

Exclusive interview

France's Calvet: 'Maximum for Mexico's industrialization'

Jacques Calvet Olmers, President of Banque National de Paris, the largest in France, and long-term collaborator of President Valery Giscard d'Estaing met with Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo and other Mexican government, banking and industrial leaders during his March 16-21 visit to Mexico.

In an exclusive interview with the Executive Intelligence Review's Mexican correspondent, Josefina Menendez, Calvet stressed that Mexico has all the preconditions for becoming what he called a "pole of industrial development" in the Latin American area.

Calvet's visit is undoubtedly one of many top-level contacts leading up to the visit of the Mexican President Lopez Portillo to France in May. It also shows the importance France places on Mexico. Calvet served as managing director for Giscard when the later was Finance Minister. Although the Banque National de Paris is state-owned, Calvet stressed that his visit—and his comments—were made as a private banker, and not as a diplomatic representative of the French government.

As may be foreseen in Calvet's enthusiastic wish that Mexico have "the maximum success in its industrial development," his visit will probably be translated into a major increase in Mexican-French economic cooperation.

In his interview with EIR, the president of the world's fourth largest bank spoke of Giscard's efforts to stabilize the world monetary system and explained the possibility of gold as a solution.

Later at an open press conference Calvet Olmers underlined the fact that the current high interest rates restrain economic development, even in the advanced sector since credit destined to productive investment costs more.

Q: Mr. Calvet, when you accompanied President Giscard through the Middle East, and before that to Africa, he spoke of a "trialogue" between Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Would this be extended to include Latin America?

A: Well, you would have to ask that of Giscard himself. ... Our President seeks to find the basis for international organization in different regions, in different countries. What our president is doing is a great effort, something

quite necessary at this moment when the world is full of danger, when the forces of violence rear their ugly heads all around us.

It is important to remember that President Giscard was the one who spoke of a "trialogue" before anyone else; Giscard initiated the European Monetary System. And on this basis I can tell you that I know the importance that Latin America has for President Giscard. He will do everything possible to foster world stability, and for that it is impossible to brush aside a region as important as Latin America.

Q: Mr. Calvet, President Giscard's trip to the Middle East has again placed on the table the launching of Phase II of the European Monetary System, that is financing of technology transfer. (This possibility is seen as a solution to the international crisis in which we are living.) What proposals on this do you bring for the Mexican government.

A: ... Your question is very important, but I would prefer to wait for what our President says. What I can tell you is that his trip to the Middle East was carried out in the context which I laid out in answer to the last question: as part of the efforts of President Giscard to bring stability to the entire world.

Q: Do you think that Mexico can be an adequate partner in dialogue for Europe and in particular France?

A: ... We certainly take into account the extreme importance Mexico's future has for the world. From what I have been able to see, and what I have realized during my stay here and my talks with various Mexican officials, Mexico must become a particularly important pole of economic development for Latin America as a whole. I think that for Europe and especially for France, Mexico should be an especially prominent economic partner in the coming years. An important partner not only because of its oil, but because of its vibrant industrial development, made possible by the efforts of the men and women of Mexico and the effectiveness of the organization and methods of the Mexican government and Mexican organizers.

Q: Mr. Calvet, can you explain to us whether the remonetization of gold at this moment could contribute to the stability of the world economy?

A: Of course, this could give greater stability to the international monetary system. Gold has not lost its real value because gold constitutes part of monetary reserves, but I don't believe that gold as a metal is the only possibility for stabilizing the monetary system. ... The problem is knowing whether the balance of forces of the various governments and the large banks are willing to collaborate to find a solution to this problem. *That* is the real problem.