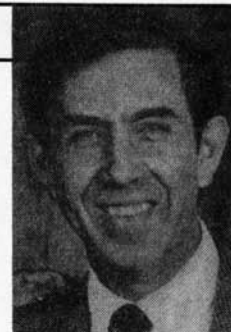


## Interview: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano



# 'For a government in Mexico not subordinate to foreign interests'

*The following is an exclusive interview granted to EIR by Mexico's National Democratic Front presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano. The interview, conducted by our correspondent Dolia E. Pettingell, took place May 14 aboard Cárdenas' campaign van during his 400-mile tour through the Mexican border state of Sonora.*

**EIR:** What is the National Democratic Front (FDN) expecting from the presidential elections of July 6? What are the forecasts?

**Cárdenas:** We predict that the FDN is going to obtain a majority vote. This is not just wishful thinking on our part, but objectively, given the response we have been getting from organizations that have joined the FDN, from many groups that have adhered to the Front and which come from organizations of the ruling party, peasant, worker organizations, some of the most important trade unions in the country, the electrical workers, the oil workers, railroad workers, and also independent workers' groups that have already joined the efforts of the FDN. All this tells us that a very broad movement is truly being formed.

We have had very, very large rallies of the population in different parts of the country. In many states, there has been a truly explosive response, very enthusiastic, massive, which is what enables us to predict—along with the polls that have been made, in short, from various evidence—that there is going to be a very high vote in favor of the FDN. Thus, we are predicting a high vote. The higher it is, the easier to defend; the higher it is, the more difficult it will be for the other side to try to disavow it, or to deny who won the victory.

For the first time in the past 30 years, an opposition force is seriously contending for power and to replace the official party in government. For the first time, a different perspective for strengthening democratic practices in Mexico has opened up. We are committed to leading this fight to its final consequences. We stand by this commitment.

**EIR:** Do you truly believe that the government, or the PRI [ruling party] is going to surrender power through the elections?

**Cárdenas:** If there is a popular alignment on the other side, of sufficient magnitude to impose victory, it will give in. It will have no other choice.

**EIR:** The National Action Party (PAN), along with the most radical left in Mexico, maintains that the only means of taking power is violent action. What do you think?

**Cárdenas:** I do not believe the electoral path has been exhausted in Mexico.

**EIR:** How does the FDN plan to fight against possible vote fraud, without at the same time falling into the United States' destabilization games?

**Cárdenas:** With the means the law affords us. Simply by the exercise of our rights, the right to meet and of free expression, to express our disagreement with certain behavior and to demand, by popular mobilization, that in a given case, such behavior be corrected. Everything we can do by means of writing, by expressing ourselves, by talking, by meeting. In sum, by a very active resistance to all possible attempts to change the electoral results, or to attempt to limit the exercise of constitutional rights.

**EIR:** Nonetheless, the United States is convinced that if there is violence as a result of vote fraud—many of the PANistas have indicated they are ready to resort to violence to defend the vote—the United States would not tolerate it and could intervene as it has in other countries.

**Cárdenas:** We oppose any intervention from any foreign country or foreign interests in matters that we must resolve ourselves. We reject ahead of time any intervention, and we will identify and condemn those who would call on interventionist forces to resolve national problems.

**EIR:** An important Washington newspaper gave you 35% of the vote, matching that of PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari. However, the daily observes that the PRI is the one which counts the votes. What is your comment on this?

**Cárdenas:** This time the PRI is going to count the votes, but we are also going to count them. We will have sufficient basis for judging how the vote turned out.

**EIR:** What has been the worst error and the greatest success of the Miguel de la Madrid government?

**Cárdenas:** I am not aware of any successes. I don't believe it has complied with any of the promises made during candidate De la Madrid's campaign, neither regarding the reactivation of economic growth, nor in defeating inflation, nor in improving living standards, nor in promoting employment. I see these as the greatest failures of the current government.

**EIR:** Regarding the economic situation, what do you propose to begin to reverse the effects of the economic crisis Mexico has experienced for the past five years, both in terms of national development and in terms of the foreign debt?

**Cárdenas:** This is a crisis that expresses itself principally in inflation and at the same time, in economic stagnation. . . .

This government, in a particular way, has subordinated us to foreign interests, has subordinated us to a plan of domination by the most reactionary interests of the United States, represented by the International Monetary Fund.

We propose, therefore, a radical change in economic policies, beginning with a radical change in the way the foreign debt has been handled. First, we believe that the priority, in allocating resources, should not be payment of debt service. The priority, for us, is the reactivation of the economy, to relaunch production after five years of no growth, on the average.

In this government, wages have lost at least 60% of their real buying power. It is necessary to raise the buying power of salaries toward restoring the maximum levels they had, in real terms, around 1976. Current salaries represent 30% of those salary levels that had already been reached by a percentage of Mexican workers. There has been a general deterioration of living standards. Public works programs tending to improve the well-being of the population have been suspended.

To make use of resources that are today going to pay the debt, to use them for other purposes, requires negotiation. The FDN does not propose that the Mexican government unilaterally suspend debt payment, but immediate negotiation, that is, using resources that now go to pay the debt for immediate national priorities, while at the same time beginning negotiations that will permit us to establish different terms than the current ones, so as to continue meeting our international obligations. This implies a halt in payments under current terms, and the immediate initiation of negoti-

ations that recognize the real value of the debt. It is 50%, according to those who know, both the banks and the Mexican government itself, but they still pay 100%. It means admitting that significant amounts that they are still charging us interest for, even though they consider them to be unrecoverable, have been written off the banks' books. One must demand admission of co-responsibility for the high level of indebtedness that Mexico contracted, when it was known that the economy no longer had the capacity for more commitments. Here there was, from our standpoint, a clear intention to strengthen the bonds of dependency and the possibilities for political intervention, and not just resolve an economic problem. This part of the debt should be treated politically, and not economically, as one might with the rest of the debt.

We cannot establish a detailed plan at this moment, because the Mexican government has systematically refused to reveal how the debt is constituted, and which are the commitments that make up each of the different parts of the debt. At the point we have this information at hand, we will be able to establish what to pay, and how to pay, and how much to pay.

**EIR:** What development model do you propose as an alternative to the *maquiladora* [foreign-owned sweat shops] economic model of the government?

**Cárdenas:** A model that is premised on the concept of strengthening internal markets. It is by strengthening internal markets, integrating our industry, integrating the different branches of production, also accelerating the expansion of agriculture, of fishing, of industry generally, that we believe inflation should be controlled and the country enabled to enter a process of sustained economic growth.

The government seeks to develop us as a *maquilador* and exporting nation. We don't deny the importance of exports, and we believe they should be promoted, but not above or before meeting internal needs. Further, we believe in the need to encourage exports, not of raw materials, or semi-finished products, or the products of the *maquiladora* as the present government seeks, but of products with high added value that will enable us to derive greater economic benefit while, at the same time, a greater development of our national industry.

**EIR:** What is the main problem that you see in the *maquiladora* scheme?

**Cárdenas:** Other than the fact that in many cases the *maquiladoras* do not meet national laws, neither in matters of labor, benefits, wages, nor do they pay what should be paid to the workers, in their majority women, nor consider the quality of work done; they impose very severe work loads which cause serious health problems. The trade union organizing of the workers of the *maquiladoras* is prevented by the actions of government, by the bosses themselves; nor is the

law met regarding foreign investment, regarding the percentage that should be in national hands versus foreign hands. I believe that it is an industrialization scheme that is not going to benefit nor integrate the national economy. It remains an enclave that accepts inputs from abroad and sends its final product abroad. It has helped solve an immediate employment problem, but at the same time, this *maquiladora* plan has many defects.

On the other hand, the *maquiladoras* have been receiving benefits, indirectly if you wish, which are not given to industry in the rest of the country. The government constructs industrial parks, the government constructs and improves highways. The case of Sonora is clearest in this sense, with the installation of the Ford plant in Hermosillo. The government is spending on infrastructure so that these companies will come and install themselves here in this country. . . .

The manner of integration of these companies, in many cases as twin companies with others that exist in neighboring parts inside the United States, in many cases with common technical and administrative supervision, or integration that de facto is provided by improving communications, by providing all kinds of opportunities to link them further to the United States, it could reach the point that if we ignore the border zones of the country like Sonora, they could end up being integrated, including a territorial integration, with the North American economy.

This is an invasion not carried out by armies, but silently and peacefully. And in the end, what we are seeing is an integration of our economy and a good portion of our territory, with the activities and under the domination of the economic interests of the United States.

**EIR:** Why do you believe that the educational, university levels in Mexico have declined so in recent years?

**Cárdenas:** The government's plan is one of political and economic subordination, also in the educational and cultural terrain. The current government is interested in maintaining cheap labor power, supposedly to make the country attractive to foreign investment. The cutbacks being made in the university budgets are a way of keeping us within this dependency plan, and in terms of what it is doing to economic development, it is a plan which denationalizes us, which makes us increasingly dependent on the multinationals, and which seeks to turn the nation into one big *maquiladora*.

For those who seek to install the *maquiladoras*, and develop the country as a *maquilador* country, there is no need for top-line professionals, nor of researchers who could be the leaders in that field. They want to have professionals who can interpret instructions that come from the United States, who can simply meet these orders without much discussion. That is why they are also stripping the curriculum of civic education, of studies of history, of national problems that should be part of our study plans from elementary education to higher education.

**EIR:** In the process of Ibero-American integration, what role should Mexico play?

**Cárdenas:** It should be a positive role, of encouraging that integration in political, economical, and cultural aspects which there should be with the continent—that is, with the Latin American nations. We should give each other a hand and act in solidarity with one another, and gradually develop institutions which enable the gradual consolidation of unity—institutions such as the Latin American Parliament, which could have a greater influence in our countries' internal life—and gradually develop the political and economic ties which this integration requires. Legislative measures could be taken to recognize anyone born in Latin America—that is, all Iberians and Ibero-Americans—as Mexicans, in order to give this great nationality international scope, breadth, and integration. This is what we should aim for in the future, in the immediate future.

**EIR:** Do you favor an Ibero-American Common Market?

**Cárdenas:** It must be developed. It's one of the things which must begin to happen on the economic front. The development of a Latin American market must emerge, as well, out of the development of the productive forces and potentialities in our own countries, through the modernization of our production facilities, always relying on better by-products with greater value added, and taking advantage of the opportunities every country may find in order to foster this integration and national development at the same time.

**EIR:** And are you in favor of a united front of debtor countries, to jointly negotiate aspects of the foreign debt?

**Cárdenas:** We in the FDN have long been advocating the need to join efforts with those of other countries which also have high indebtedness, and which need solidarity, as do we, so as not to continue acting in isolation as the Mexican government has done, which keeps us from accomplishing unity.

**EIR:** In the strategic international context, that is, in the context of East-West relations, what direction should Ibero-America take?

**Cárdenas:** The path of Latin America, the path that all independent countries take, that of full exercise of their sovereignty and of setting their own rules. I believe that Mexico should be a full member of the Non-Aligned Movement. This is proposed in our electoral platform.

**EIR:** Why do you think the United States chose Panama as the target of one of its greatest assaults against a nation of this hemisphere?

**Cárdenas:** Because the actions of domination, of imperialism, always tend to increase penetration and interfere with potentially autonomous decisions. We have demanded for some time, since the intervention against the Panamanian people began, the withdrawal of U.S. forces, that the armed,

political and financial intervention of the United States cease, and that it can also cease in other parts of the Central American isthmus, that the Central American people—including the people of Panama—be left alone to resolve their own problems in accordance with their own interests and their own manner of viewing their problems.

We must be in solidarity, active solidarity, with the Panamanian people, in international forums, in inter-American forums, and in bilateral forums, with the purpose of continuing to maintain and support Panama's right to receive the Canal in 1999, in agreement with the Torrijos-Carter treaty.

**EIR:** General Noriega recently stated that United States' policy toward Panama is a "laboratory experiment" in which the United States is trying to impose its power upon a series of countries, among which Mexico would be one of the first. Do you share the general's opinion?

**Cárdenas:** I believe that all the interventions of the United States, throughout the history of the continent, have been laboratory experiments; they already know how to intervene when they want to, and they also already know the resistance their interventions will encounter.

**EIR:** What does Mexico, or a government headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, expect in bilateral relations with the United States?

**Cárdenas:** A relationship of mutual advantage, a relationship of close cooperation in economic, cultural, political, and labor matters; but always to mutual advantage, always resolving matters in full exercise of sovereignty. I believe that we can have such a relationship with the United States.

**EIR:** What do you think of the proposal of Republican candidate George Bush to create a North American Common Market among the United States, Canada, and Mexico?

**Cárdenas:** I am not familiar with the proposal in detail, but I think that the proposal would quite simply put us at a serious disadvantage, and would, as [Bush] is most likely looking at it, be a way of forcing upon us a greater dependency on the United States economy. I do not believe that we should accept integration in a common market in a disadvantageous situation. Thus one would have to carefully review what forming a common market would imply and how one, in this case, Mexico, could remain autonomous.

**EIR:** Do you believe that with the possibility of a Democratic government coming to power in the United States, relations with Ibero-America would improve?

**Cárdenas:** I believe that what is most important is the attitude that the governments of Latin America adopt in their relations with the United States.

**EIR:** What do you think of the United States' Senate vote approving Mexico's efforts to fight drugs?

**Cárdenas:** I find it very serious that foreign governments intervene in matters that are our sole concern. But I find it still more serious that the Mexican government has agreed to sign an accord by means of which its activities are supervised by a foreign government.

**EIR:** To what agreements do you refer?

**Cárdenas:** The agreements on fighting drugs established that there will be economic aid, a variety of things given to the Mexican government, as long as the Mexico government complies. I think that the Mexican government should never have assented to the American government being the one to certify its good or bad conduct, or if it meets its obligations or not.

It is one more way of inviting foreign intervention in our affairs.

**EIR:** However, cooperation among nations to fight the drug trade is necessary.

**Cárdenas:** Cooperation, yes. But some countries must do some things, and others must do others. It isn't fair to take only one side to task for whatever is being done or not done. In fact, sovereignty is being surrendered, and it has been surrendered in many ways throughout this government of Mr. De la Madrid.

**EIR:** Ambassador Walters, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., recently stated that given the enormous power of the drug trade, the only means of fighting it is for the producer nations of Ibero-America to surrender some of their sovereignty so that the United States can send anti-drug squads to act in other countries. What is your opinion?

**Cárdenas:** That it is inadmissible from any standpoint to declare ourselves helpless, and to have to call upon foreigners to solve our problems.

**EIR:** Some of the United States' media describe you as a leftist. Where do you place yourself in the ideological realm?

**Cárdenas:** I don't go by labels. I stand by the principles and ideology of the Mexican Revolution. I identify myself with the principles of the Mexican Revolution. I am fully convinced that by carrying them out, we can resolve the country's problems and establish the basis for the political and economic evolution of Mexico.

**EIR:** What are the strongest memories and main lessons your father left you?

**Cárdenas:** The example that he offered throughout his life of consistency in every sense, of not saying one thing and doing another, and of permanently fighting with full conviction for the causes in which he believed.

**EIR:** Who is the 20th century figure you most admire?

**Cárdenas:** Lázaro Cárdenas, of course.