

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### The ABCs of destabilization

*A U.S. television documentary declares war on Mexico, portraying it as the "Iranizers" would like it to be.*

**T**he time is 1978. ABC-TV runs a feature documentary on Iran, forecasting a period of growing instability. There is corruption in the royal family. The Shah's grip on power is slipping.

Two years later, the Khomeinac hordes had overthrown the Shah.

On Sunday evening, July 25, 1982, ABC-TV ran a similar program for national, prime-time broadcast. This one was on Mexico, which ABC presented as the likely new Iran.

The image presented was designed to stun the audience. The opening shot was of weeping peasants talking of police raids and how their homes had been burned down. Unrest in the countryside and the labor unions was emphasized; inflation is rampant; corruption is paralyzing the country; the oil boom has brought only austerity and unemployment; "the political system is under fire"; leftist and rightist upsurges are spreading, along with violent repression.

And then the final message: "Mexico is not immune to the upheavals of Central America. . . . [It] is a country of underlying strengths. But now, in these times of crisis, with its future in jeopardy, we in the United States can no longer assume" that Mexico will remain stable.

As in all lying, black propaganda, the ABC program contained elements of truth. Mexico *is* suffering from inflation; left and right

extremism are on the rise; there is still great poverty in the country. But the overall picture of Mexico was a lie, an evil attempt to provoke conflict between the United States and Mexico and to advance the plot to submerge Mexico in an Iran-style civil war in the months immediately ahead.

Dissident labor leaders were quoted freely as representative of the majority view here. Statements by Mrs. Rosario Ibarra de Piedra were featured prominently—but the program omitted to report that she was the presidential candidate of the Trotskyist, pro-terrorist PRT party. Statements of spokesmen of the leftist PST party were aired as the views of "simple peasants." And Juan Sánchez Navarro—in real life a scion of one of the most feudal-minded oligarchic families in all of Mexico—was portrayed as nothing more than your typical Mexican "businessman."

A Mexican politician who had seen the program commented wryly to me that ABC and its backers in the U.S. government were doing more to give credibility to the Mexican left than the Soviet Union was. "With friends like that, who needs enemies?" he asked me.

A highly placed government official told me: "The ABC program was a declaration of war. We are taking it very seriously. Now the fight is open and public."

He elaborated that perhaps the most dangerous feature of the program was that Reagan's ambassa-

dor to Mexico, John Gavin, seemed to endorse the "Iran" image of Mexico by stating on the show that the United States is concerned about the spread of violence from the Central American nations to the South over the borders into Mexico.

The U.S. cause was hardly served by the fact that the only person in the entire Mexican press corps to defend Ambassador Gavin's remarks was the strange Enrique Farlie Fuentes, a scribbler for the daily *El Heraldo*, who reportedly was born in Bolivia and maintains close contact with dictators Pinochet of Chile and Stroessner of Paraguay. This coincidence of views is under investigation.

What I have been told in private about the ABC show is also being stated publicly by Mexican political leaders and government-linked journalists. CTM labor confederation leader Fidel Velásquez, for instance, stated categorically that the image that the U.S. media is presenting of Mexico is false. "The working class is not so restless as to be on the verge of an uprising. . . . The situation is difficult, but this does not mean that the working class wants to aggravate the problem."

*Novedades* columnist Joaquín López Doriga, known to closely reflect the thinking of President López Portillo, wrote: "This is the most distorted document on Mexico that has ever been prepared and transmitted abroad, whose conclusion is that we are one step away from a civil war."

López Doriga emphasized: "What the ABC network presented, I repeat, is not Mexico. . . . Possibly it is what they would like it to be."