

# Searching for the 'master race' in Mexico

By Brian Levinson

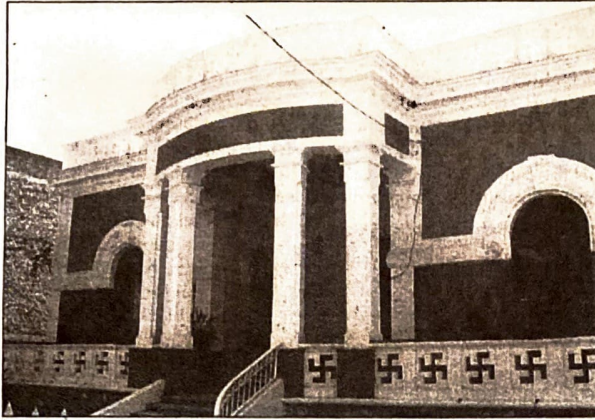


Photo by B Levinson

A house dating back to the 1930s on Calle Francia is decorated with forward and reverse swastikas. The owner and architect, Alfonso Bustos Michel, was said to have contact with Adolf Hitler.

Nazism is making headlines of late. Last week, an official memorial event in Germany for the 1945 Dresden bombings was overshadowed by a 2,000-person strong neo-Nazi march. Then there was Great Britain's Prince Henry — more stupid than fascist — wearing a Nazi uniform to a costume party in January.

There are stains of Nazism in Guadalajara as well, and one need only head to a tianguis or open-air market to find them. Whether it's the Tianguis Cultural on Saturdays, or the daily bazaars in Plaza Tapatia, there are several vendors who sell t-shirts and key chains decorated with swastikas, in some cases along with Nazi literature.

Young people wearing swastikas on their clothing have been spotted at family restaurants and nightclubs. There are cars with Nazi bumper stickers. The most eye-catching Nazi display is found in Colonia Moderna where three separate houses, their balconies and facades decorated with swastikas, have remained preserved and inhabited since the 1930s.

Rogelio Marcial, an academic director at the Colegio Jalisco, studies adolescent culture in Guadalajara and Mexico. He said that for most swastika-wearing youth, the emblem represents nothing more than violence and rebelliousness.

This helps explain why, despite the ideological contradictions, Nazi paraphernalia is often sold right next to posters of Che Guevara and other leftist heroes.

Skinheads live in the city, explained Marcial, but many are unfairly tagged as neo-Nazis. Years ago, a small group of skinheads broke off to promote an "ultra-right" agenda, one linked to the National Front movement in Europe, and they ended up giving all shaved-head youth a bad name.

Marcial said that worldwide groups like the now defunct Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP), which has since been replaced by Red Anarchist Skinheads (RAS), reflect the more tolerant skinhead mainstream.

But there are some true believers in Guadalajara. At the Saturday Tianguis Cultural in Parque Agua Azul, known for a diversity of cliques and ideologies, Marcial once discovered "a group of six or seven young men, who defined themselves as skinheads in favor of racial discrimination."

They showed up in 2002 and 2003 at the Guadalajara Gay Rights Parade, saluting Hitler and hurling insults at the marchers.

passed by. Gays, in fact, are among the few traditional enemies that neo-Nazis can target in Guadalajara, a city with almost no blacks and only about 2,000 Jews.

Marcial also reported that during a live music performance at the Tianguis Cultural, members of a heavy metal band decided to inform the audience of their "support for ideological fascism and rejection of diversity." The all-female group, called Infective, was immediately booed off the stage. Nobody said it was easy promoting Nazi-like fascism in Mexico. The notion of "racial purity" does not play well in a country where almost everybody is mixed race or mestizo, and ten percent of the population is identified as indigenous, with their own regional cultures and languages.

Nazi influence has always been difficult to measure in Mexico. From 1934 to 1940, the country was led by Lazaro Cardenas, who leaned more leftist than fascist, though he did permit the sale of petroleum to the Nazi war machine. By 1942, the traditionally isolationist Mexican government was officially on the side of the Allies and even sent troops to the Philippines in 1945.

Oddly enough, it was the Mexican Communists who threw their support behind Nazi Germany as a result of the short-lived 1939 Non-Aggression Pact signed by Hitler and Stalin.

During this period, there were also radical strains of conservatism. A wealthy, right-wing army general, with backing from Catholic fundamentalists, might have won Mexico's 1940 presidential election were it not for ruling-party electoral fraud.

The Sinarquista movement, conservative Catholic and popular among peasants, was also strong. According to Saint Louis Univer-

sity anthropology professor Lorenzo Covarrubias, the Sinarquistas "are often seen as the closest thing to a fascist response in the Mexican dimension in the 1930s and the 1940s."

He explained, "I don't believe that there ever existed any 'official' link between them and the Nazis in Germany, but they did have an appreciation for Franco's Spain and the Falange at the time." The Sinarquistas still exist and the symbols they use in their publications "look quite fascist," said Covarrubias, "even though they don't approve of such comparisons."

The members of the National Socialist Party of Mexico, how-

ever, are more than willing to embrace Nazi comparisons. The articles posted on their official Internet web site make for interesting reading. "We the National Socialists want to transform our country into a strong and predominantly white nation," wrote one member who signed his name Santos Chapa.

"Our white families," he continued, "deserve a world where they are respected for the color of their skin, not like here in Mexico, where to be white is a sign of displeasure and hate on the part of communist Indians and loathsome Jews."

The Mexican Nazis on the web site have several reasons to hate Jews, and not just because "they control the markets, banks and governments" of the world. An urgent server message laments that "Judeo-Marxists" recently hacked into the web site. "Using a simple Java script code, the Semitic organization redirected a link to a Jewish page."

It remains unclear the socioeconomic level of these faceless cyber-fascists. There is a sense that lack of education spawns reactionary movements, and — just like the Sinarquista peasants — Nazi sympathizers in modern Mexico are poor and working class.

But Marcial at the Colegio de Jalisco said that the neo-Nazis he has met, in addition to the people that just wear swastikas as a symbol of violence, often come from

the middle to upper classes of Guadalajara.

Some elite families in the city, though not Nazi, practice a radical conservatism that borders on fascism. The private Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara, for example, is an institution rumored to be run by Opus Dei Catholics, where Marxists texts are forbidden, and students and teachers considered subversive — leftist or gay — are chased away.

At least one Tapatia was unafraid to display his Nazi ties. In the 1930s, businessman and architect Alfonso Bustos Michel built the three swastika-laden houses in Colonia Moderna to celebrate his favorite Axis power. The descendants of Bustos were hesitant to speak with the REPORTER, but did confirm that he "had contacts with Hitler."

In a city where 80 percent of old houses have been destroyed by wanton development, the Bustos structures are ironic symbols of historical conservation, for which they have even won awards from Guadalajara City Hall.

Asked her opinion of the house on Calle Francia, the wife of Bustos' great-grandson said the unique architecture represents a historical moment in time. She added that the current Bustos family rejects Nazism. All the same, she said she cannot wait to move into the house, which is currently occupied by her elderly mother-in-law. □



**AL-CAR**  
motors



FUEL INJECTOR  
REPAIR SERVICE

Service  
Quality  
Professionalism  
Guarantee



EXPERTOS

**TOP AUTOMOBILE MECHANICS**

**Parts and all services for your imported or Mexican automobile**

  
PARTS

  
LUBRICATION

  
SUSPENSION  
AND SHOCK  
ABSORBERS

  
BATTERIES

  
AUTOMATIC  
TRANSMISSIONS

  
CLUTCH

  
DIGITAL  
TUNE UPS

  
BRAKES

**TUNE UP SPECIAL**

- Motor diagnostics
- Computer check up of 35 areas\*\*
- Imported spark plugs
- Air filter
- External gas filter\*\*
- Fuel injector cleaning/maintenance
- Valve and PCV filter change
- Air chamber cleaning
- General maintenance and inspection
- Minor adjustments
- Anti-smog inspection
- Verification hologram

**UP TO 30% SAVINGS ON FUEL**  
This is how HIGH POWER PLUS works:

Poor Oxygenation  
Inefficient Combustion



Good Oxygenation  
Rich & Clean Combustion



**ALSO SENSATIONAL POTENCY**

**LUBRICATION SPECIAL**

- Engine wash
- Chassis wash
- Body wash and inside vacuum
- Tire shine
- Suspension lubrication\*\*
- 20w50 multi-grade oil change (up to 4 liters)

**TO CELEBRATE OUR 31st ANNIVERSARY**

**15% DISCOUNT**  
on labor presenting this ad  
(except for promotions)

\*\*prices are plus IVA tax, subject to change without notice, payment in cash, excludes imported vehicles, vans, RVs, cargo vehicles, point adjustment, special plugs and filters. \*\*Restrictions apply. Prices for Mexican cars only.

**CARS \$399**

COLOMOS No. 2296. Col. Provalencia  
(Across from Club Guadalajara)  
Call us for directions  
www.alcar.com.mx  
Tels: 3342-0495 / 3342-0496