

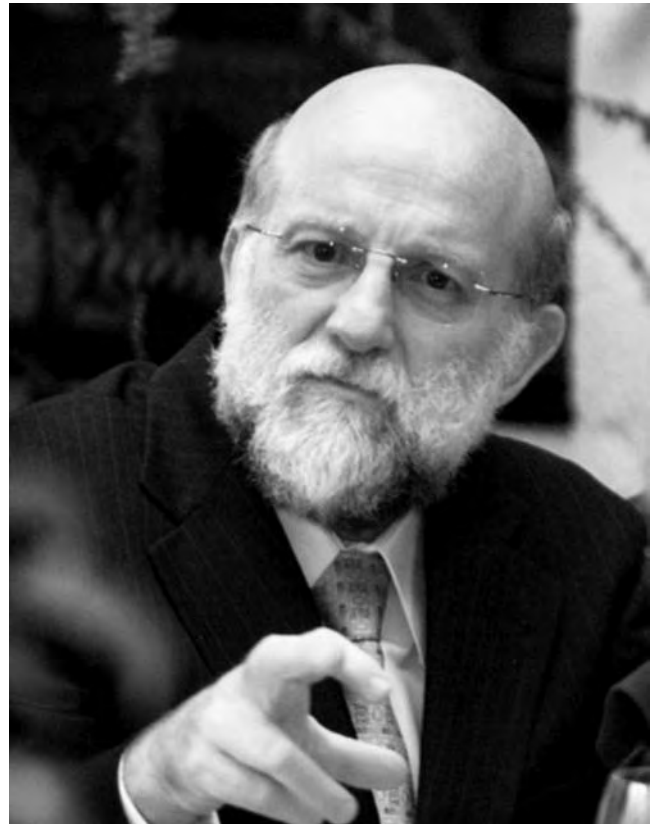
Carlos Rico Ferrat

A Good Heart Guided by Solidarity (1950-2010)

Respected diplomat Carlos Rico Ferrat died in Houston, Texas, where he was doing research about the Mexico-U.S. border. Voices of Mexico pays him homage in the words of his closest relatives, colleagues and friends.

Marisa Studer:¹ “I had the privilege of knowing Carlos Rico, an exceptional person, when I took the course he taught for several years at El Colegio de México [Mexico College] on Mexico’s foreign policy Above all things, Carlos was my teacher. His example taught me to take on any project with fervor and complete commitment. In his absolute devotion to research, Carlos taught me the fundamental importance of academic rigor and intellectual honesty. His mind —brilliant, erudite and crystal clear— was an infinite source of inspiration. His profound humanity taught me that it wasn’t worthwhile winning the argument if that meant humiliating the other person or losing a friendship. He also taught me that originality of thinking is a precious gem that must be cultivated through constant learning. He was a visionary, a precursor of many innovative ideas in the field of international relations.”

Luis Maira:² “Carlos Rico was my best Mexican friend among the many very good ones I had in the 12 years I lived in exile in Mexico City. Affection for Carlos was incremental. It increased the more you knew him and got to know the different facets that made him more complete and original: the vastness of his literary, cinematic and musical culture; his collector’s passion for searching out books, records or movies that he would then have trouble classifying and organizing.... I also admired the generous relationships he established with his many disciples and their recognition of him.... I remember his solidarity with those fighting for freedom and democracy in our countries and his commit-



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ment to building a more united, integrated Latin America. I traveled through almost all the countries of the hemisphere with him and saw how everywhere, invariably, the number of followers and the affection increased.”

Juan Rebolledo Gout:³ “I met Carlos at the Instituto Patria around 1965 or 1966. We used to frequent proto-literary circles, aficionados that we were of history and lan-

Carlos Rico Ferrat

Born in Mexico City in 1950, Rico did his undergraduate work in international relations at El Colegio de México (The Mexico College). He received his master's in diplomatic studies from the Matías Romero Institute for Diplomatic Studies, and his doctorate from Harvard University.

As vice-minister for North America between December 2006 and September 2009, he was one of the negotiators of the Mérida Initiative together with Mexico's ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhán. From the time he accepted this post, he accompanied Minister of Foreign Relations Patricia Espinosa on innumerable occasions and President Felipe Calderón on his trips to the United States, since he worked unceasingly to improve bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States.

Before that, Rico was a Walter J. Levy Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1980 and a senior consultant for the Inter-American Dialogue from 1982 to 1983. He also did outstanding work as the head of chancellery at Mexico's embassy in Japan (1992-1994); in the the Ministry of Foreign Relations as general director for Latin America and the Caribbean (1997-1998) and for North America (1998-1999); as consul in Boston (1999-2002); minister for political affairs in Washington (2002-2004); and Mexico's ambassador to Israel (2005-2006). He left his post as vice-minister for North America in the Ministry of Foreign Relations last October to head up the beginning of the Mérida Initiative, of which he was one of the ideologues. After laws were passed in the United States a couple of years ago infringing on undocumented Mexicans' rights, he also worked to defend immigrant rights north of the border.

Rico was also recognized for his academic work, in which he focused on North America, and among other important achievements, he headed up the Institute for United States Studies (1984-1986) at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), one of the first institutes of its kind in Mexico. Also, he was a visiting professor at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California at San Diego (1983-1984), and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University (1986-1987). He was also a professor at CIDE (1976-1980) and El Colegio de México (1987-1992), and a researcher at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (1989). His diplomatic experience led him to act as an advisor and on editorial boards of several publications in Mexico and the United States, among them *Voices of Mexico*, in addition to being a tutor and example for several generations of new researchers and diplomats.





guage. We weren't anarchists or history-biased, but we used to enjoy seeing things as they were and imagining what they could be. I leaned toward philosophy and Carlos, history. Our eagerness to understand the world was even greater than our desire to change something in the world. [With time] we created mechanisms for working with the Americans and the Central Americans; I don't know if they've lasted, but in their time, they were useful for the country."

Abraham F. Lowenthal:⁴ "Carlos managed to develop in tandem both his analytic, intellectual and academic skills and vocation, but also his mastery of public policy, bureaucracy, politics and diplomacy. He had a restless curiosity and a capacity to frame good questions and to get them answered. But he also had a strong commitment to action, aimed at solving problems and improving situations. He was never too academic to be relevant and useful, indeed indispensable, to the foreign ministry. But he was also never so political or diplomatic as to weaken his intellectual acuity and integrity... Jewish culture emphasizes the qualities of a *mensch*, a Yiddish word that means a good and decent person, someone whom other people like and look up to. Carlos was, above all, a *mensch*."

Roberto Bouzas:⁵ "Our presence testifies to his generosity, his decency, his love for Mary and his profound pride in Ana and Deni.⁶ When we saw each other in Houston last November, as he looked at photos of his children when they were

little, Carlos said, 'We have to be proud of our children.' And Carlos was. There are few things that can make anyone happier than the love of his partner and pride in his children. He had both. Carlos was a happy guy. Today, it falls to me to write these words with the tears falling on the page from somewhere unexpected, but a place not foreign to Carlos (Jerusalem). As I said at the beginning, these words don't mean to be a farewell, but to pay homage."

Ana and Deni Rico: We knew and we know that his greatest quality and what distinguished him is that he was a good man, in the full meaning of the word. He was generous; he watched over our dreams; he helped us and educated us. He really opened

the doors of the world to us, as well as the doors to his heart.... He was brilliant, honest, and always intelligently humorous; he knew how to enjoy life and he taught us to enjoy it, too.... Our dad was always our guide, offering the best of his counsel and taking great interest in us. He had many lives and we had the good fortune of sharing some of them with him. He lived intensely, giving himself over 100 percent to everything he did." **MM**

NOTES

¹ María Isabel Studer Noguez is the director of the Center for Dialogue and Analysis about North America, an institution linked to the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM) Graduate School for Administration and Public Policy (EGAP), Mexico City campus. [Editor's Note.]

² Luis Maira is a Chilean lawyer and socialist politician, a former minister in the cabinet of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle and currently his country's ambassador in Argentina. [Editor's Note.]

³ Former vice-minister of Foreign Affairs for North America and the European Community (1994-2000) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) during the period when Carlos Rico was the General Director for North America (1998-1999). [Editor's Note.]

⁴ Abraham F. Lowenthal is a foreign policy expert focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, professor of international relations, University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and President emeritus of the Pacific Council on International Policy. [Editor's Note.]

⁵ Roberto Bouzas is the academic director of the Flacso-University of San Andrés-University of Barcelona master's program in international relations and negotiations, and professor of international economics at the University of Buenos Aires School of Economic Sciences. [Editor's Note.]

⁶ His wife and children. [Editor's Note.]