

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

### Sir Keith strikes out

*Britain has largely been excluded from Mexico's aggressive foreign economic strategy and Sir Keith Joseph only managed to remind Mexicans why.*

Even blasé Mexican journalists were left speechless last week during the Mexican visit of British industry minister Sir Keith Joseph—not because of his lordly pretensions—but because of what he said. Mexican officials were so shocked that one later commented, “Did that guy know what country he was speaking in?”

Sir Keith visited Mexico June 3-6 to express “England’s renewed interest in Mexico” and because he felt that England is “falling behind Europe” in economic cooperation with Mexico. It was hardly a successful exercise in “catch-up.”

Speaking out against Mexico’s industrialization plans, His Lordship declared that “by acquiring expensive and sophisticated technology which carries with it excessive indebtedness, Mexico is taking the wrong road.” The next day Mexican businessmen angrily refuted Sir Keith’s pompous advice. “Mexico’s development has superseded the stage of primary technology,” Juan José Moreno Sada, vice president of the National Chamber of Processing Industries (Canacindra) told the press. Questioned on Sir Joseph’s statements, Moreno Sada said, “the time is past when they used to sell us obsolete technology.” On the danger of indebting the country, Moreno Sada recommended that the British minister not worry: “We have to accept progress with all its advantages and risks . . .”

The minister met with President López Portillo, the commerce and foreign relations ministers, and the director of SIDERMEX, the state steel company. He also had a private dinner with the Mexican business sector where he gave them a lesson on how the English private sector, after World War II, was so confident that the state could solve all problems, that Britain suffered serious defeats in its struggle to win the peacetime economic war. He detailed how the businessmen, on becoming conscious of their role, ended up renouncing protectionism. The implied criticism of Mexico’s recent decision to stay out of GATT was not lost on his listeners, nor was it appreciated by the many businessmen who supported the decision.

As might be expected, Sir Keith left without getting even promises from the Mexican government. He said that he was not expecting anything concrete, but “only to create proper conditions” for British investments in ports, and especially in the second state of the Las Truchas steel complex (whose first part was partially built with British financing). Mexican political analysts suggested that although Sir Keith is “an extremely clever politician” and “very important in English politics,” agreements would not be signed until British foreign secretary Lord Carrington visits in August.

Nevertheless, a Mexican offi-

cial told the *EIR* that if Britain’s official policy toward Mexico is—as it indeed seems to be—the one expressed by its industry minister, it was a foregone conclusion that Lord Carrington’s visit will be a failure. With this assertion, the official proved what was already “general opinion” in Mexico: the Mexican government places its relations with Britain near the bottom of its priorities. This was shown on López Portillo’s recent trip to Europe, in which he studiously avoided the British Isles.

And, although Leopold Rothschild, director of N.M. Rothschild & Sons, Ltd., himself visited us last January to express the great interest of Britain’s biggest businessmen in investing to “help solve the bottlenecks” of the Mexican economy, England’s “new offensive” launched by Sir Keith has yet to gain much ground.

As one source put it, unless Lord Carrington were to pull out some sort of “blackmail,” “it’s hard to see how we could agree on important business deals.” Mexico’s ambassador in London, Juan José de Olloqui, disagrees with the pessimists. Before Joseph’s trip, he spoke repeatedly of “the great opportunity” Britain offered Mexico. But it’s worth recalling that Mr. de Olloqui was recently demoted from the Undersecretary of Foreign Relations post and parked at the Court of St. James to soften the blow.

What it all comes down to is that Mexico is a nation fully committed to the republican form of capitalist industrial development. What “great opportunity” could be offered by Britain? It is a country still feudalistic on all important issues.