

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Businessmen split on de la Madrid trip

The majority sees continental integration as their best hope; an anti-Semitic minority prefers to spread hate.

Businessmen in Mexico are sharply polarized along the strategic lines drawn by President de la Madrid's trip to several countries of Ibero-America, i.e., formation of an Ibero-American Common Market, renegotiation of foreign debt, and economic integration of the Ibero-American sub-continent.

The most representative of the industrial organizations in Mexico, the National Confederation of Industrial Chambers (Concamin), is cooperating with the president's efforts for continental integration. On the other hand, a faction of openly anti-Semitic businessmen which has long dominated the employers' union, Coparmex, is not only opposing de la Madrid's strategy, but trying to erode popular support for the Mexican government, counting on the Nazi-communist drive of the National Action Party (PAN).

Recently, steel producers in Mexico have complained of the lack of understanding of the Mexican economic and political situation from the United States. Many other sectors of the Mexican economy, which had sought U.S. markets to cope with the depression, have seen their hopes vanish.

A major industrialist told me recently, "It is evident that there is blindness, or myopia, from the United States toward us. How is it possible that they don't realize the harm they are imposing on us?"

Many have taken to looking south for business. In late February, the vice-president of Concamin, Monterrey

businessman Eugenio Clariond, gave a series of public speeches reporting on his previous tours to Ibero-America and on talks with colleagues in the Asociación de Industriales Latinoamericanos, the body through which ALADI (Latin American Association for Integration), an intergovernmental body, has been promoting private sector participation in building an Ibero-American Common Market.

"Brazilians would rather buy newsprint in Sweden, but they can get it from Chile without using dollars. Chileans perhaps prefer Japanese steel, but Argentina is offering it to them without use of their monetary reserves. Argentinians prefer German polyvinyl chloride, but CYDSA in Mexico can offer it to them at competitive quality and price. Mexico, in turn, would buy soybeans from Brazil instead of from the United States." These are the options left to Ibero-American business, as explained by Clariond at a February symposium on productivity organized by the Technological Institute of Higher Studies of Monterrey.

Clariond repeated these views to an audience of members of the Social Union of Entrepreneurs, and added: "After so many years, finally a common denominator exists in Latin America: No country has enough dollars. . . . We can't pay our debts and pay for imports. . . . Paradoxically, as a result of an unhappy fact, our bankruptcy, we can find now the basis for our own regional integration, and as a consequence, stronger develop-

ment and a better standard of living for our population. . . . This is the major fact that gives me confidence in the advance of Latin American integration. . . ."

More recently, Clariond made an advance trip to Argentina, one day before President de la Madrid arrived, to announce that through the mechanisms of compensating payments (barter), trade between Mexico and Argentina will rise from \$60 million in 1983 to \$600 million this year. Already, before de la Madrid left for Colombia, the former president of the National Association of Importers and Exporters from the Mexican Republic, Juan José Flores, announced that an accord had been signed with Brazil for \$40 million in trade this year, to rise to \$100 million soon.

Although for the majority of the business community the Ibero-American Common Market is "an idea whose time has come," one faction does not agree. The last national convention of Coparmex gave a green light to destabilizing the Mexican government, using the Nazi-communist party PAN as its "electoral arm." José Luis Coindreau was the star speaker then, and is now repeating his speech everywhere. Their media spokesman, anti-Semitic journalist José Antonio Pérez Stuart, is spreading the line that Concamin president Jacobo Zeidenweber, a respected Jewish textile industrialist and physician, is "unable to give leadership" to the Mexican business community. Instead, says Pérez, Coindreau is visiting all members of Concamin to supply such leadership.

This faction's hatred for Zeidenweber comes from their "psychological need" to fight Jews. Pérez Stuart, his boss José Luis Coindreau and the PAN's Manuel Clouthier have hoisted the same flag against *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche, whom they call "that rich Jew from Philadelphia."