

ICI director: 'We support joint debt discussions'

The Spanish Council of Ministers issued an official statement April 28 supporting the efforts of the Contadora Group—Mexico, Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela—to find a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the Central American crisis. The statement followed the visit of Spain's Foreign Minister, Fernando Moran, to Mexico and Colombia, in preparation for a late May presidential visit by Felipe González. Felipe González, widely known and respected in Ibero-America, has expressed his willingness to aid in negotiations if so requested by Ibero-American leaders. Below are excerpts from an interview with Mr. Luis Yañez, director of the Ibero-American Cooperation Institute (ICI) of Spain. The ICI, under the González government, has assumed a more active role in promoting and strengthening Spanish-Latin American cultural, economic, and social relations and interchange. It is reported that the ICI may be upgraded to the level of a government ministry in the future. The interview was conducted by EIR correspondents Anno and Elisabeth Hellenbroich and Katherine Kanter April 20 in Madrid.

EIR: It seems the most important strategic problem for Ibero-America is debt. Over the last year, several Ibero-American presidents, like President Osvaldo Hurtado of Ecuador, Siles Suazo of Bolivia, or Carlos Alzamora, the head of the Latin American Economic System (SELA), have called for the formation of a debtors cartel or for joint action. How do you see such proposals?

Yañez: We, as a government, as Spain, have supported the initiatives of President Hurtado of Ecuador as well as those of President Siles Suazo to achieve strategically joint discussion of the Ibero-American foreign debt, through regional integration organizations, some of them unfortunately in crisis because of growing protectionism by many countries. But we support the idea of the need for a common strategy of the Ibero-American countries, [when] facing third countries and blocs, to deal with the extremely grave situation of the foreign debt. That is our position on this question. Spain has collaborated in refinancing of the foreign debt of various countries, with the result at least of successful negotiations. This is the case of Cuba, Mexico, and various other Ibero-American countries that are involved in renegotiation of their foreign debt. That is our position on this question. Spain has collaborated—of the foreign debt these countries have with the rest of the world.

EIR: Antonio Blanca, the special representative of French Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, stated several weeks ago in Caracas that the IMF is responsible for genocide in Ibero-America. Could you give us your opinions on what he said?

Yañez: I don't know about these statements. But there is no doubt that the demands made by the IMF on developing countries, concretely on the Ibero-American countries, are excessively draconian; they see only the monetarist aspect of the economic situation, without considering the social consequences and the level of development of those countries. I think that the international financing and credit institutions must . . . consider other circumstances and conditions that are not exclusively the interests of the centers [of economic power]. . . .

EIR: In the case of Central America, some of President Reagan's advisers are trying to trap him in what they call a "second Vietnam," without making the mistakes made in Vietnam. How do you think Spain could help President Reagan get out of a situation that could be very tragic and which could lead to a strategic catastrophe?

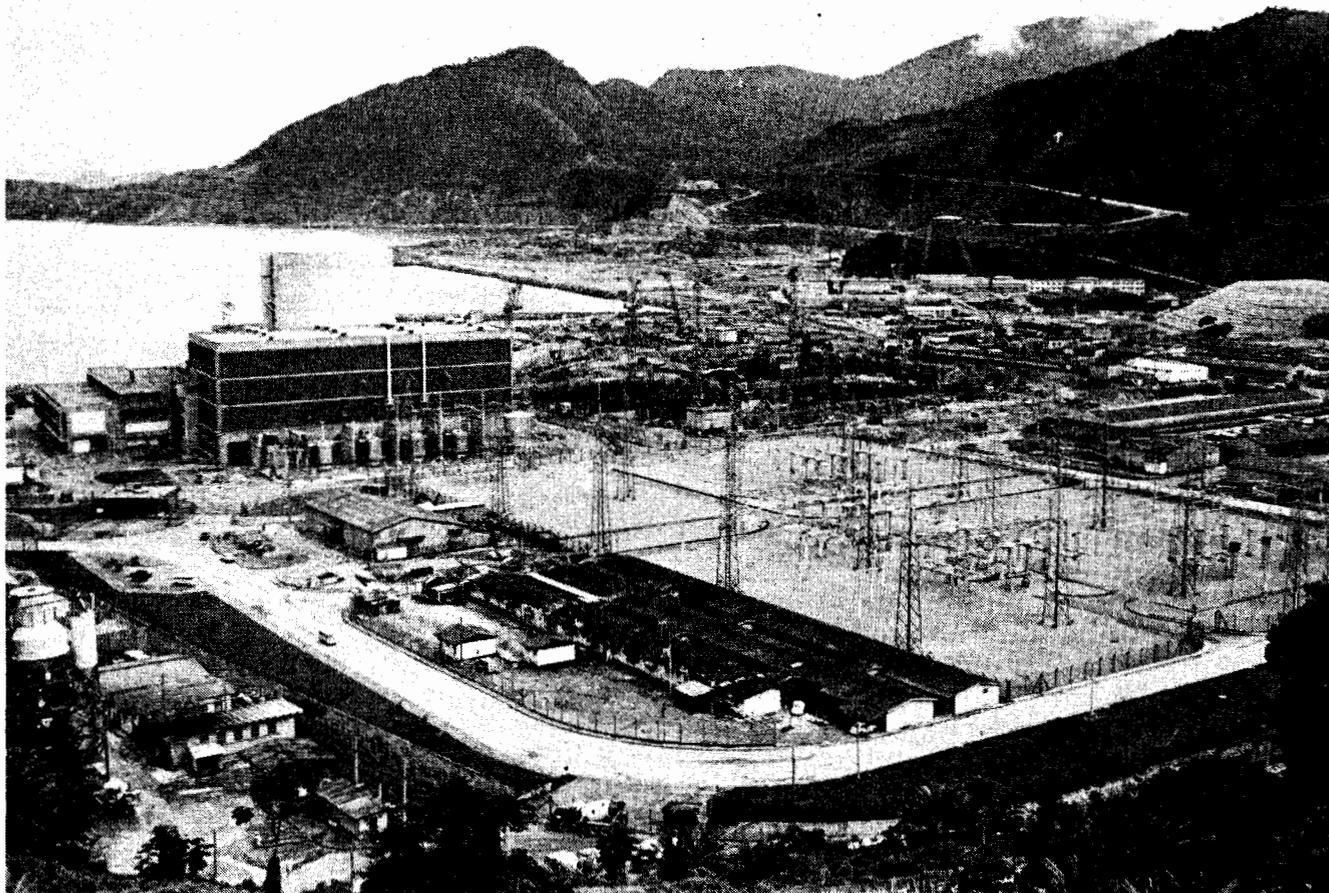
Yañez: We have always had the impression that the U.S. government, the Reagan government, has a tremendous flow of information on the Central American situation; it has a lot of facts, but doesn't understand the situation. Paradoxically, it doesn't know how to interpret those facts. [The Reagan administration] doesn't draw the conclusions that seem to us appropriate concerning the situation. It seems to me that there is an excessive tendency in Washington to see exclusively East-West relations, relations between the blocs, in the Central American situation. While we do not ignore the interests that the Cuban-Soviet axis may have in the zone, this the basic element of the situation. The basic elements are socio-economic, a situation of underdevelopment, of dependence, of extremely lacerating historic injustices that have not been solved in the slightest degree. Thus, as long as the policy of President Reagan continues to be the way of force, the solution of conflicts by exclusively military means, the problem can never be resolved. It can be prolonged indefinitely, because a military victory is not possible for either the guerrilla forces or the forces opposing that oligarchy. Here is where I believe that Spain, as well as other countries in or outside the area, can contribute: by communicating that message to the U.S. administration, and, concretely, Spanish President Felipe González has already had some talks with high-ranking U.S. officials to this very effect. In the near future, in June, [Felipe González] is going to go to the U.S. and will meet with President Reagan. I hope that by then the Central American situation is not already absolutely irreversible, which is the real danger of the situation. We are the first to be concerned that the countries of Central America—like Nicaragua or El Salvador or others—are not turned into sat-

ellites of the Soviet Union. But we think that some of the black and white, "pure and tough" attitudes, and lack of comprehension of the problems on the part of Washington are pushing those countries toward such undesirable positions.

EIR: Mr. Lyndon H. LaRouche, head of a faction of the Democratic Party, the National Democratic Policy Committee, recently made a proposal for Central American peace that includes the following points: close the borders totally, freeze arms sales, create an international commission under the leadership of Belisario Betancur, cut back \$4 billion aid to Israel, and promote a policy of big industrialization projects for Central America, including construction of a second Panama Canal. Would you comment on these points?

Yañez: Well, I believe that these are constructive suggestions. The comment that could be made about what makes the proposal as a whole constructive—rather than to comment on the specific points, which, in any case should be left to the governments of the region, or to those governments

seeking to bring peace to the area—is that it addresses the roots of the problem. These are problems that are historic in nature, about social inequalities, about the absence of reforms during the last 50 years, about conditions that are almost prehistoric in the countries of the region. I believe the spirit of these proposals is being made concrete by the Contadora group, by the four countries that are seeking a negotiated solution, and which, of course with the support of other European countries such as Spain, we believe can be a way to solve the problem. But, in fact, these initiatives must overcome the rigidity and intransigence not only of the United States or Reagan, let us be fair, but also that of the government of Nicaragua, which does not accept the withdrawal of the military advisers, of the military assistance it receives from Cuba and the Soviets. But I hope and believe, that if there were, if ways could be developed, to guarantee to the parties that certain accords would not be violated, I believe that there is still time to reach a peaceful and negotiated solution in the region.



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Dennis Small/NSIPS