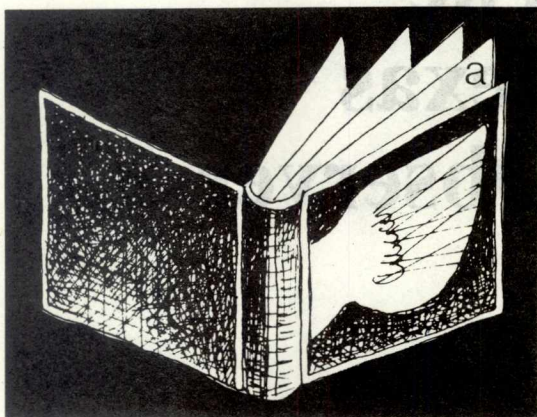
La convencion. Smiling figure in clay from central Veracruz. National Museum of Anthropology Photo: Jose de los Reyes Medina



Engravings in stone (number 26) from Yaxchilan, Chiapas

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From the moment an individual stands out from the rest of his group there is introspection; man comes to know himself and thus, begins to know his relation with the world around him. Man goes on to deeper levels of understanding which no longer deal only with himself and his natural environment but go beyond him into the world of the supernatural. This further step along the pathway to consciousness points to his own need to transcend the representation of his immediate natural surroundings and to distinguish between the divine and the human by means of symbols. "Supernatural imagery leads man to an existential understanding that the realm of the sacred, though it may originate in man himself, becomes something entirely different." At this stage in her research the author analyzes the figures of gods whose form originates in the human figure, such as the Aztec deities Coatlicue, Xochipilli and Mictlantecuhtli. The fantastic is analyzed as an even more subtle level within the realm of the supernatural. "It expresses man's more existential relation with the divine; it is a cognizant relation in which man commits himself to making real a conceptual abstraction."

mounting pathway reaches its full meaning. Once man starts out on his journey towards the spiritual, he uses the figures he makes of himself to move everybody in that direction. This transcendent vision of man is what makes an artistic expression valid beyond the time and geographical space in which it was produced. The author successfully leads us, step by step, through the labyrinths of the human psyche. From man as a member of a group to man who conceives the supernatural based on his own essence and being. The treatment of the subject matter in this book certainly adds new dimensions to the history of art. Not only does De la Fuente classify an important portion of the faces and portraits of prehispanic art, she also develops areas that seemed to have been forgotten by most art historians. The publication of a book like **Pathways to Consciousness** also points to the editorial development of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM. The book combines excellent research with high quality photographs of an ample sampling of prehispanic faces, in an attractive format and high quality printing. This book is alluring to both the layman and the specialist. ★

**FIDEL CASTRO ON RELIGION**

Frei Betto, *Fidel Castro and Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto*, Siglo XXI

A new Latin American best seller, second only to Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Times of Cholera* was recently published in Mexico. In *Fidel Castro and Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto*, the author transcribes 23 hours of conversation between

grounded, but there is a reaching out toward each other from the very heart of both Christianity and Marxism. Neither gives an inch, yet they seem to reach deep understandings on such important subjects as morality, contemporary political and economic problems, as well as on the need to unite Christians and Marxists in the struggle for a better world.

The book gives us an important insight into Fidel Castro's ethical groundings. We learn about the influence his formal schooling had on him, particularly his experiences in grade school and high school at the best Catholic parochial institutions in Cuba. The highly principled ideas of Varela, Luz Caballeros and Jose Marti are obvious influences in Fidel's early development. This ethical component may be one of the more unusual aspects of the dialog.

Two of humanity's most important historical currents of thought and emotion, Christianity and Marxism, seen as irreconcilable by some, find new and surprising paths of understanding in these conversations. The issues are of interest for everyone sincerely concerned with the future of mankind, regardless of personal philosophies or beliefs.

These are some of the aspects that explain the book's success in Latin America. Instead of seeking simplistic solutions to complex problems, Latin Americans seem

open to exploring possible alternatives in order to develop their own point of view on the issues.

Unfortunately, what I consider the first part of the book (the part ending with the second interview) is marred by repetitions on the different subjects. Though this is faithful to the original conversations, it goes against the overall pace of the book.

With the way this book has been selling, Latin American readers are saying once again that the only taboo is closing one's eyes to the issues and not fully exploring the diversity of points of view before making key decisions that affect us all. ★

Pantxika Cazaux

**ON FREI BETTO**

Frei Betto is a Brazilian Dominican friar who was born in the city of Bello Horizonte in 1944. He was active in the student movement by the early age of 13, and was in the national leadership of the Catholic Student Youth movement between 1962 and 1964. He studied journalism and was first jailed for his political activities in June of 1964, shortly after the military takeover. He entered the Dominican order the following year.

Along with studies in philosophy and theology he worked as a journalist and was active in the

resistance movement against the Brazilian military regime. He was arrested again in 1969 and sentenced to four years in prison. As of 1974 he has been dedicated to organizing Ecclesiastic Base Communities.

He is currently an advisor to the Sao Bernardo do Campo Workers' Pastoral, which is located in Latin America's most important steel-producing region. He is also a member of the Popular Education Center of the *Sedes Sapientiae* Institute. He is part of the International Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, and has



Frei Betto.

published at least twelve books, some of which have been translated into several languages.

the Cuban president and Frei Betto, a Brazilian Dominican friar and militant Catholic with deep Christian convictions.

The conversations between the two took place in May of last year and cover a broad range of religious topics. Other issues are dealt with along the way, such as Castro's childhood and education, and the assault he led on the Moncada military headquarters in 1953, which signaled the beginning of the end of Batista. They also talk about love as a revolutionary quality, the nature of Cuban democracy and the Latin American foreign debt.

The long dialog between the revolutionary and the friar is friendly and straightforward, yet always intellectually precise. They seem to warm up to each other as the interview unfolds, and the tone is stronger and livelier as the hours—and the pages—pass.

By the third interview Frei Betto's questions are more forceful and sometimes even provocative. The interesting thing is that Castro does not elude the friar, but instead goes into greater detail in ideas that had formerly been glanced over, or gives his views on touchy subjects that are particularly important today. This is an additional angle of interest for readers of this 369 page document.

Throughout the confrontation both characters display a wealth of knowledge and self-confidence. Each is sure of his own convictions yet at the same time interested in establishing closer ties that can be helpful to the Latin American people. Their positions are firmly



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**DISEASES, OLD AND NEW**

Ruy Perez Tamayo, *Old and New Diseases, Siglo XXI*

*Old and New Diseases* brings together material from a series of lectures Dr. Ruy Perez Tamayo delivered at the School of Medicine of the National Autonomous University of Mexico during March of 1985. The author maintained the style he used in his lectures, so the book is practically devoid of technicalities. Although scientifically precise, the writing is simple and direct, making this a medical text accessible to the layman. The book also makes for pleasant reading because of its photographs, engravings and abundant anecdotes.

The main theme in *Old and New Diseases* is the critique of the widespread notion that progress in medical science will eventually

lead to victory over disease and to a sort of health nirvana. According to the author, this idea has taken shape in the study of the history of medical progress. Perez Tamayo believes this conclusion is wrong even though the facts it is based on may be correct.

A state of perfect health for mankind is unrealistic for two basic reasons. One is that not all diseases are caused by external agents. Some result from human beings' constitution and development, from our anatomical and functional complexity. The second reason is that certain diseases change over the course of time. Some may change their features,

others come and go or even disappear entirely. And this is so basically because our pathology is to a great extent a reflection of our natural surroundings and of the conditions under which we live. Thus, despite technical and cultural advances, the only way man could possibly escape disease is if he ceased to be human and alive.

Perez Tamayo argues that we will never be free of disease, and that we must also be prepared to see much of it change. In support of his theory Dr. Perez Tamayo introduces a historical classification of disease in which he analyzes patterns of diseases throughout time, and comes up with four dif-

ferent groupings. **Constant** diseases are those that have been present since recorded history and have maintained the same basic characteristics and development. **Variable** diseases are the ones that have undergone dramatic changes over the course of time, becoming either chronic or less serious, but nonetheless, constantly present. The third category is that of **Historic** diseases. These exist in specific historical periods and have disappeared because of man's action against them (smallpox, for example), or for reasons as yet unknown (coreomania). **New** diseases are the fourth and last category. Some of these may

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also be **variable** diseases, and it is difficult to find precise patterns for them.

Dr. Perez Tamayo believes that many of the factors that actually determine the persistence, variation, appearance or disappearance of disease are little known. Among these factors he includes variations in personal hygiene and natural surroundings, changes in food and occupational patterns, changes in physical conditions, psychological tensions and stress levels, etc.

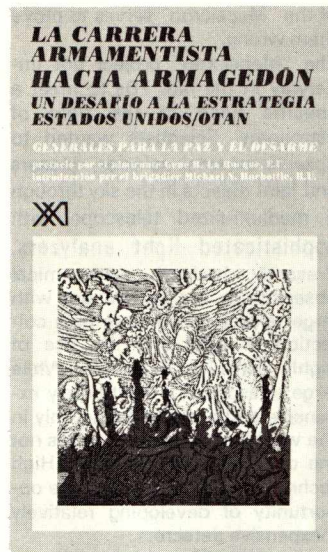
The author uses this framework to go over each category with examples.

The idea that pathology is dynamic, as changing and versatile as life itself, is emphasized. Many diseases change over time because they are not permanent and autonomous, but rather result from different living patterns and as side effects of the way man adapts to his surroundings. This is why disease will be with us as long as we live.

Ruy Perez Tamayo was born in Tampico, Tamaulipas, in 1924. He took his degree in medicine at the UNAM School of Medicine and went on to get his Ph.D. in immunology at the National School of Biological Sciences of the National Polytechnical Institute, IPN. He has held teaching and administrative positions at several important national institutions, and has taught at Latin American universities in El Salvador, Nicaragua

and Guatemala, as well as at the National University of Colombia. He has lectured at the universities of Washington, Colorado and Kansas, and at Yale, Johns Hopkins, Rochester and Harvard. He has also taught in Geneva and at the Jimenez Diaz School in Madrid.

The author is presently on the editorial board of several medical and scientific journals, including the **International Review of Connective Tissue and Experimental and Molecular Pathology**. He has published fifteen books and numerous articles that have appeared in magazines, newspapers and medical collections. He was awarded the National Science Prize in 1974 and became a member of the National Guild in 1980. ★



### TOWARDS ARMAGEDDON

Generals for Peace and Disarmament, **The Arms Race Towards Armageddon**, Siglo XXI

This book is a unique document of our times. Thirteen NATO generals and admirals from eight European countries came together to voice their concern about the ominous escalation in the nuclear arms race.\*

These high ranking officers have all held high military command positions and acquired an exceptional insight into the nature of the East-West conflict and the dynamics of the Western alliance's military policies. This led them to the conclusion that there is little time if we hope to avoid Armageddon.

The book's importance lies mainly in the fact that it is written by a group of very well informed people who actually had a part in world nuclear planning. After a cold-headed analysis of the facts they concluded that more weapons do not offer more security. They believe dissuasion is possible without nuclear weapons, and that it is much more important to work toward building confidence than to continue with the arms race, which they regard as highly dangerous and profoundly immoral.

The activities of these men point to ways of achieving these goals. The most important up to date was a meeting they organized between former NATO and Warsaw Pact generals. Siglo XXI also published the final statement issued at this meeting.

This book will surely be important to those concerned with the arms race and who are looking for authorized sources on the subject. ★

Arturo Arias

\* The officers are: General G. Bastian (West Germany), General J. Christie (Norway), Marshall F. da Costa Gomes (Portugal), General M.N. Hardbottle (England), General G. Koumanakos (Greece), General Jose Lima (Portugal), General M. Herman von Meyenfeldt (Holland), Admiral M. Papsyrou (Greece), Admiral A. Papathanassiou (Greece), General N. Pasti (Italy), General A. Sanguinetti (France), General M. Tombopoulos (Greece) and General G. Vollmer (West Germany).

### HOT OFF THE PRESS: THE NEW AND THE NOTEWORTHY IN MEXICAN PUBLISHING

**Declive (The Slope)** by Sergio Galindo (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

Mexico City and Acapulco are the setting for this novel. A man's past determines his behavior as he moves in an unreal, ghost-ridden world, incapable of taking time out to reflect on his own life. The author's skill allows the reader to penetrate the family world of Juan Rebollar, a well-intentioned man who, nonetheless, cannot avoid the destruction of someone near to him who has other worlds within himself. Galindo was born in 1926.



**Isla de raiz amarga, insomne raiz (The Island of the Bitter Root, Sleepless Root)** by Jaime Reyes (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

These two books in one give us an important look at the early work of a splendid poet. The currents of love and restlessness of modern Mexican life flow through his words. These books place Jaime Reyes, born in 1946, in the forefront of contemporary Mexican poetry.



**Fragmentario (Fragments)** by Rafael Torres Sanchez (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

The author's style captures the tidbits that can make life either joyous and luminous, or demoralizing. The poems are profound and ingenious. Life's excitement and dizziness are constantly renewed in them, as the 33-year-old poet learns to live in the sunlight of poetry.



**Horizontes de la musica precortesiana (The Horizons of Pre-Conquest Music)** by Pablo Castellanos (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

This is a systematic survey of pre-Conquest music, from Tepexpan man to Cuauhtemoc. These Horizons was developed from documentary sources that formed the basis of this solid analysis of pre-Columbian musical instruments and their uses throughout different historical periods. In addition, the last chapter provides an overview of the survival of pre-Conquest music through colonial times and into the present.

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**Mujeres y vida cotidiana (Women and Everyday Life)** by **Teresita de Barbieri** (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

The author seeks to capture the essence of the feminine condition through the analysis of women's everyday life. Ms. Barbieri studied lower, middle and upper class women in Mexico City and extracts a common denominator for all: domestic labor. In the final chapters she analyzes who it is that ultimately benefits from this labor.



**escribir con luz (Writing with Light),** photographs by **Hector Garcia** with an introduction by **Juan de la Cabada** (Fondo de Cultura Economica)

This book reproduces some 50 photographs that illustrate the extraordinary work produced by Hector Garcia between 1940 and 1978. As much a documentary statement as an appropriation of the magical moments in life, Garcia's camera has captured the events and images that make up Mexico. This book is ample proof of Garcia's importance as a photographer.



## Science and Nature

**THE MEPSICRON, A MEXICAN BREAKTHROUGH IN ASTRONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY**

The dividing line between basic science and technology is gradually blurred. Just as science can't do without the new tools provided by advanced technology, many modern technological developments would be unthinkable without the inspiring role of the basic sciences.

Nevertheless, there are people in the developed countries who maintain that basic science is not a profitable means of generating technological advances. The story

of the "Mepsicron" serves to prove them wrong.

The "Mepsicron" project got underway in the late 70s to meet a specific need in the field of astronomy. Scientists wanted to observe external galaxies, quasars and faint objects in the sky through a medium-sized telescope with sophisticated light analyzers. Presently, in-depth astronomical observations are carried out with large telescopes through high collection of light and the use of highly sensitive detectors. While large telescopes are extremely expensive and are thus found only in the wealthiest countries, this is not the case with the detectors. High technology research offers the opportunity of developing relatively inexpensive detectors.

In the late 70s the Institute of Astronomy of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM, had a 2.1 meter diameter telescope at the Astronomical Observatory in Baja California. Its additional equipment consisted of one Echelle spectrograph, which permits very accurate light-color analysis. In order to use these instruments for extra-galactic research, a high sensitivity, low internal noise, good resolution and extended dynamical range detector was necessary, but none of the most recent television cameras fulfilled these requirements.

The project to actually build the new detector took off in 1981, and was named shortly afterwards "Mepsicron." The name is an acronym for Microchannel Electron Position Sensor I (and) CRON (time). The success was partially related to previous experiences in television technology, which at the time was one of the most advanced techniques for astronomical observations. A series of key experiments were carried out with the cooperation of the Space Science Laboratory at the University of California-Berkeley in order to demonstrate that a very high quality detector was possible. Later, the emphasis was on improving and optimizing the design. An electronic system able to process the enormous amount of information provided by the "Mepsicron" was also designed and built.

While still on an experimental basis, the "Mepsicron" became operational in 1983 in the Baja California Observatory. A group of technicians tried to guarantee optimum performance of the equipment and to observe its reactions through time and under special operating conditions.

A great amount of information has been gathered in the last three years, some of which will serve to correct critical design and technical aspects of the equipment. Thanks to the scientific results obtained, those difficult conditions of the first years will change for the better with a special laboratory currently under way. This will allow for new technological solutions and further advances.

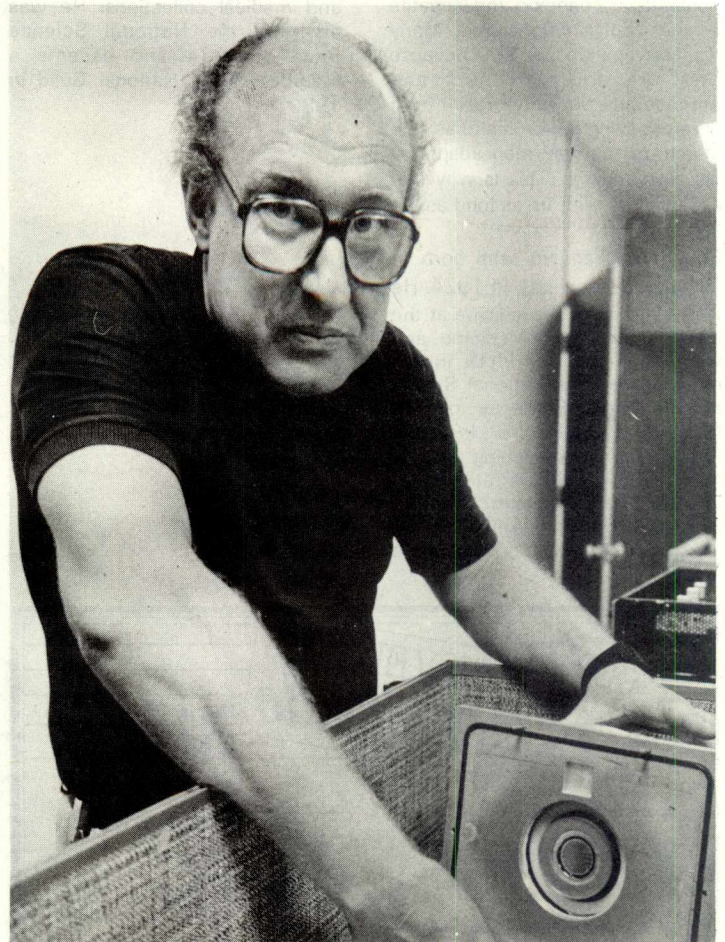
While the first detector had one of the highest resolutions ever achieved with electronic sensors,

today a new design is ready that is compatible with a resolution two times higher, and research is underway to achieve a resolution four times higher than the original device.

One of the problems that appeared during the experimental phase was the insufficient stability of the special light-sensitive film: the photocathode. Experiments are still under way in order to guarantee a more stable regime.

An additional pleasant surprise is that "Mepsicron" turns out to have applications in scientific and technological fields besides

astronomy. Because of its flexibility, it can easily be applied to an electronic microscope in order to supply high quality images of the micro-world. Experiments carried out in UNAM's Institute of Physics showed that Mepsicron is able to provide information that is beyond the scope of more conventional technologies. This is basically related to its wide dynamical range, i.e. the capacity to simultaneously detect faint and bright details of an image. Interesting experiments in biology and medicine are also ready to be carried out.



Dr. Firmani in his lab. Photo by Nadia Bindella.

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Last September the "Mepsicron" project was awarded first prize by UNAM in the field of technological research. This was a high point in the special attention the University has given this project.

Just as the project has been instrumental in overcoming the false conflict between basic science and technology, and the benefits in both directions are obvious, now UNAM is seeking to find applications for this technology in production. The uses of "scientific prototypes" will always be limited in comparison with a manufactured model. Yet the resources put into designing and building an industrial prototype are justifiable on the basis of great production volumes and marketing possibilities. On the other hand, the potential demand from fields in which "Mepsicron" technology may be applied can only be met with industrial production. The process and responsibility of carrying out this project is an important and illuminating experience. It began five years ago as a technological development in astronomy. Then it became a source of inspiration for other fields of science. And now it's possible the "Mepsicron" will even be industrially manufactured, a process from which surely new ideas and impetus will come. ★

Claudio Firmani

## Exhibits

### SEEING IS BELIEVING! THE CIRCUS IN MEXICO

For all of us, at one time or another, the circus opened up a route to the far reaches of our imagination. A tent of magic realism, a chalk ring in which what is, just can't be, and what you see, you can't believe. Incredible and unheard of things play with our desire for fantasy. A real show, we leave satisfied that we enjoyed great entertainment, more exciting than television, more eloquent than the movies.

But the circus is much more: there, reality is reborn on the stage; there, laughter, that great subverter of order and solemnity, is enthroned; there, the agility and grace of the human body are carried to their utmost. This, and much more, is what lies inside the circus.

On the outside, the circus is a mirror and prism of the reality which surrounds it. It captures the fantasy prohibited by repressive institutions. It embraces the wandering Gypsy life denied by concrete cities. It collects, sifts and recreates the people's cultures of every neighborhood, every town which it visits. It is an historic counterweight to the loss of collective emotion, of joyous rites, of people's identity.

This is why the National Museum of Popular Cultures has opened the exhibition, "SEEING IS BELIEVING, THE CIRCUS IN MEXICO," as part of the Ministry of Public Education's programs for promoting and stimulating culture in Mexico. On this occasion the exhibition focuses on a popular tradition which is little-known by the public at large: Mexican circuses.

Why has the National Museum of Popular Cultures spent nearly three years carrying out research for an exhibition on the circus? Because the circus is not only entertainment, a happy moment shared with friends and neighbors. Its freshness and appeal go beyond the painted faces; behind the make-up there is a long history, a purpose and a metaphor.

Its history, as with everything Mexican, dates from before the Conquest. By that time, acrobatics and other demonstrations of physical agility had already gained a place in public events and celebrations. In fact, the word **machincuepa**, which means somersault, comes from **nahuatl**, the language of the Aztecs, where it means "to know how to spin...how to turn over."

This proclivity of human beings to carry physical skill to its furthest limits is common to the vast majority of the world's peoples, especially those of Asia and the Middle East. The example set by Chinese acrobats, Indian

troubadors and Arab magicians, provided many of the ideas and routines which have been incorporated into today's circus.

Part of the National Museum of Popular Cultures exhibit recreates a colonial street bearing the edicts and prohibitions of the Inquisition against circus shows. The Inquisition outlawed laughter and punished fantasy. Its objective was to dominate and conquer consciences. Poor sinners were even burned because they dared to step into this world of imagination. In this way, by crushing the imagination, the powerful muzzled peoples' minds and condemned the colonized to reject their own creativity, to renounce the strength that comes from the imagination and from their own culture.

All imperial powers have applied this kind of pressure in an attempt to culturally sterilize the peoples they colonize. In this context the circus, by creating and disseminating the right to free the imagination and to cultivate human physical, emotional and spiritual capacities, becomes an exercise in liberation.

Mexican circuses have a long history of traveling the country's byways, going from town to town, developing trapeze artists, jugglers and clowns famous for their artistic excellence. And their fame has not been limited to Mexico. Many Mexican jugglers and trapeze artists, such as the Flying Gaonas, have been acclaimed in circuses around the world, including the famous Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus of the United States.

Today many, many circuses continue playing to audiences throughout the country, from the tents of small peasant circuses to the large modern businesses which cross the borders to present their shows in other countries. Why has



the circus tradition continued in Mexico? Perhaps due to the eagerness shown by a people that does not seek isolation in individualism and that defends with life and limb their collective identity. An eagerness to share a live emotion, for the necessity felt by Mexicans to see the faces and, at the same time, to play with the masks those same faces become. The exhibition is also a way to pay homage, to give public and collective recognition to that entire league of artists who for so many years have brought happiness to the lives of the people, offering

is simultaneously recreation and creation, of new perceptions and new sensations. All who go to see it will be different when they leave. They won't become spider women or elephant men, but they will come out with a completely different vision of the circus and the areas it touches: the human face, the animal cage, the tent, the house and the street. With this effort, the National Museum of Popular Cultures fulfills the purpose for which it was created: to reclaim and stimulate popular cultures through its exhibitions. Similarly, the General



them a magical and unexpected dimension to their daily lives. But through the exhibition, the public can also go behind the curtain and enter the world of the performers. It even gives us a chance to satisfy that great curiosity many have felt -to peek in on the home of circus artists. In the center of the museum stands an ancient truck loaded with memories, broken cups and make-up. The entire exhibition attempts to recreate all of those circus gestures and routines which make us feel such excitement. Thus, the museum gives us something which

Direction of Popular Culture fulfills its obligation to promote the country's popular cultures. The circus is, in effect, an entire world. Mexican figures from a narrow colonial street appear, a Pandora's box is opened, a Mayan Indian on stilts comes alive. It is an eminently creative work, which takes that which circus people have entrusted to the museum, recreates it and returns it to them and to all the public that visits the exhibition. ★

Lourdes Arizpe, Betty Perkins and Alfonso Morales

Logo of the Dirección General de Fomento Editorial, UNAM. It features a stylized open book with lines radiating from the top, suggesting pages or light. Below the logo, the text reads: "dirección general de fomento editorial coordinación de humanidades unam".

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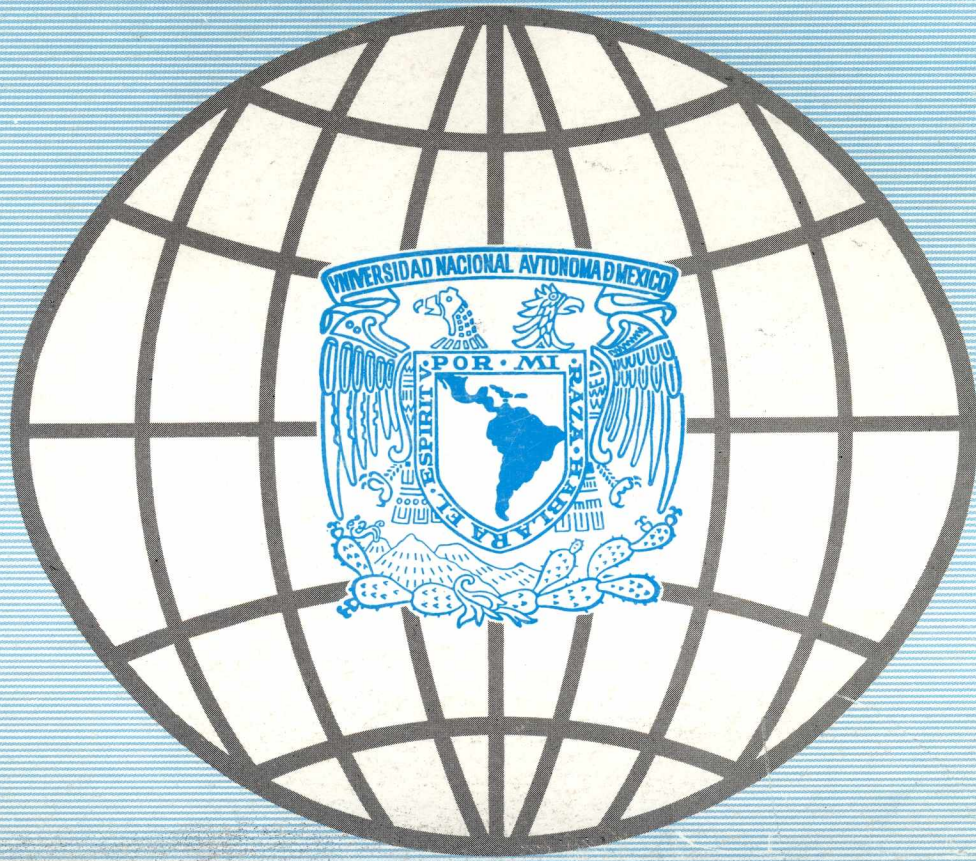
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