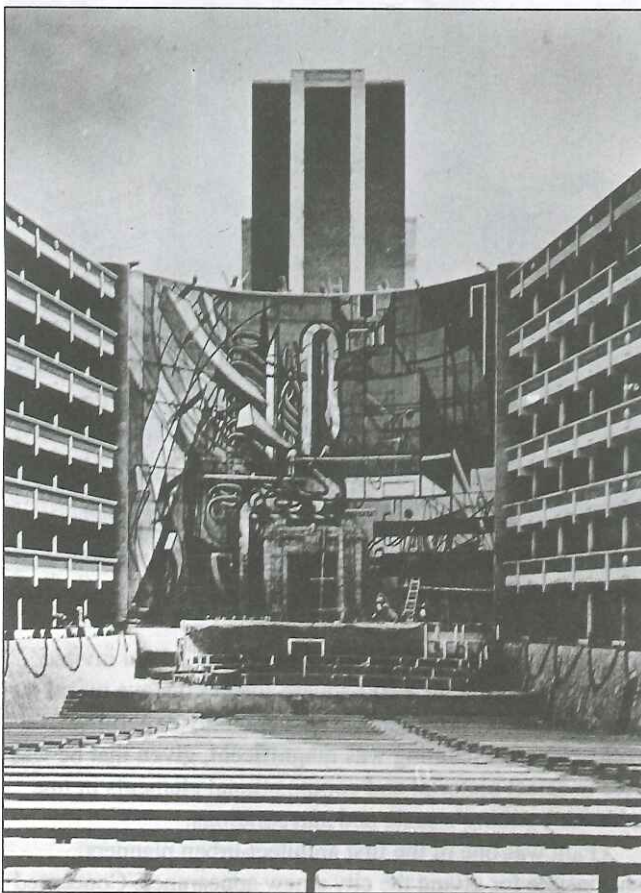


Mario Pani, Cantinflas and Cesar Chavez

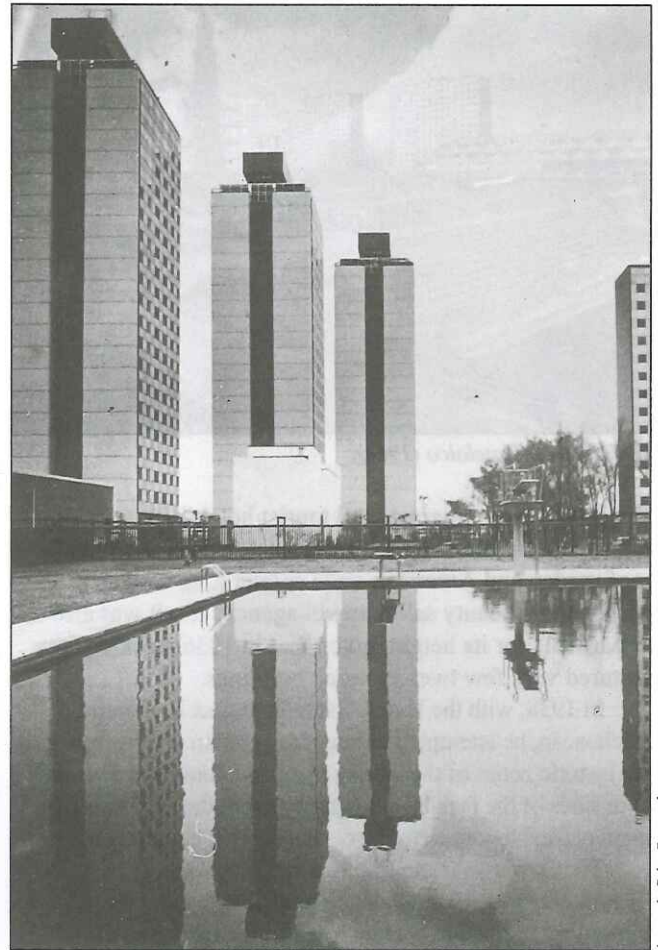
Mario Pani: architect and urban planner

Mario Pani Darqui, a promoter of modern architecture in Mexico and proponent of innovative concepts which changed the urban geography of the nation's capital city, died in Mexico City on February 23, 1993, at the age of 81.



G. Zamora.

National Teachers' college (1947).



Armando Salas Portugal.

View of Tlatelolco (1964).

Always in the vanguard, he used his intuition to identify the problems faced by urban development in Mexico City—housing demand, zoning changes, the elimination of green areas, among others—offering new concepts and fresh solutions for handling them.

Pani was responsible for the construction of the first international hotel (1936), the first housing project (1948), the first condominium (1956), and the first cooperative housing complex, known as the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Unit (1964), a complex which was seriously damaged in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake.

Born in the capital in 1911, he spent part of his childhood and youth in Europe. He studied architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Paris, returning to Mexico after earning his degree in 1934.

Despite his youth and the hostility shown him by certain members of the profession, Pani demonstrated his ability by submitting his work in competitions, winning first prize on a number of occasions.

At the age of twenty-four, he made his debut as an architect with the construction of the Hotel Reforma.

Armando Salas Portugali.



Old and new Tlatelolco (1964).

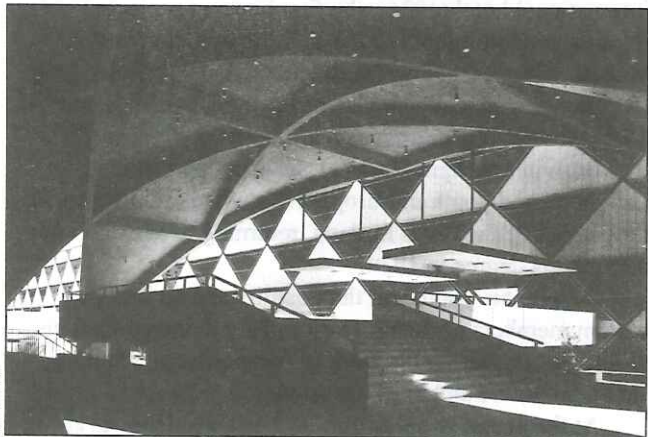
Conceived as an international tourist hotel, it was the first in the country to offer such services as a convention hall, roof garden and American-style cafeteria, as well as a barber shop, beauty salon, travel agency, etc. It was also remarkable for its height, given that in 1936, Mexico City featured very few twelve-storey buildings.

In 1938, with the Hotel Alameda project in Morelia, Michoacán, he attempted to integrate modern architecture into the historic zones of the city by placing colonial porticos on both sides of the façade, in alignment with the angles of the main plaza. Nevertheless, he considered his attempt a failure.

That same year, he founded the magazine *Arquitectura/México*. Over the next forty years, the bimonthly magazine was devoted to the diffusion of opinions and information on Mexican architecture.

In 1944 he participated in the first interdisciplinary team formed to plan the construction of a nation-wide hospital network. Using the experience of U.S. hospitals as a starting point, the National Hospital Plan proposed the construction of a model hospital to serve as a prototype for the entire nation, with special adaptations to the resources and needs of the different regions.

G. Zamora.



IMSS hospital in Tlatelolco (1964).

From 1943 to 1946 he also worked with the Administrative Committee of the Federal Schools Program of the Ministry of Public Education. He headed the modernization of the National Teachers' School in Mexico City, where he built the auditorium and the first classroom-observation rooms in Latin America.

Besides providing sufficient room for large numbers of conference-goers and students, the auditorium is an excellent example of the integration of painting and sculpture with architecture through José Clemente Orozco's mural *El mestizaje*.



G. Zamora.

The first condominium in Mexico (1956).

As a proponent of "plastic integration," Pani invited Orozco to contribute a 100-square-meter concave mural for the auditorium. The painter's first and only experiment with sculptural painting was magnificent, given that he was able to select pictorial and compositional elements in line with the building's scale and surroundings.

Pani was one of the first architect-urban planners responsible for giving the city a new appearance. Concerned about rapid population growth, he foresaw, before many

others, the problem this would pose for the city and its inhabitants, and thus took the then audacious step of building the first multi-family housing project (1949). Despite criticism, Pani was convinced of the need to achieve greater density in Mexico City, by optimizing the use of space, in order to provide the greatest benefit to city inhabitants.

On a 4,000-meter site originally earmarked for the construction of 200 houses for federal employees, Pani suggested the building of a complex of structures containing 1,000 apartments.

With a density of 1,000 inhabitants per hectare, 20 percent of the site was used for construction, while the remainder was reserved for green areas. With a solid structure and materials which have withstood the passage of time, the housing project known as the President Miguel Alemán Urban Complex is a pioneering example of urbanist-architectural solutions. Pani also built the Model Housing Unit (1948) and the second Journalists' Residential section (1949).

In collaboration with Salvador Ortega, he created the President Juárez Urban Center, which collapsed in the 1985 earthquake, and the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Urban Complex (1964), which was also seriously damaged.

Despite criticism of the conceptualization, scale, urban density and architectural style of the Tlatelolco complex, built in one of the oldest areas of Mexico City, Pani defended the validity of the project until his death.

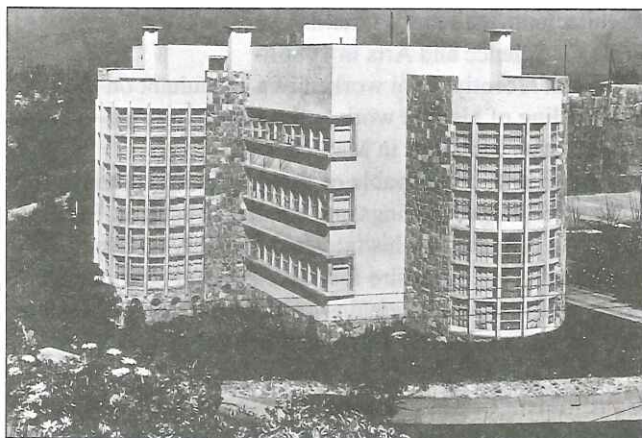
Based on detailed studies, the complex was designed to improve traditional housing—small complexes with bad ventilation, poor land use and a lack of green areas—without altering the sense of community characterizing the older neighborhoods of Mexico City. "Tlatelolco," Pani said, "has the philosophy of a barrio, on a million-square-meter lot."

With a density of 800 inhabitants per hectare, Tlatelolco was built as a series of high-rises, so as to use land space rationally and provide efficient, decent housing in a well-ventilated area, while reserving 60 percent of the site for green areas.

Divided into three zones, the complex offers all of the services required for family life: a church, schools, hospitals, businesses, meeting halls, parks and pathways. Due to its size and integration, the complex earned the rank of the fourteenth largest city in Mexico in 1964.

Pani held that the damage to the buildings which resulted from inadequate maintenance of control pilots did not "finish off" Tlatelolco—precisely due to the community spirit of its residents, a spirit which survived the 1985 disaster, and spurred calls for the reconstruction of the complex.

Other notable works by Pani include the Ministry of Water Resources building and the Acapulco airport, the latter a joint project with Enrique de Moral. He also created an office building located at the corner of Reforma and LaFragua in Mexico City, which incorporates the work of



Apartments in Las Lomas (1942).

G. Zamora.

Jesús García Collantes, as well as the National Conservatory of Music. Both were built in 1946.

With Enrique del Moral, Pani co-directed the overall construction project at University City, and designed the Rectory Tower (1950-1952).

Pani is also responsible for the introduction of the condominium concept to Mexico, as a means of financing construction in the face of rising land costs.

In his work as an urban planner, Pani helped promote territorial planning, writing regulatory plans for several provincial cities. In 1962 he was named chief architect of the architectural and urban projects of the National Borders Program, and was one of the first to advocate regulated development in the border cities.

He used his Workshop and teaching activities to educate several generations of young architects. He was a professor at the School of Architecture of UNAM (1940-1948, 1969 and 1976), also teaching at Anáhuac University.

A founding member of the Association of Mexican Architects, he also participated actively in the Mexican Society of Architects. In 1985 he received the National



The National Conservatory of Music (1946).

G. Zamora.

Architecture Academy's Grand Award, and the National Prize for Science and Arts in 1986.

Most recently, Pani worked as a consultant on the remodelling of his first work—the Hotel Reforma—as well as other buildings in Mexico City.

As an architect capable of designing large urban complexes, large buildings and smaller structures, Pani's work—a reflection of his interest in the city and its inhabitants, and his desire for a liveable and harmonious urban environment—remains on the landscape of Mexico City, as an example for future generations.

Cantinflas: “Could you please explain what I just said?”

Mario Moreno Reyes, better known as Cantinflas, died in Mexico City on April 20, 1993, at the age of 81.

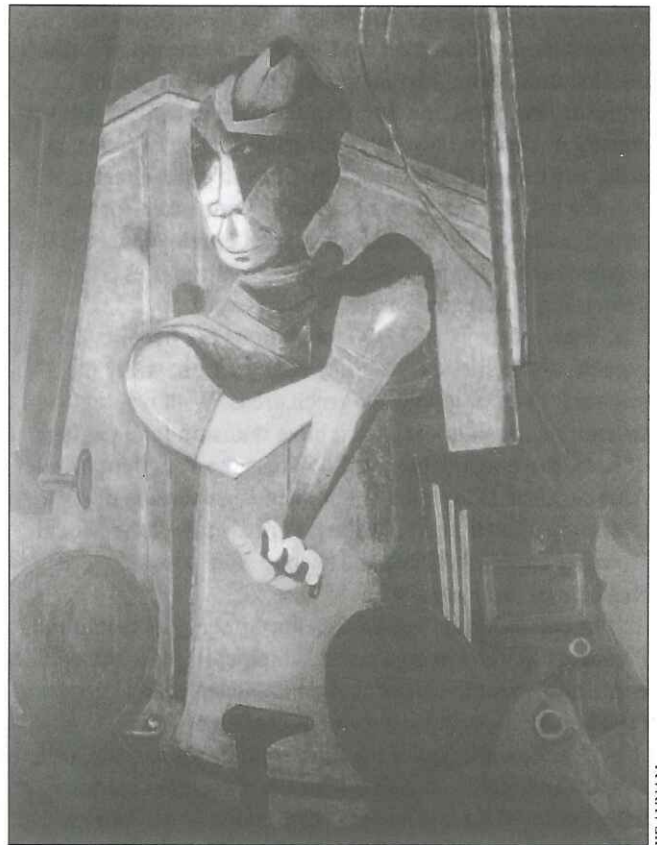
The character he portrayed—famous for his unique way of expressing himself, which consisted of talking a lot without saying anything—gave rise to three new words: the noun *cantinflas*, the adjective *cantinflesco* and the verb *cantinflear*. Accepted by Spain's Royal Academy of Language, these words are included in the latest edition of the dictionary of the Spanish language.

Mario Moreno was born in Mexico City on August 12, 1911. Since his family was large and had to struggle to make ends meet—his father was a postal employee who had to travel from town to town, his mother a housewife—starting at a young age Moreno had to work to help pay the family's expenses. He was always proud of his humble origins.

His life story is peppered with anecdotes that have become legendary with the passage of time. When he finished grade school he was unsuccessful in his attempts to continue his studies. He worked at several trades, from assistant shoemaker and barber to pool-hall employee and cab driver, also serving as an altar boy. He even did a stint as a boxer—earning a small fortune (30 or 40 pesos) for getting knocked out “from the get-go” in “opener” matches.

He made his first appearance on the stage at the age of fifteen, when he accompanied his father on one of his trips to Veracruz. The original plan was for Moreno to remain in the port city to learn the postal worker's trade. However, he decided that wasn't for him and took off for the city of Xalapa, where he got his first job working in a *carpa*.¹ Some say what really happened was that he ran away from home and after working at various trades

¹ *Carpas* (literally, tents) are traveling variety shows featuring dancers, singers and comedians. Typical audience favorites include parodies on the news, current events and public figures—among them politicians, performers or well-known businessmen. A distinctive trait of the *carpas* is that they allow for direct communication between the audience and the performers. The audience, usually made up of people from the surrounding neighborhood, is quite demanding, and, if the show is not to its liking, will boo the performers and even throw things at the stage.



Rufino Tamayo, Portrait of Cantinflas (1948).

discovered his true vocation dancing and singing in provincial *carpas*.

His discovery as a comedian was accidental. During one performance he was so nervous that he blurted out a series of nonsensical phrases that struck the audience as extremely funny, setting the pattern for what would be his unmistakable style.

Since being a comedian was considered socially unacceptable, the name Mario Moreno never appeared on show programs, so that his family would not find out what he was doing. This was one of the reasons he adopted the stage name Cantinflas.

Stories differ as to the origin of this name, but all agree that it arose from a play on words with the audience during one of his shows. Since his speeches were incoherent and resembled the ramblings of a drunk, the audience often yelled something like “*en la cantina inflas*.”² This phrase was shortened to make a single word: Cantinflas.

At the age of seventeen he made his Mexico City debut in the “La Valentina” *carpa*, where he met the only woman he was ever to marry, Valentina Ivanova, a

² In Mexican slang *inflar* (to inflate) is a synonym for drinking. Thus, *en la cantina inflas* is roughly equivalent to “You’ve been boozing it up at the bar.”



HIE / UNAM.

Diego Rivera, Mural at the Insurgentes Theater, detail.

ballerina of Russian background whose father seems to have been the owner of the *carpa*. After working in bit parts in several variety acts, Moreno's character Cantinflas began to acquire fame and popularity. Cantinflas made his appearance as a parodist for the first time in the "Rosete" *carpa*.

His character was marked by the malicious and sarcastic air adopted by many Mexicans from working-class neighborhoods in the 1930s. His attire consisted of a worn-out white sweatshirt, a rag draped over his shoulders and proudly dubbed his "mackintosh," patched and sagging trousers held up by a string in place of a belt. To round this off he wore a pair of old shoes, a neckerchief and a hat of uncertain shape.

When speaking he adopted a characteristic stance: on foot, crossing one leg over the other, he would rest his right elbow on his left hand while holding the burning stub of a cigarette, simulating deep thought. It was in this get-up and posture that Cantinflas was immortalized by the Mexican painter Rufino Tamayo. For Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis, "Cantinflas is the malicious, cynical, inoffensive and tender version of the *pelado* (the 'skinless one', who has nothing and wears nothing), one of the historical manifestations of the urban pariah."

His public identified with him, admiring the mental agility he displayed in getting out of sticky situations through wit and quick repartee. Mario Moreno defined his character as "an uncultured and uneducated person, who nonetheless speaks out, is a person of good will, wants to help, wants to be important, seeks to do something in life."

His speaking style was simultaneously a parody and a critique of the way in which professional politicians and trade-union leaders expressed themselves. According to Cantinflas himself, "I wound up giving a name to a style which was used then and still is today. It's linked to politicians because it is a way of speaking without committing yourself, a way of saying a lot without saying anything."

In 1937 he participated in the polemics between Vicente Lombardo Toledano and Luis N. Morones, the leaders of the two most important trade-union federations of that period—the *CTM* and the *CROC*. In an effort to discredit Morones, Lombardo Toledano challenged him to prove his "dialectical ability" by debating with Cantinflas. The comedian agreed to take part and made a speech which went down in history as the most famous of his *cantinfladas*:

The first thing I did was to think about going to see Lombardo to ask him what the objective was... but then I thought... well, no! Because thinking it over, to tell the truth, he couldn't have chosen a better person than me to solve the solution of the problem... because, as I was saying, naturally, given that if he can't work things out and he says a lot, the same thing happens with me and I never get anywhere...

Ah, but I should like to point out that I do have moments of lucidity during which I speak quite clearly. And now I will speak clearly.... Comrades! There are moments in life which are truly momentaneous... and it is not a question of saying so, but rather that we must see for ourselves! What do we see? That is what must be seen... because what a coincidence it would be, comrades, if we were to suppose—and let us not say that it could come to pass—but one must indeed ponder and comprehend the physiology of life in order to analogize the synthesis of humanity. Am I right or wrong? Well, that is the point!...

That is why I believe, brothers and sisters, and you will be in accord with me on this, that if this comes to pass... because it could... and it's not nice to send it back... that it must be shown, as the saying says (I wish I could remember what it is that the saying says!), and this being said, I hope that just as I heeded the call of something I cannot recall, we must all unite for the unification of the emancipated ideology which fights... What does it fight for, comrades?... Let's just take a look here... you will recall that on September 15... which to a certain degree has nothing to do with what we're discussing here... but one must be prepared because that's how life is and that's how I am.... And how am I, brothers and sisters? A worker, a proletarian for the cause of labor which strives to drive toward the same cause.... And now we must see the cause why we are here today....

So now comrades, brothers and sisters, my friends... could you please explain what I just said?

He made his first appearance on the silver screen in 1936, when the director Miguel Contreras invited him to play a supporting role in the movie *No te engañes corazón* (Don't fool yourself, dear). In 1937 he appeared in *Así es mi tierra* (My land is like this) and *Aguila o sol* (Eagle or

sun), under the direction of Arcady Boytler. In 1939 he made *El signo de la muerte* (The sign of death) as well as several short features. The following year he appeared in *Ahí está el detalle* (That is the question), his first big hit.

In the course of his artistic career he was to make more than 45 movies. In 1939 he founded his own production company—Posa Films—in partnership with Jacques Gelman and Santiago Reachi. From then on he worked with an ongoing team consisting of Miguel M. Delgado as director and Jaime Salvador as screenwriter, with the occasional help of Carlos León. In his movies Cantinflas appears in such guises as matador and boxer as well as making parodies of the “classics”: *The three musketeers* (1942) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1943).

In the forties the Cantinflas character achieved popularity beyond Mexico’s borders, reaching into most of the Spanish-speaking world. *The circus* (1942), a parody of Charles Chaplin’s film of the same name, won him the praise of Chaplin himself, who called him the best comedian in the world.

In the presidential elections of 1946 and 1952, thousands of citizens voted for Cantinflas, writing in his name as an independent candidate. At the same time, he enjoyed growing prestige as a philanthropist and man of the people. It is said that every Saturday there were long lines of needy people waiting at the doors of his house, in one of Mexico City’s most luxurious neighborhoods, to receive food and other assistance from Cantinflas.

A big fan of the bull fights, his appearances in *toreo bufo* (comic bull fights) filled the stadiums. Commenting on these shows in his own special style, he said:

A bull is a serious thing. That I can assure you. So serious that I’ve never seen a bull laugh. This is not to say that the fiesta isn’t full of happiness and things that make you laugh.... What does this mean?... That there are happy bulls!... Or haven’t you ever read that the bull charged happily?... On the other hand no one has ever heard of a bull dying because it was overcome by sadness.

The actor was also known for his fight for the independence and integrity of the film producers’ union. In 1945, together with the singer Jorge Negrete and the photographer Gabriel Figueroa, he led a movement which split the Union of Film Production Workers away from the Union of Film Industry Workers. The latter, affiliated to the Mexican Federation of Labor (CTM), was accused of mismanagement and union corruption.

In the fifties, fame and fortune began to make deep changes in Mario Moreno, which led to changes in Cantinflas as well. Mario Moreno became a well-to-do businessman, the friend of presidents, pampered pet of the press, and Cantinflas gave up one of his distinctive traits—his attire—while making his movies reflect a

moralistic view of reality in which humor tended to give way to solemnity. According to Carlos Monsiváis, “His audience stands by the original mythology; for them there will only be one Cantinflas. The other variations were welcome enough, but at the basic level were not taken into account.”

Mario Moreno defended the changes, attributing them to the natural evolution of his character: “That is the same Mario Moreno, the same Cantinflas, just older and with more enemies.... Cantinflas has not betrayed his roots, since from the beginning he set out to struggle for self-improvement. Cantinflas cannot stay the same, because the people who don’t forgive him for being successful would also reproach him for failing to evolve, for becoming obsolete, and it wouldn’t work, since the times when he started out now belong to the past.”

In 1953 he inaugurated the Insurgentes Theater with the musical review *I, Columbus*. His figure appears at the center of the mural by Diego Rivera which adorns the theater’s façade. Despite its success, this would be Cantinflas’ last theater performance.

In 1955 Cantinflas made his Hollywood debut. His friend Mike Todd—Moreno was Todd’s witness at his marriage to Liz Taylor in Acapulco—invited him to appear in the extravaganza *Around the world in eighty days*, together with David Niven, Marlene Dietrich, Frank Sinatra and an international cast of characters. In 1960 he got the starring role in *Pepe*, directed by George Sidney, with 35 co-stars from among the period’s leading performers, such as Maurice Chevalier, Bing Crosby, Tony Curtis and Frank Sinatra.

These efforts were met with bad reviews, both in Mexico and abroad, marking the end of his Hollywood career. Nevertheless, his footprint can still be seen outside the Chinese Theater on the Avenue of the Stars in Los Angeles.

He made his last movie, *El barrendero* (The streetsweeper), in 1981, after which he devoted himself entirely to his business interests and charity work. For children, he produced 104 five-minute animated shorts on educational topics, called the “Cantinflas Show,” as well as making a record to raise funds for UNICEF.

Moreno received many awards and honors. President Lyndon B. Johnson invited him to stay at the White House, an honor which the comic said “made me sleepless, since I felt like the CIA was spying on me, and I thought that if they discovered what I was dreaming they’d throw me out.”

For conferring dignity on the role of police in society, in his movies *El gendarme desconocido* (The unknown gendarme) and *El patrullero 777* (Patrol Car 777), he was named an honorary member of the Guatemalan police and the honorary chief of the Colombian police. He was made doctor honoris causa by the University of Michigan and

received the title of “Mr. Amigo” in Brownsville and “Mr. International” in Laredo, Texas. For his sympathetic portrayal of the priestly life in his movie *El padrecito* (The little father), in 1981 he was made an honorary member of the presbytery.

The government of Venezuela awarded him the prize of the Order of the Liberator Simón Bolívar. The Organization of American States named him “Ambassador of Peace.” He was given the keys to the cities of Washington, Paris, Bogotá and San Juan. In 1983 a film festival of all his movies was presented in New York.

In Mexico he received the Golden Ariel in 1987, in recognition of his artistic contributions. His death prevented him from receiving the Príncipe de Asturias prize for the arts. Nominated in 1992, he was expected to win the prize this year, but his candidacy was suspended upon his death, since the title is not awarded posthumously.

Considered the most universal comic working in the Spanish language, his death was mourned by government leaders, politicians, artists, the mass media and the citizens of Spain and all Latin American countries.

In Mexico City there were tumultuous outpourings of grief. Members of his family, friends, artists, politicians, streetsweepers, firemen, policemen and common people came to bid farewell to the comic who, years before, had written his own epitaph: “It looks like he’s gone but it’s not true.”

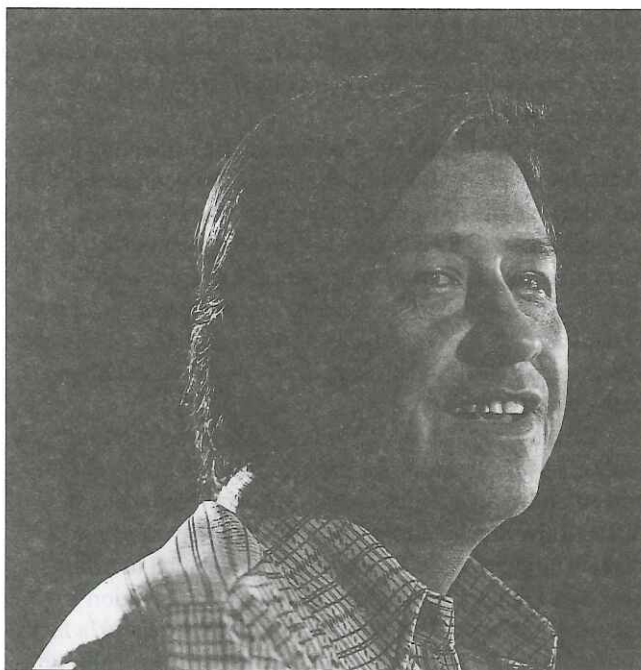
Cesar Chavez, a man committed to “the cause”

Cesar Chavez, founder and leader of the United Farm Workers (UFW), the first union in the history of the United States that managed to achieve substantial improvements in living and working conditions for farm workers, died in San Luis, Arizona, on April 22, at the age of 66.

Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, on a small farm near Yuma, Arizona. His life as a migrant farm worker began when he was only ten, after his father lost the family farm due to economic problems caused by the Depression. Chavez’s family, like many others, moved to California, doing migrant farm labor along the way. Chavez left school after eighth grade so he could work to help his family.

He joined the U.S. Navy in 1945 and served in the Western Pacific. In 1948, he married Helen Escobedo, whom he met while working in the vineyards in Delano, California. They settled in the “Sal si puedes” (Get out if you can) district of San Jose.

From 1952 to 1962, Chavez worked in the Community Service Organization (CSO), formed by Mexican-Americans in California for the promotion of actions to benefit slum dwellers. During this time, he organized new chapters in California and Arizona, coordinating the registration of voters of Mexican origin and fighting discrimination against Chicanos.



Rick Tejada-Flores & Gayanne Fietinghoff.

Chavez gained the sympathy of liberals, civil rights activists and political figures such as Robert F. Kennedy.

In the late 50’s, Chavez was named national director of the organization, but he resigned in the early 60’s to set up an organization for the defense of farm workers. Together with his wife and their eight children, he moved to Delano, where he founded the National Farm Workers’ Association, later UFW. Although the organization consisted mainly of migrant workers of Mexican origin, there were also members of other minorities.

Chavez overcame numerous obstacles in his efforts to recruit members to his union. He worked in the fields on weekdays and spent the weekends visiting the fields, trying to convince workers of the benefits of joining together to improve their living conditions. Chavez used to say, “If you’re outraged at conditions, then you can’t possibly be free or happy until you devote all your time to changing them and do nothing but that. But you can’t change anything if you want to hold on to a good job, a good way of life and avoid sacrifice.”

In 1965, the union joined the AFL-CIO’s Agricultural Workers’ Organizing Committee in the strike against vineyard owners in the Delano area. The following year, Chavez organized a pilgrimage from Delano to Sacramento, the capital of California, to seek the governor’s help, recruit members for his organization and make his struggle known to the American people in order to enlist their support.³

³ The NFWA and AWOC merged in 1966 to become the United Farm Workers’ Organizing Committee (UFWOC), which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW).

Marchers carried a banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Mexican flag and an Aztec eagle as a symbol of their fight for *la causa*; other religious symbols as well as the American flag were also used.

Chavez's tactics soon drew the public's attention to the ill-treatment suffered by immigrant and undocumented farm workers, and the movement was given broad coverage by the national press. Chavez's non-violent approach (which he maintained until the very end) gained him the sympathy of liberals, civil rights activists and political figures such as Senator Robert F. Kennedy, as well as religious, student and labor organizations. Their support was to be a crucial factor in the union's successes.

Farmers retaliated by hiring illegal workers, firing workers who supported the strike, and even carrying out acts of physical violence against strikers. This made it difficult for Chavez to persuade the majority of grape-pickers to join the strike. He therefore decided to use a boycott to put pressure on farmers beyond the union's sphere of influence. With public opinion in Chavez's favor, consumer response was decisive. In 1968, grape sales on the domestic market had dropped 12%; by 1969, grape sales in California had fallen by over 15%.

In May 1970, vineyard owners decided to negotiate with Chavez's union. Agreements signed by the union involved more than 3,000 farm workers and 3,070 acres of vineyards in the farming valleys of California and Arizona. The same boycott tactic was later used successfully against lettuce growers.

By 1971, the union had signed a number of contracts with farmers in California, New Mexico and Arizona and was affiliated to the AFL-CIO.

In 1973, the union began to lose ground because of internal dissent and competition from the Teamsters. The Teamsters signed an agreement with farmers to take over UFW contracts that were due to expire. Chavez appealed to public opinion and the Chicano community, and publicly announced that defense against the Teamsters was *la causa* of all Chicanos.

From that time until his death, Chavez fought for the survival of the union, facing attacks from farmers, competition from the Teamsters, as well as the UFW's own ups and downs. "Farm workers will never again be treated like agricultural implements to be used and discarded," Chavez said. "We have tasted freedom and dignity and we will fight to the end before we give it up. We have come too far and we have too much further to go to give up now!"

Thanks to Chavez's efforts, many farm workers obtained better wages, medical coverage and some protection from harmful chemicals such as pesticides. However, the majority continue to work under conditions of poverty and abuse.

The UFW leader went on hunger strikes three times as a tactic on behalf of farm workers' rights. Chavez's last hunger strike was in 1988, at the age of 61, to protest the use of pesticides responsible for cancer and other diseases among children and adults working in the fields.

In 1990, Chavez was awarded the Aztec Eagle by the Mexican government for his contribution to the respect of human rights and the dignity of undocumented Mexicans, and to social justice and non-violence. In the same year the Mexican government signed a contract with the union to provide medical service in Mexico, through the Mexican Institute of Social Security, to families of Mexican workers that emigrate to California.

Chavez's death was mourned by thousands of farm workers, politicians and union leaders. A funeral procession over three miles long accompanied his body to its last resting place. Even Chavez's former opponents paid homage to the man who was committed to a cause he regarded more highly than his own well-being and to which he devoted his whole life ✘

Elsie L. Montiel
Assistant Editor.