
Mexico

José López Portillo takes the gloves off

by Carlos Wesley

Former Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was told to shut his mouth and allow incumbent President Ernesto Zedillo to get on with the job of dealing with the massive crises now facing Mexico. The broadside against Salinas was leveled in an interview by his predecessor's predecessor José López Portillo (President, 1976-82).

"The job of an ex-President is to be prudent, serve Mexico by being silent, and not create more problems for the current President who has the responsibility and deserves the same opportunity to serve the country that he had," said López Portillo in the interview, published on March 3 by the daily *Excelsior*. López Portillo, whose administration was the last one to make any significant investment in Mexico's industrial plant and physical infrastructure, blamed the current crisis on forces outside Mexico, not on any mistake committed by President Zedillo. In 1982, after meeting with American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, López Portillo nationalized Mexico's banks and took other nationalist measures to deal with a financial crisis not unlike the current one. But other Ibero-American leaders failed to back him, and his two successors—particularly the Harvard-trained Salinas de Gortari, one of the fair-haired boys of the Bush administration—handed the economy over to foreign speculators and free-trade privateers.

"Speculative finance is vicious, and did us no good," said López Portillo, who described Salinas as "a good student of the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Treasury." Salinas has been insisting that the devaluation of the peso that started when the Mexican debt bomb exploded this past December, was not due to his policies, but to those of President Zedillo, who took office just days before the crisis hit.

The Salinas drug connection

Salinas went to the extreme of declaring a hunger strike in order to force Zedillo to take the blame for the economic crisis and to force the authorities to exonerate Salinas from criminal charges. The strike lasted but a few hours. On Feb. 28, his brother Raul Salinas de Gortari was arrested for ordering last September's assassination of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, secretary general of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI).

Also indicted on charges of covering up Raul Salinas's role in the assassination was Mario Ruiz Massieu, who was deputy attorney general in Carlos Salinas's administration and brother of the murdered PRI official. Mario Ruiz Massieu was arrested by U.S. Customs agents in Newark, New Jersey, as he attempted to board a plane without declaring that he was carrying thousands of dollars in currency. It has since been made known that Ruiz Massieu has millions of dollars deposited in accounts in the United States, which authorities suspect are pay-offs to him for allowing cocaine shipments from Colombia to enter Mexico.

President Zedillo warned that "no one is above the law" in the investigations of the three murders which have convulsed Mexico since May 1993: those of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, PRI presidential candidate Luís Donaldo Colosio, and Roman Catholic Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo. The investigations have hit directly at the British intelligence-backed political apparatus which has tried to dismember the Mexican nation-state through a two-pronged offensive: the imposition of "free market" lunacy, and the activation of the narco-terrorist Zapatista insurgency in Chiapas in January 1994.

Authorities are also moving on other cronies and relatives of the Salinas brothers. Jaime de la Mora Gómez, a Salinas brother-in-law who co-founded the leftist Torreón Group with Raul Salinas, and served as assistant secretary of agriculture in Carlos Salinas's administration, was recently arrested on charges of misappropriation of funds. Another Torreón Group co-founder, Hugo Andrés Araujo, had to resign as head of the National Peasant Confederation, an arm of the PRI.

Although former President Salinas has not yet been officially implicated in his brother's alleged crimes, the issue of the weekly *Siempre* which hit the newsstands on March 1 editorialized that "if Carlos Salinas wasn't the intellectual author of [Colosio's] murder, he did cover it up."

While the popularity of President Zedillo rose in the wake of the arrest of Salinas and his cohorts, the disastrous economic situation is promoting instability. The peso has dropped to about one-third of its value of last December, interest rates on inter-bank loans have zoomed to 75%, and the government announced another devastating austerity package on March 9, in exchange for a \$50 billion financial package from the United States and the International Monetary Fund.

President Zedillo said on March 7 that there is the danger of a global crisis because of the "systemic" problems of the international monetary system, and called on France to join Mexico to work on reforming the volatile world financial system.

The LaRouche factor

In Monterrey, Mexico's second-largest industrial center, businessmen declared themselves "fed up" with the policies



Then-President José López Portillo during a Sept. 3, 1982 rally in Mexico City's huge central square to celebrate his nationalization of the banks three days earlier.

imposed by the IMF, and staged a protest on March 8. Hours before, Lyndon LaRouche was interviewed on Monterrey's Radio Metrópolis. He said that the Mexican government must take "protectionist measures to protect the essential industries of Mexico from being disintegrated because of the temporary financial situation."

Documentation

In interviews with the daily El Sol de México on Feb. 20, and with the daily Excélsior on March 3, former Mexican President José López Portillo broke a 12-year silence he had kept since he left office at the end of 1982. He described his country's current economic crisis as the result of Mexico's fatal turn to neo-liberalism, and at a moment of extreme danger, the former President called for Mexicans to rally around their President and national institutions.

On the economy

By allowing itself "to go from its national revolution to a neo-liberal regime recommended by the international organizations and by the Great Power, and receiving good conduct awards for opening up the economy to free trade, to privatization and to turning over development to private initiative," Mexico "fatally collapsed in the face of the worst vices of capitalism: speculative and sterile capital. . . . If there is anything great about capitalism, it is its productive capacity. If it has anything hateful, it is its sterile and abusive speculative capacity."

Mexicans should "stop blaming ourselves [and] losing national pride . . . so that we can join with other countries in our condition in search of a better world order." (*El Sol de México*, Feb. 20)

While Mexico had opened its economy to globalization "prematurely"—former President Carlos Salinas "was a good student of the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Treasury"—Mexico's repeated economic crises over the past 20 years are not the result of any specific measures applied internally. Rather, it is a country in the process of development which "cannot complete it, because the international monetary order is not made for that, it serves capital, it disdains and forgets labor and the developing countries."

"Mexico is a developing country which is being incorporated belatedly into the modern world. . . . The parity with gold was broken, the tremendous inflation of the 1960s and early 1970s came on; an inflation which blew up the Bretton Woods system and spread over the world like a plague that caught up with us." With the oil crisis of the 1970s, "I saw a crack in the world of the capitalist wall, and I tried to get in there to find a system of financing for our development. . . . We achieved an interesting period of development of Mexico; we doubled our industrial plant, we created more than 4 million jobs—and I maintain, in Mexico, to govern is to create jobs."

"Speculative finance is vicious, and did us no good. Let us not tear ourselves apart! Let us not sacrifice generations and generations of Mexicans condemning them as the culprits. We cannot take the step forward, while the world is not organized for it. Therefore, our obligation is: We must have solidarity with those who are in our condition. We should understand this, and pose it as a conscious problem, as we

tried to do in a North-South meeting: Establish an order which serves all countries, and does not make the rich richer, because while we are using speculative capital, and getting wretched countries to compete one with another, which we have to accept to cover our deficits, it leaves whenever it pleases. Let us not blame ourselves. It is an order with which we have to live, and improve."

"Speculation is a mirror image; it is capital which does not create wealth, it just multiplies its image. It goes around the world ruining countries, as it just ruined ours." (*Excélsior*, March 3)

On deploying the Army to defend Chiapas

Chiapas is "a territory which contains one of the greatest energy potentials in the country, both in terms of petroleum and hydraulic power, which are basic for Mexico's development and which cannot be put at risk."

"Sovereignty is not only de jure, but de facto and this implies supporting it by force. . . . And when the public force is used, it is not out of sport, but of the necessity to give security to the law. If it is used, it must be to win. There is no other way."

The Zapatista movement in Mexico is an artificially created excrescence of the left which since 1968 has had "a passion for impotence."

"They gave their youthful passion to essentially circumstantial causes which were unwinnable. . . . It is a very interesting case of renouncing life and loving death."

In Chiapas, "enough time has passed without decisively concluding the dispute over sovereignty. It was high time to decide. A year of hesitation is more than enough. I always recommend putting out matches before they set off a bonfire." (*El Sol de México*, Feb. 20)

"There must be trust in the institutions. I believe this is the time in which all Mexicans should be supporting our institutions which, at this time, President Zedillo embodies. The country will find the continuity of its destiny, on the basis of its institutions and the leader who is at its head."

López Portillo refrained from giving advice to Zedillo, because "the job of an ex-President is to be prudent, serve Mexico by being silent, and not create more problems for the current President who has the responsibility and deserves the same opportunity to serve the country that he had." I was attacked "brutally, without mercy," when I left office, he added, but "I shut my mouth, endured the beating," because that is one of the implicit rules of the presidential system; "this is the way which an ex-President has of serving his country."

So what about the accusations against the last President's family? "The law is being enforced. . . . The law is the law, although it is harsh."

No matter that there exists a strong base of "irrationality" which supports the Chiapas uprising, "this is a problem of sovereignty. . . . When a group of Mexicans attempt, through war, to separate a part of its territory, they are vio-

lating its sovereignty, and the government has the obligation to maintain sovereignty in all national territory. . . . It is not only a right, but an obligation. This is the lamentable case in Chiapas."

"Jobs! Jobs! is the only way we have to be just and to guarantee freedom. To create jobs in Chiapas and in order to create them there we have to do it all over Mexico." (*Excélsior*, March 3)

Books Received

Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles, by Peter Grose, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1994, 641 pages, hardbound, \$30

How Pasteur Changed History: The Story of Louis Pasteur and the Pasteur Institute, by Moira Davison Reynolds, McGuinn and McGuise, Sarasota, Fla., 1994, 151 pages, paperbound, \$14.95

Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes, by David Robertson, W.W. Norton, New York, 1994, 639 pages, hardbound, \$29.95

Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956, by David Holloway, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1994, 464 pages, hardbound, \$30

The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life, by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, The Free Press, New York, 1994, 845 pages, hardbound, \$30

Race, Evolution, and Behavior, A Life History Perspective, by J. Philippe Rushton, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, N.J., 1994, 334 pages, hardbound

Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs, by Eric A. Hanushek, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1994, 195 pages, hardbound, \$34.95

Creating a New Civilization: The Politics of the Third Wave, by Alvin and Heidi Toffler, Progress and Freedom Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1994, 98 pages, paperbound

Foreign Affairs Agenda, 1995: Critical Issues in Foreign Policy, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1995, 256 pages, paperbound, \$9.95

Democracy and Violence in India and Sri Lanka, by Dennis Austin, Royal Institute for International Affairs/Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1995, 101 pages, paperbound, \$14.95