

## Mexico's ambassador: 'A very positive attitude'

*The following exclusive interview was conducted by EIR correspondent Héctor Apolinar with Mexico's Ambassador to Japan, Francisco Javier Alejo, at the 12th Plenary Meeting of the Mexico-Japan Businessmen's Committee held in Guadalajara, Mexico, Oct. 5-7.*

**Apolinar:** Mr. Ambassador, could you tell us the status of the oil negotiations between Mexico and Japan?

**Alejo:** Japan had been seeking to buy an amount of crude oil which Mexico had not been able to supply, due to prior commitments. We have a policy with a fixed export ceiling of 1.5 million barrels per day—unless the circumstances or necessities of development demand more. Given our 1.5 million barrel per day export ceiling, and prior commitments, for a long time we were unable to satisfy Japan's repeated request to increase deliveries of 100,000 barrels per day up to 300,000.

But now, with the present situation of a short-term oversupply on the international market, we have told our Japanese friends that we want to satisfy their old request as soon as they wish, and obviously they have been pleased. But on the other side, they also have a short-term problem. Japan's petroleum industry has suffered strong financial setbacks, seen in the fall in price of products from their refining industry, and from the rise in interest rates, that have produced devastating effects on Japan's holdings.

For this reason, Japan has had to make adjustments. Their reply to our offer has been ambiguous so far, due to Japan's dilemma in these circumstances. But their attitude has been very good, very positive, and we are examining the situation like friends, patiently. It is up to them to accept or not. Of course, at a certain point if they don't decide, then we will sell our oil to others, since we have other requests. So it basically depends on Japan.

**Apolinar:** What areas of co-investment do you believe may have the greatest interest for Mexico?

**Alejo:** The areas of co-investment which have been planned are those decided by Mexico—basically industry, tourism, and fishing. The priority areas in our industrial development plan include metal-working industries, capital goods, consumer durables, some basic metals, secondary petrochemicals, a bit in transportation, a bit in electronics.

**Apolinar:** Have you seen a more defined strategy on the part of the Suzuki government toward Mexico?

**Alejo:** Well, I don't think that this question can be personalized, since Japan is a very institutionalized country. I would say that there has been more of a Mexican strategy toward Japan than a Japanese strategy toward Mexico. The Mexican strategy is finding favorable ground because there is wide general interest in Japan about Mexico, as much from the standpoint of the size of the Mexico market as from the medium- and long-term dynamic of the Mexican economy, as well as its nearness to the U.S., which offers interesting perspectives for international trade. Plus Mexico's natural resources, which of course offer very interesting complementary possibilities. So from the Japanese side, more than having a particular type of strategy, there is a general interest that gets translated into concrete decisions to the degree we specify to them what it is that we want.

**Apolinar:** I have spoken to several Japanese businessmen established in Mexico who are thinking of delaying their investments for the rest of this year and part of next year, due to the current election campaign in Mexico.

**Alejo:** Well, this is a very general Japanese attitude, what they call a policy of "wait and see." It refers not only to Mexico, but to any country they are dealing with. Japanese investors, perhaps because they have worked so hard to achieve what they have achieved, are very cautious. So there are some examples of delay.

But there are others where work is proceeding intensely. The most noteworthy case is that of Nissan Motors, which has an investment program of \$450 million, no small amount in Mexico. They have been working very hard, and have no intention of interrupting or postponing that work.

**Apolinar:** You have mentioned the importance of the favorable position of Japan for the Cancún meeting. On what do you base that understanding?

**Alejo:** It's based on specific statements made by the Japanese government; on the position adopted by Prime Minister Suzuki at Ottawa, a very positive position; and on the position adopted by the Prime Minister and several of his ministers during the ASEAN coordinating meeting in Osaka. All the countries in that region have asked Japan to be their spokesman with the other developed nations.

**Apolinar:** What has been the reaction of Japanese political circles to Mexico's position on El Salvador?

**Alejo:** Japan has traditionally had close relations with El Salvador, so relations with El Salvador claim their attention and interest.

I believe that Japan's attitude for the present is basically to observe and study our position, which I believe they regard with a great deal of respect.

## Japan's ambassador: 'Our neighbor is growing'

*Japan's Ambassador to Mexico, Noboru Matsunaga, has taken an increasingly forthright and public role as a Japanese spokesman on development. In some moments taken out from the Japan-Mexico Businessmen's Meeting in Guadalajara Oct. 7, Mr. Matsunaga explained to EIR's Héctor Apolinar how the Japanese see their relations with Mexico and the rest of the developing world.*

**Apolinar:** What is [Prime Minister] Suzuki's appreciation of the relations between Mexico and Japan?

**Matsunaga:** The development of bilateral relations between Mexico and Japan is good. Mexico is growing very fast in its economic and political relations with countries outside its borders. Japan is one of the most industrialized countries in the world, searching to expand its relations with various countries. Mexico now occupies a very important place in this framework.

Moreover, we are confident that the next century will be a century of the Pacific Ocean. This is a very important concept in this meeting, because Mexico and Japan are both neighboring countries. They have only the Pacific Ocean between them.

**Apolinar:** Do you expect an increase in the economic collaboration between Mexico and Japan?

**Matsunaga:** As I mentioned, Mexico will grow and it is our expectation that Mexico will become a very modern country participating and contributing to the creation of a stable world economic order. The prosperity of its economy will contribute to the whole world. There can be no doubt about this. With this in view, we will endeavor to achieve closer cooperation between Mexico and Japan.

**Apolinar:** Do you expect that Mexico and Japan will reach an agreement on oil purchases?

**Matsunaga:** We are now importing oil from Mexico on the basis of 100,000 barrels per day. In the long range we expect to increase our imports of Mexican crude. Looking short term, the immediate supply-and-demand situation for crude oil in the world is very loose. We cannot increase our imports from Mexico today or tomorrow. But definitely we are looking forward to developing our relations with Mexico which will include the transfer of crude.

**Apolinar:** Will Mr. Suzuki stop in Mexico City after the Cancún meeting?

**Matsunaga:** He will fly directly into Cancún and back again to Japan, because at this time Japan is in full session of the Diet [Parliament]. But he already knows Mexico very well. He has come several times. He has very good personal relations with the leaders of Mexico, including President José López Portillo.

**Apolinar:** Are there consultations between Mexico and Japan in regard to the Cancún meeting?

**Matsunaga:** We are consulting constantly with Mexico. We have very close contact with the Mexican government.

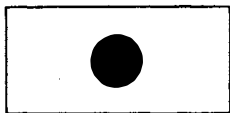
**Apolinar:** Can you tell me the main point that Japan will make in the Cancún meeting?

**Matsunaga:** I don't know what the Prime Minister will say in the Cancún meeting. I can tell you only that the basic position of Japan has always been looking toward such a meeting at the highest level, to contribute to the progress of the dialogue between North and South. Japan is a country which is heavily dependent on its relations with the South, the developing countries. We believe that without the economic development of the developing countries, the developed countries cannot enjoy their own prosperity. So we are making our best effort to assist and encourage the development of the underdeveloped countries.

I don't think the Cancún meeting will result in reaching agreement on concrete projects. They will have only two days of discussion and the participants are all heads of state. But if they are coming to Cancún in order to create a kind of good atmosphere for future dialogue between North and South, then I think we can say that the Cancún meeting will be a big success. The most important thing is to avoid confrontation between the North and the South. We should recognize the importance of interdependence and reaching common interests between the North and the South.

**Apolinar:** As you know, Mexico is very worried about the deterioration of the situation in Central America. The violence is increasing, and Mexico is proposing that the economic development of these countries is the way to bring peace. Does the Japanese government agree with this view?

**Matsunaga:** We are also worried about the unstable situation in Central America. And we know that the economy in Central America is not very good. They certainly need assistance from the outside world. However, as you know, we have always been strongly against external intervention for the settlement of disputes. In this area again, it is always our view that such instability be resolved through the interested parties on the basis of peaceful negotiations.



## Taguchi: 'Mexico's strength is her young population'

*The following interview was granted to EIR by Renzo Taguchi, representative of Japanese industrialists at the 12th Plenary Meeting of the Japan-Mexico Businessmen's Committee held at Guadalajara, Mexico, Oct. 5-7. The interview was conducted by Héctor Apolinar.*

**Apolinar:** Have there been political obstacles to Japan's increased purchase of oil from Mexico?

**Taguchi:** There is no political obstacle. Generally, news reporters insist that there are political problems, both Japanese and Mexican reporters, but I do not think so.

**Apolinar:** There are some in Mexico who think that Japanese industrialists are disposed to cooperate only in a limited way with Mexican industrialization. Are there limits to Japanese cooperation with Mexico, or are Japanese industrialists willing to make Mexico into another Japan in industrial terms?

**Taguchi:** There are politicians, industrialists, and officials in Japan who think that limits exist. There are always problems in the economic sector. But others do not think so.

Look at the case of Libyan oil. Libya opposes U.S. policies, but the U.S. buys 40 percent of Libya's oil. In the political realm, it's as if the economic relation didn't exist. The responsibility of you reporters is very important. What you say is vital, because it is what is sent from one place to another, while politicians are the ones really responsible for directing the course within each country.

**Apolinar:** My magazine has stated that there are international groups or factions that want to impede closer cooperation between Mexico and Japan.

**Taguchi:** I don't think such pressures exist. In the history

of our countries, there has always been fraternal unity between our nations, as we see in today's meeting.

**Apolinar:** Do you think that Mexico can become another industrial Japan in the near future?

**Taguchi:** It can happen, but the key area for this is education. It will take a major educational effort that reduces the percentage of illiteracy and raises the educational level of the population to the point that the people can read technological documents written in a foreign language in that language. This is a basic contribution to the eventual industrialization of your country, like Japan.

In the trip I made to Mexico last December, visiting various ports and factories, I found large numbers of people on every hand, very industrious workers, and an atmosphere of striving for a goal which the country feels is close at hand.

If we look at statistical projections for the year 2000, we see the active working-age population fluctuating around 25 years old, which is very young. It will have to be guaranteed employment. Japan now has the largest percentage of old-age population in the world. From this standpoint, Japan is conceptually moving toward old age. Its working population is diminishing.

By contrast, Mexico's working-age population is increasing—that's the source of Mexico's economic advance. One can see in Mexico's youth hope for the future, which they should have, and confidence in themselves. The old people do not have much hope in life, but the youth have great hope in life and should have a prosperous future. Japan is a very small country; old people must go abroad to subsist. We human beings must work very hard; that is the secret to remaining young.

The power of the press in each country, especially you young reporters, must have a sense of guidance to promote the destiny of each country. Two decades ago, students who studied Marxism-Leninism were considered progressive, but now when one studies Marxism-Leninism, one is not considered progressive; such is the atmosphere which exists in Japan. The proof of this is Eurocommunism in Europe, where the Marxist-Leninists are not considered progressive.

**Apolinar:** Do you believe there is any similarity or coincidence between the Meiji Restoration and the Mexican Revolution or Mexican Independence?

**Taguchi:** The times have changed. Japan was the only country that had more than half its population able to read between 1804 and 1828. Fifty years later came the Meiji period, in which foreign technology was introduced into the country. When the Meiji Restoration occurred, each person in Japan was able to read the foreign culture, able to use what he read; he was already prepared.