

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FATHER OF MEXICO'S GRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY CONDUCTED AND TRANSLATED BY JOHN J. PINT

Who's This Rius?

He's Eduardo del Rio, he lives in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and he has over 60 books to his credit, all of them graphic and most of them featuring the unique style which sets him apart from all other comic book writers in Mexico and perhaps the world.

Rius's typical work could be called the "Graphic Social Documentary." A down-to-earth, unpretentious narrative shares the page with his cartoon characters (Mexican Indians, bureaucrats, cops, drunks, old ladies in black shawls) whose speech balloons may question, confirm, or pooh-pooh the narrative, usually in lively, ungrammatical, and often funny street slang. Along with copious drawings, there are pasted-in old photos and what look like clippings from the first Sears catalogue, all mouthing comments on the subject in question.

This subject usually falls under politics, religion, nutrition, or health, although he has books on other subjects, including cartoonists of the world.

The majority of his books deal with socio-political themes important to Mexico and/or mankind. Here are a few titles, translated; those marked with an asterisk are available in English:

- Marx for Beginners**
- Cuba for Beginners**
- Nicaragua for Beginners**
- Mao for Beginners**
- Hitler for Masochists*
- The Trukulent History of Kapitalism*
- The Feminine Revolution*
- Mexico's Foreign Debt*
- The Devil's Name is Trotsky*
- Che Guevara*
- Uncle Sam's True History*
- The Never-Ending Conquest of Mexico*
- Palestine: From the Wandering Jew to the Wrongdoing Jew*

Rius's books on religion offer an investigative, historical perspective (*The Myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe**, *The Mormons*, *The Masons*) or a philosophical attack (*Manual of the Perfect Atheist**).

The title of his most famous book on health, *La Panza es Primero*, is a parody of the phrase which appears on half the statues in Mexico: "*La Patria es Primero*" (The Fatherland Comes First), only Rius has substituted belly for fatherland. This book and others — like *Don't Consult Your Doctor!* — discuss everything from vegetarianism, herbs, dentists, and white bread to how to grow sprouts. The proliferation of health food stores everywhere in Mexico, even in tiny villages (called *pueblitos*), is almost exclusively due to Rius' comics.

Several of Rius' books are anthologies of his and others' cartoons: *Kama Nostra* (erotic), *Demons*, *The Other Rius*, *The Holy Book of Cartoons* (his choice of the world's best 100 non-political cartoonists). Many of the above-mentioned books contain material that first appeared in the now-defunct weekly comic books *Los Supermachos* and *Los Agachados* (The Downtrodden).

A typical story begins with a fat, slovenly fellow nam-



ed Nopalzin lying drunk in the street. A friend pours a bucket of water over him, stands him up, and tries to convince him he should get a job:

"Save a little every week and in no time at all you'll have a nice nest egg and won't have to work anymore."

"But I ain't workin' now!"

"So you won't even consider getting a job?"

"Work... so you kin stop workin'?"

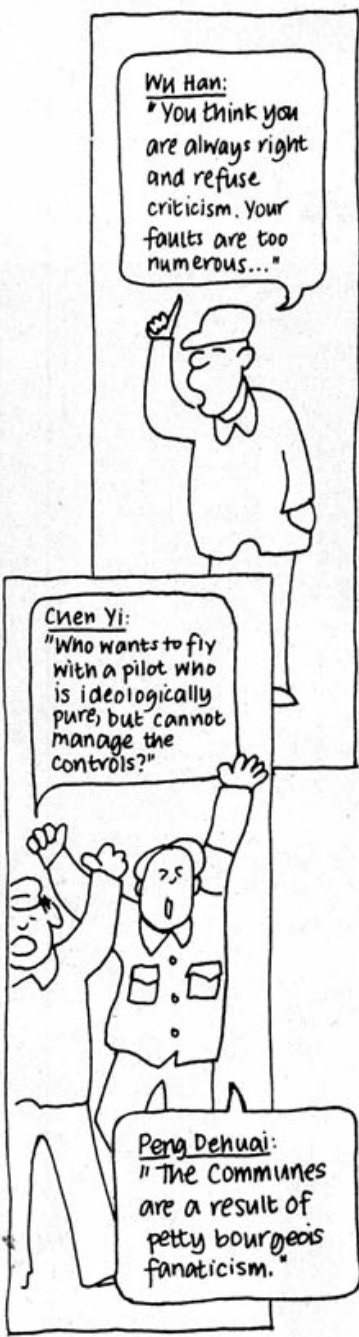
Nopalzin soon finds himself arrested (for peeing on a government telegraph pole) and tossed into the town jail which happens to be crowded with a group of his friends in the middle of a conversation, locked up for being subversive. The local school teacher is speaking and his words now become the narrative portion of the rest of the book, a detailed study of the American Indian, an often surprising history of his betrayals by the white man, ending with the then-current occupation of Wounded Knee by the Sioux. The final page of these comics often contain a bibliography on the subject in both Spanish and English.

In today's Mexico, it is not difficult to find people who will tell you that their perspective on nutrition, Nicaragua, or Jesus Christ was radically changed after reading a comic by Rius. That one man could have had so much influence on both the awareness and the health of people in his country is remarkable. That he did this through comics is amazing. And that he could have entertained people and made them smile while educating them is something very few teachers anywhere in the world, at any time in history, have managed to accomplish.

Eduardo del Rio was born in Zamora, Michoacan, Mexico on June 20, 1934. By his own description, he is short on hair, has dreamy blue eyes, has a horrible Judeo-



TOP: Photo of Rius in front of a still-life with vodka.
ABOVE: Self-portrait of Rius, the atheist, with a halo.



Christian nose, and two eyebrows. His height is 1.69 meters, Sanforized.

[Editor's note: Two of Rius' works are reviewed by Rich Kreiner in this issue of The Comics Journal]

PINT: What experiences or studies steered you toward the particular kind of comic book you've been producing for such a long time?

RIUS: I spent some years in a Catholic seminary with the Salesian Fathers, who specialize in teaching, and I think something of that wish to be a teacher has stayed with me to this day.

Anyhow, when I left the seminary, I had to find work. I ended up doing all kinds of jobs: washing glasses in a bar, selling soap from door to door, working as a bottler, as an office boy — actually, I was an office boy in the company that distributes Walt Disney comics in Mexico, which was my first contact with the medium. After that, I got more of a permanent job with a well-known funeral agency and this place was really my "university" because I have no valid diplomas of any study beyond fifth grade. You see, studies in a seminary don't count in this country.

Now, there were some Spanish Republicans working in a bookshop next to the funeral parlor and they were the ones that got me interested in reading, let's say "leftist" literature: Karl Marx, novelists of the '30s like Steinbeck and Dos Passos, people who were writing social novels. So, between this kind of influence and that of certain people in the Mexican press, I got the idea of becoming a cartoonist.

PINT: Did the press come to you or did you go to the press?

RIUS: Well, I had always liked drawing and did a lot of it in the seminary, though I've never had any formal training. So, one day while I was working at the funeral parlor answering the phone, I was doodling just to kill time. Then, I walked the editor of a humor magazine called *Ja Ja* [Ha Ha], and he asked me why I wasn't drawing what we call *humor blanco* [white humor], the kind of cartoon you find in *The New Yorker*.

So, the next week I started bringing him cartoons without captions, a pure copy of Saul Steinberg's style.

That's how I got started back in 1955. I kept working at the funeral parlor and during my lunch break I'd trot my cartoons over to *Ja Ja*. In the same year, I started doing editorial cartoons for *Ovaciones*, a sports paper with a news section. After a while, I was doing political cartoons for nearly every newspaper in the country.

PINT: Eventually your political cartoons got you in trouble, didn't they?

RIUS: They accused me of being a communist. It was the time of the Cuban revolution and I was clearly in favor of Castro. Suddenly, three or four newspapers dropped me. It reached the point where nobody would take my cartoons and I figured I'd have to leave the profession and dedicate my life to selling soap. Cartoons didn't seem like a good business!

That was when I ran into a friend who did comic books. He suggested I write one of my own and the result was *Los Supermachos*.

PINT: *Los Supermachos* is hardly a typical comic book. How did you come up with that particular style?

RIUS: True, there weren't many precedents for comics dealing with political subjects. The only one I knew of was *Pogo*. I can't say I was exactly inspired by *Pogo*, but it did help me develop a formula for dealing with politics and characters symbolizing certain social classes in Mexican society.

PINT: It seems to me your use of these stereotyped characters to produce a kind of documentary on a well-researched theme can only be called unique.

RIUS: Well, I spent a long time analyzing U.S. comics and I noticed that they were, in part, used to politicize people, to convince them that the "American Way of Life" was an ideal way to live. Lots of comics were dedicated to attacking communism — for example, *Steve Canyon*, *Dick Tracy*, *Li'l Abner*, *Captain Marvel*. They actually indoctrinated people who didn't realize they were being indoctrinated.

So, I thought, maybe I can fight fire with fire, jump out of the trench, catch some of their grenades and throw them back. I wanted to turn the comic book into a teaching medium, from a politically leftist point of view.

PINT: Would you call yourself a Marxist?

RIUS: I'm not an expert on Marxism, but all my work, even the books on religion, have a Marxist base. To tell the truth, I've never been a good Marxist, much less an orthodox one. My real position has been that of a critic in respect to socialism... not precisely a Trotskyite, but a critic of the errors of socialism, Stalinism, etc.

PINT: So, how do you see the recent changes in Russia and Eastern Europe?

RIUS: In a way, I was prepared for these changes. I had been wishing for someone like Gorbachev to come along and change everything. I'm happy because what looks like the fall of socialism is actually its *renewal* — I hope! Just before you came, I was working on a new book, 120 pages dealing with *perestroika*.

Socialism has to adapt itself to the reality of each coun-



ABOVE:
Slogans
from Mao for
Beginners.
RIGHT: In
Cuba for
Beginners,
only the
imperialists
change;
imperialism
remains.

try. It was a mistake to copy Soviet socialism in Cuba, for example. Maoism has some good points, but for China, not for other countries.

PINT: How do comics fare in those countries?

RIUS: I've always been a ferocious critic of the misuse of political cartoons in the socialist countries. In the face of all the errors that were being made, the cartoonists never had a chance to exercise their profession as critics of society. Only with *perestroika* are they getting a better chance to have their say. In fact, even comics are starting to appear in these countries.

PINT: You've written a lot about Nicaragua. What do you think about the latest developments?

RIUS: Yes, I have three books on Nicaragua. As for my opinion, I think the negative influence of the United States has been the main factor in why the people voted against the Sandinistas. They were terrorized by the contras and all they wanted was peace. Actually, the people of Nicaragua voted with their stomachs!

Now, the question is: what will the U.S.A. do with Nicaragua? They promised them everything and now they're dispensing it with an eyedropper. First, they make the patient sick, then they refuse to cure him!

PINT: Back to Los Supermachos. From what I've heard, it's no easy task launching a quality comic book in Mexico. How did you get this one off the ground and how did it become so popular?

RIUS: When I began the series, I had been doing cartoons for 10 years. People knew my name and started buying the comic. It was a gradual process, though, and I'd say it took 10 issues to reach a large enough circulation for it to stand on its own. When we had 40,000 readers, the editor felt we had made it. Success!

But it was hard going at first. People weren't used to this kind of comic...

PINT: I suppose not, since it was a completely new genre.

RIUS: It was a comic that forced people to think and nobody was prepared for that.

PINT: What sort of people bought the comic?

RIUS: Well, I had in mind the same public that likes political cartoons, especially university students. And, in fact, they were my most enthusiastic readers — and they still are. They have a need to know, a thirst for knowledge, and they find something substantial in these comics.

Once, they made a market study and it showed that most of the readers were students. Next, came professionals. There was a smaller number of blue-collar workers, and very, very few *campesinos*. However, some interesting information came to light: we discovered that some groups of *campesinos* were buying just one copy of *Los Supermachos* and then using it for studying, for holding discus-



INVARIABLEMENTE, DETRAS DE TODO RÉGIMEN DE TIPO FASCISTA, PODEMOS ENCONTRAR EL APOYO DE ESTADOS UNIDOS: GUATEMALA, TURQUÍA, SUDÁFRICA, ARGENTINA, CHILE, ISRAEL, LIBANO...

sions, especially when the subject was political problems.

In Nicaragua, during Somoza's time, my comics were circulated underground among the Sandinistas, even inside the jails where they were being held. Apparently, they considered me their ideologist! Some of their leaders told me they had become Marxists after reading my comics and my book on Marx.

PINT: In how many countries were they reading those comics, anyhow?

RIUS: In Latin America, especially in the underdeveloped countries like Nicaragua, Mexican comics — not just mine — have had a great influence, especially the semi-pornographic kind, probably more than in Mexico.

PINT: Mexico's the publishing capital of all Latin America, isn't it?

RIUS: Oh, yes, and for a long time, the movie capital. Even now, Mexican comedies and soap operas (unfortunately!) are seen on TV in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela... all over.

PINT: If we can return to the subject of your earlier days, is it true your publisher "stole" *Los Supermachos* from you? What happened?

RIUS: Well, I was the first comic book writer in Mexico who actually managed to sign a contract. On top of that, it was a contract including royalties on every issue sold.

However, the publisher was a *licenciado*. People in the States won't understand, but a *licenciado* is a person with a pretentious degree, often a sort of two-bit lawyer or politician and very easily corruptible.

Now, when the comic really became popular, the government saw it as something extremely dangerous, especially because of its influence on students. So, they simply bought the publisher. He took the comic away from

ABOVE: "Invariably, behind all fascist regimes, we find the support of the United States: Guatemala, Turkey, South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Israel, Lebanon..." From *Hitler Para Masoquistas* (Hitler for Masoquists).
BELOW: The Allied invasion of Italy from *Hitler Para Masoquistas*.

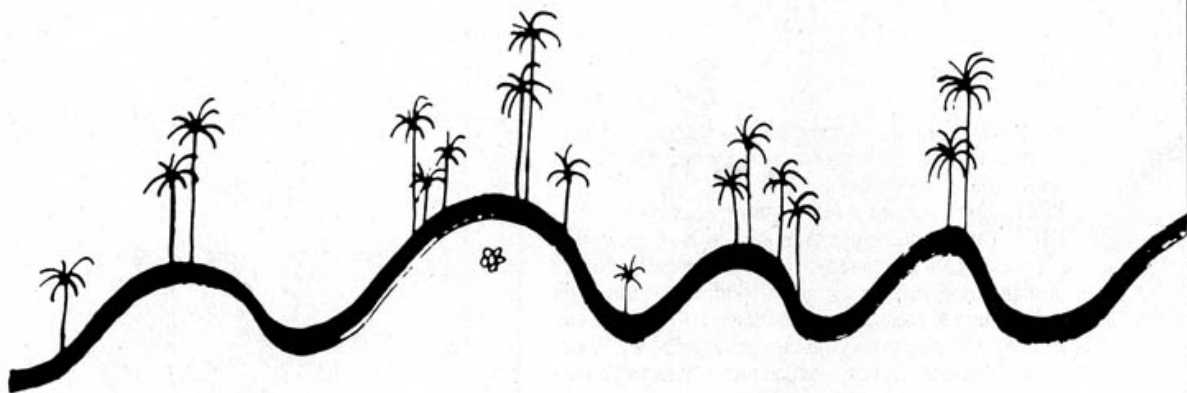


THE SPANISH GOVERNOR GONE...



.. ENTER MR. WOOD. TAXES WERE ELIMINATED - TO THE KING- AND CUBANS INITIATED PAYMENTS TO WASHINGTON...





me and gave it to some other artists and writers.

PINT: *In what year did this happen?*

RIUS: I had only done *Los Supermachos* for two years, 1966 and '67. By 1968, I had lost the rights to it. This may seem unbelievable to your readers, but this was by direct order of the President of Mexico. The comic book was either to disappear or be transformed into something less hostile to the government. So, since there was money to be made from it, with a circulation of 200,000, they just took it away from me. To use a proper Mexican expression: *me chingaron a mi* [they fucked me royally].

PINT: *But you said you had a contract — was there a loophole in it or something?*

RIUS: No, no. They did this "Mexican style." I could have had the greatest lawyer in the world, but because of this order "from above," there wasn't a thing I or anyone else could do. In these cases — here in Mexico — the law has certain limitations.

So, the editor gave these other people two months of secret training and they took over and kept producing "my" comic book for another eight years. Naturally, none of them had a contract and there were no more royalties — they lost all that.

PINT: *This time you weren't planning to go back to selling soap?*

RIUS: No. A friend, Guillermo Mendizabal, who loved *Los Supermachos*, actually sold his car, mortgaged his house, and started a publishing company called Posada — today a very successful publisher — for the purpose of producing a similar comic with a new name, *Los Agachados* [*The Downtrodden*, literally, "those who are stooped over or abused"]. In one week, I had to invent new characters, a whole new comic book.

PINT: *And Los Supermachos?*

RIUS: It continued to deal with politics, but with a new ideology. My character, Calzonzin [a tall Indian wrapped in an electric blanket] was turned into a sort of "running dog" for the PRI [Mexico's establishment party, which has run the country since 1921].

PINT: *Los Agachados outlived Los Supermachos. Why did you finally stop producing it?*

RIUS: I was worn out! This may be interesting for my colleagues in the U.S. I didn't have a team of six or seven working on the comic. I did everything, starting with the

research and ending with the inked pages. The only help I had was from my former wife for the coloring.

It was terrible. Every week I had to produce 32 or 34 pages. There was no time for vacations (and no one to pay for them), no time to get sick. In order to have time to get married, I had to get three issues ahead of myself.

PINT: *And how did it pay? How much of a royalty did you get?*

RIUS: First there was a fixed sum for the job itself. For every page, I received, let's say, around \$5 a page. It wasn't much. Here, comics don't pay. However, as I mentioned earlier, I was the first in Mexico to get royalties — and I may still be the only one. The comic book used to sell for one peso and I would receive about two centavos for each. This rose with the circulation, but I never got as much as 10 percent. The idea of a comics writer getting royalties was something novel in Mexico — and still is!

PINT: *How do they get away with it?*

RIUS: Well, because I do my own text and pictures, I'm considered the *author* of the book. But, in most cases in Mexico, they get one person to do the story for a fixed fee and then they pass this story on to an illustrator. Neither of them is ever considered to be the author. Only someone like Gabriel Vargas of *La Familia Burron* is held to be an author, and he is his own publisher. Comic book writers here are fighting to change all this. They've been fighting for years.

PINT: *Have they accomplished anything?*

RIUS: No, the publishers here operate just like the Mafia. They're so rich that they can afford to pay off the authorities regularly, instead of paying the authors. The publishers won't allow the comics writers to unite and receive what they have a right to.

It's the same story with newspaper cartoonists — no protection, no union.

PINT: *What have your relations been like with publishers outside Mexico? Some of your books are available abroad, aren't they?*

RIUS: Yes. My latest book — *Coca-Cola, The Drug That Refreshes* — is being translated in the States right now, and the one on Trotsky. Several others were translated in England a while back. The funny thing is that I've received almost nothing from those people. They owe me about 5,000 pounds sterling.

TOP: Castro in La Sierra Maestra mountains from *Cuba for Beginners*.
BELOW: From *The Myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe*.



ample, most of Walt Disney's artists were Mexicans and other Latin Americans. That's part of history.

PINT: You know, over the years I've noticed that an unusually large percentage of Mexicans love to draw cartoons.

RIUS: Latinos are very creative. For example, the majority of French and Italian comics artists are Argentinians. Most of the people who draw in *Heavy Metal* are Latin Americans. The Spaniards are very good, too.

PINT: Do you have anything special you'd like to say to the readers of *The Comics Journal*?

RIUS: Well, there is one thing. I'd like to invite my North American colleagues — within the limits of their possibilities — to produce a comic that's more useful to the people; not to produce comics that merely entertain or stultify; to help the people escape from this obsession with images that the U.S.A. has fallen into.

Sorry if that sounds like a sermon! □

Contracts, Mexican Style

Falcon and Jis, two of Mexico's top comics cartoonists, staggered into my living room begging for something cold, wet, and in quantities of several gallons.

You see, I live on top of a mountain in western Mexico and if the potholes in the twisting cobblestone road don't get you, the altitude will.

Jis (pronounced Heeesssss, like air escaping from a Spanish-speaking cobra) is 26, lanky, and somehow still preserves the look of a naive, yet mischievous teenager. He had heard I was representing *The Comics Journal* and wanted to talk to me about something.

"I sent [an American publisher] some of my work and he wrote back saying he didn't want cartoons. Why is that?"

In the discussion that ensued, I learned that most — if not all — Mexican *moneros* (those who make *monos*, or "primitive" drawings) draw both cartoons and comic strips with equal facility and can scarcely afford to specialize in only one form of the art, due to the nearly unbelievable financial conditions under which they are obliged to work.

Jis eventually sent an American alternative publisher a sample of his comic strip work and immediately (only three weeks by "airmail") received a contract for publication. As it was full of fine print in English, it was this that he had wanted me to look over.

I skimmed the page of what seemed like a more than equitable contract. "Why, this looks incredibly wonderful — a writer's dream! How does it compare with the contracts for the books you've published here in Mexico?"

Now I heard from Falcon (fall-kone). 32 years old, he had been in the business a lot longer than Jis and, in fact, had published his first work while still a high school student.

"Well, together with our friend Trino, we've made two attempts at publishing our own comics and we have two books of cartoons in print. There were no contracts involved with

the comics, and they sold like hotcakes — we couldn't believe it! Unfortunately, our group was so inexperienced and disorganized that we couldn't sustain the thing. Too bad, because there are almost no quality comics being published in Mexico aside from the work of Rius and we could see there's an enormous *hunger* here for imaginative graphics. You should have seen the crowds of people buying expensive French albums at a recent book fair. Anyhow, as for contracts, we have one for our cartoon books."

But when I enquired as to the details of the contract, all they could tell me was that the three of them had received a preliminary payment of about \$230 each, maybe \$700 total, to do their book *La Croqueta (The Dog Biscuit)*.

"We haven't done too well financially," said Falcon. "They told us the revenues from first editions always go entirely to the publishers and that if there were more editions, we'd get a royalty."

"What percentage royalty?"

They both shrugged their shoulders.

"Wait a minute. Don't you receive a statement every six months or so showing the number of books sold, profit made, and the percentage coming to you?"

"We've never seen a scrap of paper since the contract," explained Falcon with a sigh. "All we know is that we

saw the first book on sale everywhere and people were *buying* it. Whenever we phoned the Mexico City publishers, which is no easy task in this country, they said they were too busy to talk and why don't we come see them (an eight-hour drive away). Later, we got another (much smaller) lump sum of \$250 which we figured might be for the second edition. And that was it for three years! Then, we suddenly got this surprise payment of nearly \$400 and they actually *communicated* with us, saying this was "royalty money" and asking how would we like to do a second book."

"You mean, you have no idea how many books were sold? They just sent some money once in a while?"

"Well, we suspect the first book sold a whole lot better than they ever expected — it's in the third edition now — and that was why they sent us that last payment, to keep up good relations and to make sure we'd come up with the second book."

"They've exhausted two editions of *La Croqueta*, the new one's selling out in every book and department store in the country, and the total amount any one of you got comes to less than \$500?"

"Si, si. A friend said we were robbed."

"Kind of."

Falcon looked at me wistfully. "I like my work. The terrible thing is that

besides drawing, we also have to be *accountants*."

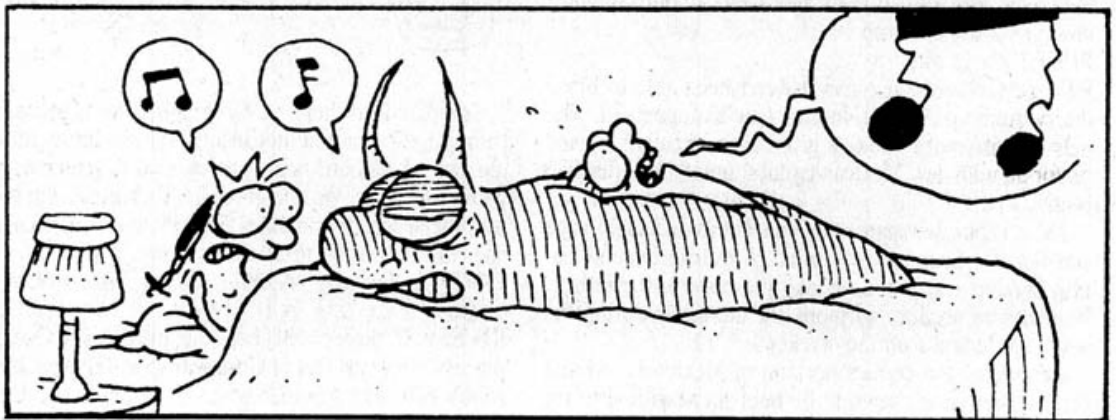
"How do you survive?"

"Actually, we don't... not on comics."

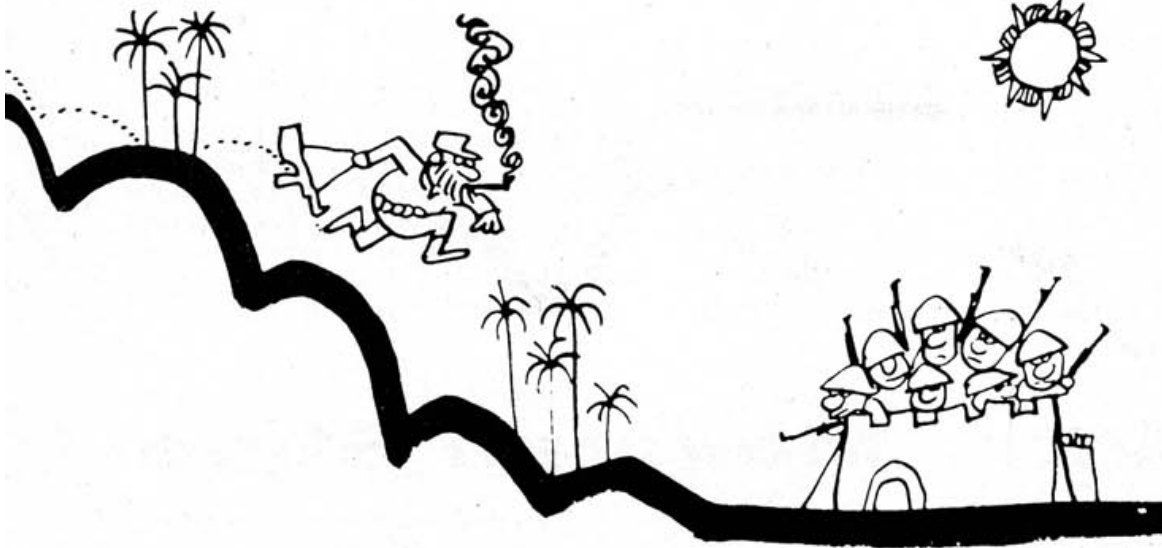
Later, I asked Rius about the payments for *La Croqueta*. "Actually, it sounds like they were paid the right amount. The trouble is, publishers get away with paying peanuts in Mexico... and the three of them have to divide up the little they get."

Falcon and Jis reside in Guadalajara, Mexico's second largest city. Along with their friend Trino, they represent one of the few efforts being made to bring Mexico a new generation of comics. "Jis" stands for Jose Ignacio Solorzano. Jis is a native of Guadalajara and contributor to the magazine *La Jornada*. Manuel Falcon is from Nuevo Laredo, just over the U.S. border. His political cartoons appear in a national newspaper, *El Occidental* and the magazines *El Porvenir* and *Parentesis*.

Much of Jis and Falcon's work is cartoon and comic strips on the "humor pages" of avant-garde political magazines. Their cartoon books, *La Croqueta* and *Matariliriliron* (the refrain for a children's game) are sold throughout Mexico. They are presently attempting to publish a comic book of their own to be called *La Mama Del Abulon (The Abalone's Mama)*. □



Jis draws surreal cartoons — and labors under a surreal contract.



PINT: What? You mean the . . .for Beginners series?

RIUS: Yes. And I haven't received a penny from the translated editions they sold in Germany, France, and Japan. Not even a sample copy! But I put it to disorganization more than anything. Let's just say they're three years behind in payments.

But I'm used to a lot worse. People have out-and-out pirated my books in Spain, England, Italy, Germany, Greece, the Scandinavian countries, and even in the U.S.A.

PINT: Gulp.

RIUS: The one in the States was a small publisher that isn't around anymore — appropriately named Quixote Press. They stole two of my books; one was *The Communist Manifesto Illustrated*, and I've forgotten which other one.

In Colombia, they pirated five of my books, and the funny thing was that the publisher was called Pata de Palo [wooden leg] . . .so there wouldn't be any doubts!

Oh, yes, it's happened in Iran, in India . . .I might even be the holder of the world's record for stolen comics, just in case Guinness is interested.

PINT: Aside from the . . .for Beginners series, what else of yours has been published — I mean, legitimately — in the U.S.A.?

RIUS: *The Myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe* and *The Manual of the Perfect Atheist* were translated and published by a small company in Austin [American Atheist Press, P.O. Box 2117, Austin, TX 78768-2117, tel. (512) 458-1244].

PINT: What's the general "state of comics" in Mexico these days — apart from your work?

RIUS: In general, the whole publishing industry is in a state of crisis, and in particular the comics. In comparison with what was sold 10 years ago, they can only sell half now. It's a drastic drop.

PINT: Why is that?

RIUS: Maybe because they haven't been able to bring the medium up to date. Nothing new has appeared. The only real attempt I know of is a magazine called *Bronca* [Trouble] with new Mexican comics, but it died after five issues.

There is one newspaper that puts out its own eight-page supplement of comic strips called *Histerietas* [a combination of *historieta* (comic book) and *histeria* (hysteria)]. The authors produce cartoons for the paper during the week and comics on the weekend.

Otherwise, the comics horizon in Mexico is sad and bleak. There don't seem to be publishers willing to try anything new. There are plenty of fine young writers and excellent artists anxious to get published . . .but they have

no place to go.

The same thing is happening all over Latin America. I recently attended a Latin American comics convention in Cuba and we were analyzing this kind of problem. It seems like the only country doing anything new is Cuba, but only for local consumption.

PINT: Cuba? What are they doing?

RIUS: Simply allowing comics at all is "new" for socialist countries. Personally, I don't care for the subject matter. What they're trying to do is use comics to indoctrinate people about Marxism. They're really not free to express themselves. I hope *perestroika* finally gets there!

Getting back to the Mexican situation . . .there being no money available, one is obliged to bend to the editors' wishes. Pay is poor and often they won't even return your originals. As for royalties, they won't hear the idea, in spite of the fact that they sell half a million copies.

PINT: Which comic, for example, sells that many?

RIUS: Oh, *Kaliman* [an adventure series], and *Lagrimas y Risas* [Tears and Laughter]. This publisher owns a chain of hotels all over the republic, but he ended up in jail recently for not having paid his taxes. These people have sold more comics than anyone else in Mexico, but they exploit the authors.



Compared to here, U.S. graphic novelists are in paradise, especially if they belong to a syndicate. In Mexico, we writers are now being forced to pay taxes, but with no benefits. We don't even get social security! [Mexican social security provides free or low-cost medical care and hospitalization to all "employees."]

PINT: Is this why Mexican comics writers leave the country?

RIUS: Well, there haven't been that many cases. One great success story was that of Covarrubias in *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, etc. Another who succeeded in the U.S. is Sergio Aragones in *MAD*. But a lot of the others who made good are unknown. They never sign their work! For ex-

CENTER: "White humor" from *El Otro Rius* (The Other Rius).