

Dateline Mexico by Joesfina Menendez

Kennedy and the Virgin of Guadeloupe

The Massachusetts senator got enough press during his Mexican visit to win some Chicano votes in the southwest, but below the Rio Grande, he is no amigo.

"I don't think Mexico has a very favorable view of Kennedy, since his is a dangerous approach. With a conservative you at least know what you're up against; but with a liberal, let alone a Kennedy liberal, nobody knows what he has up his sleeve."

This was the view offered to *EIR* this week by a Mexican government official charged with monitoring the electoral process in the United States. He added: "But we too are playing our cards in the complex game of U.S. politics."

Candidate Kennedy arrived in Mexico City on April 27 for a 20 hour visit, designed primarily to puff his presidential possibilities in the heavily-Hispanic primary states of Texas and California. The abundant media coverage which Kennedy received, both inside and outside Mexico, may well help him in that regard, but his brief stay in Mexico certainly didn't improve his standing in the eyes of the Mexican government.

The interesting question at this point is whether Mexican leaders will let Kennedy's "amigo" image stand, or if they won't instead decide to "play their U.S. cards" and communicate their distaste for the Massachusetts Senator to Mexican-American layers they influence

in the United States. If the latter is done, Kennedy's 20 hour Mexico stop-over might turn out to be an unexpected boomerang for his Presidential ambitions.

What went wrong?

First, he went straight from the airport to the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe—Mexico's holiest religious center—where he attended mass. Kennedy was undoubtedly trying to remind one and all of his Catholicism, but for official Mexico—which adheres to a strict constitutional separation of church and state—it was a sour opening note. Only three weeks earlier, a 5,000 person march of leftists, homosexuals, and radical priests espousing the "Theology of Liberation" marched to the same shrine to protest alleged repression of political prisoners in Mexico. Kennedy's stop there was widely read as support for the demonstrators, as well as possible affinity with their specific causes.

Second, in the course of his brief allocution before Mexico's Harvard Club, Senator Kennedy made three separate references in praise of the well-known Mexican intellectuals, Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz. Although scarcely noticed by most commentators, as *EIR* has

demonstrated, Fuentes and Paz are the country's two leading enemy agents organizing for the Iran-style destabilization of Mexico. They violently object to President López Portillo's strategy of rapidly industrializing the country with the use of the most modern technology.

The point was not lost on Kennedy's official hosts—always particularly sensitive to such diplomatic nuances. "It's very simple," one source told us; "if Kennedy is with Fuentes and Paz, he is against Mexico."

Third, Kennedy locked horns with Mexico on the migrant worker question. He chose to repeat in Mexico his long-standing position of calling for "an amnesty for the undocumented (Mexican) workers" who live in the United States. Within 24 hours of his departure from Mexican shores, his direct host and the head of the Mexican Senate, Joaquin Gamboa Pascoe retaliated: "the Mexican government will never support an amnesty for the undocumented workers, since this would be like accepting that they are delinquents." Mexico has always emphatically insisted that the illegal migrant phenomenon must be treated as an economic and social—not a criminal—phenomenon.

There were other significant—if more subtle—rebuffs of Kennedy in the course of his stay. Typical was the sarcastic coverage afforded him by the Mexico City daily, *El Dia*:

"As he left (the Shrine of Guadalupe), the few Catholics that were at church applauded the visitor ... Outside, a deserted street awaited him, free of all traffic, so that Edward Kennedy and his entourage could go to their hotel to rest."