

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

The Virgin of Guadalupe reappears

"The element of the supernatural always comes at the key moment," explains an anthropologist-controller.

Just before Easter, a group of Mexican peasants in the Northwest state of Sonora witnessed a miracle. The venerated image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to them etched in the glass of a windowpane in the home of a poor laborer in the city of Ciudad Obregón.

Such apparitions come from time to time, and are dismissed. An ostensible sighting of the Virgin on a wall in the Mexico City district of Coyoacán April 25 was immediately debunked by Archbishop Corripio Ahumada as the outline of an image on a previous coat of paint.

But in Sonora, the bishop of the state, Luis Quintero Arce, immediately issued a call giving the Ciudad Obregón vision legitimacy. "If the people see the Virgin, it is because they are looking for her," he declared. "Mexico has always sought the Virgin of Guadalupe in historical moments in which it finds itself unprotected, when its human rights are violated. This is the way in which the marginalized people make their voice heard, asking for the solution to their pressing needs, solutions which the current regime is not able to offer them."

It was a blatant call to use the image of the Virgin as a rallying point against the ruling PRI party and the government, and it came from a bishop who is close to both the most reactionary land-owning families in the state and the ultra-hippie environmentalist commune

called "Los Horcones."

The news of the vision and the bishop's blessing spread throughout Sonora and is now making its way around the nation, just as the original sighting of a figure of a woman on the shawl of Indian peasant Juan Diego in the 1530s eventually became the most potent cult symbol in Mexico.

The impact of the new "sighting" should make clear to readers of this column why the warnings that Mexico could be turned into another Iran must be heeded.

Take the case of Brad Fisher, editorial director for a Philadelphia anthropology collective called the Institute for the Study of Human Issues (ISHI). "The element of the supernatural always comes at the key moment, always in the nick of time. Yes, we took notice of the Virgin's appearance" in Sonora, he said in an interview.

ISHI was established over a decade ago, bringing together elements of the British psychological warfare unit known as the London Tavistock Institute; the macabre cultist Dame Margaret Mead; and, as partner in some of its major publishing on Mexico, the Rockefeller-chaired Center for Inter-American Relations, part of the Council on Foreign Relations complex.

Fisher explained that Mexico will now "shift to the left," toward a "sophisticated multi-party structure." The ruling PRI party "has

become a fossil" and must be pushed out of the way.

"The supernatural is a *deus ex machina*, a theatrical device coming just at the perfect time to set the stage for the next scene; it comes historically to help the transition."

Fisher modestly indicated he had "some familiarity with these things," citing the work he and his associates had done in 1969, when visions in Egypt called the "apparitions of Zeitoun" caused a "furor."

Sonora has been selected for the cult "apparition" because it is a pole of Mexican development, with the nation's most productive agriculture, and the site of Mexico's next major nuclear reactor center. Its governor, Samuel Ocaña, is one of the leaders and future hopes of the country's pro-growth forces.

Note that the activation of renegade "Theology of Liberation" currents in the Church does not depend on the Virgin. In the poor southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, eight "Liberationist" bishops issued a proclamation on April 23 which called for "solidarity with the poor" against the "incredible lack of sincerity, demagoguery, and total lack of democratic representativeness" of the existing government—precisely the same language as Sonora's Bishop Quintero Arce.

U.S. academic Clark Reynolds, completing the second year of intensive Rockefeller Foundation-funded "Mexico project," decided it was time to inform a U.S.-Mexico seminar April 25, in Coronado, that "there will be a notable increase in the influence of the Catholic Church over the next presidential term, in response to popular demands for greater public morality."