

'Dinosaurs' clash with technocrats

By John Ward Anderson=(c) 1998, The Washington Post

MEXICO CITY — It was supposed to be a small, off-the-record breakfast meeting of the ruling party faithful — or more precisely, about 50 current and former lawmakers faithful to one particular wing of the party, the old-guard, autocratic faction known as the "dinosaurs."

Manuel Bartlett, an urbane, charismatic state governor and key leader of the dinosaurs, rose during the enchiladas with mole sauce to blast the direction of the PRI, as his ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party is called, and its leadership — including, by inference, President Ernesto Zedillo.

"We are facing a war, a terrible battle in which we PRI members must fight against a deadly trap organized from above!" Bartlett exclaimed. "We must react, because we are not going to commit suicide by walking like sheep to the slaughter, faithfully following party discipline."

It was a call to revolt in a party renowned for enforcing seven decades of absolute obedience to its leaders, and the crowd — secretly observed by two Mexico City newspaper reporters who taped the speech — went wild. They hollered for Bartlett to run for president in two years; they jockeyed to shake his hand and have their pictures taken with him; they clamored for the firing of the party's president, Mariano Palacios Alcocer.

The breakfast insurrection was short-lived. When the newspapers wrote about it the next day, Bartlett retreated, claiming his comments were "taken out of context" and that he remained loyal to Zedillo. But the incident cast a rare public spotlight on the war for the soul of the PRI that is being waged between the hard-line defenders of party tradition — the dinosaurs — and reform-minded, free-market "technocrats," who have run the PRI for almost two decades. Under their stewardship last year, the party suffered its greatest election defeats in history.

"The party has been humiliated by an imposed silence and blind obedience, so it was obvious that when

Bartlett spoke in such a brave tone, the audience's reaction was euphoric," said Vicente Fuentes Diaz, a PRI congressman who attended the breakfast. "He was calling for no more silent subordination to the president's will, internal democracy — in other words, survival."

More is at stake than simply who should control the PRI, who will be the party's presidential candidate in the July 2000 election, and which political party ultimately will win the race — although all of that is on the table. What is being fought over, with potentially far-reaching implications for Mexico and the evolution of multiparty democracy here, is what type of relationship should exist between the PRI and the state — which have been virtually synonymous for 69 years of one-party rule.

"It is a big battle for the future of the nation," said political analyst and columnist Sergio Sarmiento. "Bartlett and many other traditionalists believe that (the last three presidents) went too far in removing the policies of the past, and that since we have become a globalized economy we have lost the roots of our nation. They want to go back to when the government had control over the economy and there were restrictions on foreign investment."

In a recent interview at his governor's mansion in Puebla, capital of a state with the same name southeast of Mexico City, and in a telephone interview, Bartlett denied leading a party rebellion.

"I didn't call for a revolt in the PRI, because I believe the unity of our party is a fundamental principle," he said. "But maintaining that unity is not an easy task because our party ... has many currents in it."

At the same time, Bartlett acknowledged that he is running for the party's presidential nomination — an astounding public admission in a country where the PRI candidate is traditionally selected in secret by the sitting president, who is limited to a single, six-year term.

"We have lost our dynamism," he explained. "We have lost our creative thinking. The party has become very bureaucratized. It has just followed,

without any discussion whatsoever, the lines of the government, and it should be the other way around. The government should follow the lines of the party."

Political moderates and liberals here say they are concerned that Bartlett, who is enormously popular with the PRI rank and file, would return Mexico to an era of autocracy, cronyism and corruption, noting that he was accused of rigging the 1988 presidential election victory of the PRI's Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who many believe actually lost to leftist Democratic Revolution Party candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, now mayor of Mexico City. Also, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration informants connected Bartlett to the brutal 1985 murder of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena while Bartlett was Mexico's interior minister, considered the most powerful position in the country after the president.

"Bartlett has history against him," said Jose Chavez Jaimes, a political columnist for El Universal newspaper in Mexico City. "His background is probably his worst enemy. He'll make a great dictator."

Bartlett, 62, said the allegations about Camarena and vote-fixing are "absolutely false." Asked why he attracts such controversies, he said the stories were ginned-up by political enemies. "They are afraid I will succeed," he said, pausing for dramatic effect. "And they should be."

Bartlett's headline-grabbing breakfast and presidential aspirations have crystallized the clash between the PRI's two camps, which historians date to the early 1960s. Their differences deepened with the launch of economic reforms in the early 1980s and have widened ever since.

At the heart of the conflict is the dinosaurs' strong nationalist sentiment and their belief that the PRI's symbiotic relationship with the state has been the principal force behind Mexico's development as a modern nation. So entwined are the nation and party that the PRI is the only political group allowed to use the national colors on its campaign banners.

The unity of party and state was

achieved by the PRI's careful nurturing of political cells in virtually every public and private institution and endeavor. In the aftermath of the 1910-20 Mexican Revolution, the system helped promote social stability and development, but it also facilitated a complex web of patronage and corruption that has guaranteed the PRI's monopoly on power. It never lost a significant election until the mid-1980s and today is the longest continually ruling party in the world.

Dinosaurs trace the party's declining fortunes in the last decade to the rise of elitist, U.S.-educated technocrats who have never run for elective office and who they believe are out of touch with the party's rank and file. The technocrats have implemented reforms — the privatization of state-run industries; trade liberalization that has opened Mexican markets; electoral law changes that have made multiparty elections freer — that have struck hard at the PRI's core constituencies and steered the party and the country away from their socialist roots. Under those reforms, the PRI has suffered an almost inevitable decline in power.

The old guard believes that the culmination of the technocrats' rule came last summer, when the PRI made its poorest election showing ever, losing the race for Mexico City mayor — considered the second-most powerful elected office in the country — and its majority in the lower house of Congress for the first time since the party was founded in 1929.

While the PRI is expected to do well in a series of state elections this year, many analysts believe the 2000 presidential race will be the most competitive in modern Mexican history.

Political analysts are bracing for a battle royal over who the PRI will select as its candidate. Traditionally, Mexican presidents have selected the PRI's nominee. Because of the party's unbroken reign of power, the practice has been tantamount to a president appointing his successor. Early in his term, Zedillo pledged to end the practice and to leave the nominating decision to the party, which has encouraged a more airing of internal dissent.

Murder, she wrote — and even men in Russia are reading her

By Daniel Williams=(c) 1998, The Washington Post

MOSCOW — The villains are memorable: the scientist who invents a ray gun that makes Muscovites want to kill one another, or a wedding photographer who murders brides, or the greedy mafia thugs who force a writer to churn out crime books for their profit.

Some readers say they identify deeply with the plain-spoken, plainly dressed heroine, a detective who smokes too much, can't get enough coffee and has a weakness for pastries, too.

Some like the homey anti-crime tips offered, or, for that matter, the tips on how to evade the cops.

One thing is for sure. Enough people buy Alexandra Marinina's books to make her Russia's most popular pulp-fiction writer. Thirteen million copies of her 18 books are in print, a feat perhaps unknown in Russia until now, and not so common anywhere else either. Every other subway seat seems occupied by someone reading one of her books.

Everyone seems to know who she is.

The phenomenon is doubly rare because Marinina is the lone woman in a male-dominated field. Agatha Christie may have spawned a long line of female crime writers in the English-speaking world, but the type had yet to surface in Russia. Here, women were supposed to write romances. Until Marinina.

"I'm surprised. I started writing for fun in my spare time, on days off and vacations. I was happy just to be published," she said in an interview.

Marina Alexeyeva is her real name, and until her retirement in March she was a policewoman who researched the criminal mind and mapped out trends in lawlessness. To get to know

her, read the books. She makes no effort to conceal the fact that Nastya Kamenskaya, the heroine of most of her stories, is her alter ego — right down to the disheveled blond hair, absence of makeup and preference for jeans and mentholated cigarettes. "The only difference is, Nastya is a detective and I was a researcher," Marinina said.

Marinina's popularity attests to Russia's fascination with crime. On television, documentary-style chase-and-crime shows get big ratings — the more gore, the merrier. Circulation of tabloids that trumpet murders outstrips more-genteel newspapers that focus on politics. About 40 percent of all books published in Russia are crime thrillers.

"This is a social phenomenon, not a literary one," Gennady Kuzimov, who edits a weekly best-seller list, said of Marinina's popularity.

The appeal of wrongdoing is not new. Dostoyevsky elevated crime writing to high art; in "Crime and Punishment," even the palaces and fog of St. Petersburg are psychological accomplices to murder. Soviet-era crime stories also were best sellers, although the plots were generally clear-cut tales of upright cops and anti-social bad guys. Marinina is in the Gothic tradition: Any Dr. Jekyll can become Mr. Hyde.

"The first thing that hits you in the eye when you read Marinina is the expanded criminal front," said Inna Vishnevskaya, a critic for the newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta. "The law may be broken by (people in) corporations, academics, hospitals, scientific institutions; by police, lawyers, prosecutors, ministers." The boundaries between those assumed guilty and potentially honest are unclear.

Marinina's hybrid of respectability and slime comes from her years of

interviewing and profiling criminals, she says.

"Contact with criminals taught me that few of them are the embodiment of evil. Most have traits we consider normal, something for which they gain love and respect. They can be good to their wives, kids, kind and tender, generous with friends. It depends on the face they turn to us," she said.

She lounged on a leather couch in her new apartment, both fruits of her recent prosperity. Her books have been bought by publishers in Germany, France and Italy. The foreign contracts may make her far wealthier, given Russia's low royalties. Her hardcovers sell for about \$2 each. Marinina left the police force after 20 years because she qualified for a pension and because she needed time to write and deal with publishers.

She began by writing a crime-busters advice column in a police magazine. The column, "School for Self-Defense," recounted fictional visits by an old, tired detective to a female friend. She feeds him, and they chat about how to avoid things like purse-snatching and rape.

Marinina began writing novels for fun in 1991. In 1995, the magazine recommended her to a publisher looking for new writers.

Her first books were successes, but one editor suggested she change her pen name to a man's. Although most book buyers in Russia are women, pulp customers are mostly male; the fear was that macho readers would not buy a thriller written by a woman. Marinina refused, but she did turn out a story with a male lead. The publisher was horrified and told her to return to Nastya because the heroine was selling big — and to forget the name change.

Marinina does not call herself a feminist. She regards her writing ca-

reer as a product of increasingly liberal attitudes toward women and the collapse of Communist rule.

"Ten years ago, I could never have been published. In totalitarian times I would have had to join the party, join the Writers Union. Now, if you catch someone's eye, you can get published. This is a time for adventurers," she said.

Nastya is not your shoot-'em-up kind of detective. She thinks a lot about crime, but also about food. She gives advice: If you need to make a phone call but are afraid it will be traced, do it from Moscow's Garden Ring road — even if the police are on to you, it takes them an hour to reach the spot because there's always heavy traffic.

Mostly, Nastya seems ill at ease with her looks, or unaware of them. In "Death and a Little Love," the one about the murdered brides, she is surprised when a photographer describes her as beautiful.

She suffers from claustrophobia and shortness of breath and is afraid to walk down dark alleyways; she's the pursued, as well as pursuer.

"The novels of Marinina in essence are not about solving crimes but about the survival of the heroine," said Anna Karinskaya, a writer for Ekspert magazine.

After 15 years of courtship, Nastya marries Chistyakov, a physicist, who finally won her heart with the gift of a computer. Married life doesn't keep her eyes from straying, in particular toward Gen. Zatochny, a military man whom she periodically meets in a park for chats.

Marinina says the general is based on her own husband, Sergei Zatochny, a policeman. She describes him as a man with a "sunny smile that forgives all."

'Angel of Death' bringing his case to television

By T. Christian Miller and Scott Glover=(c) 1998, Los Angeles Times

GLENDALE, Calif. — The hospital worker who allegedly told police he killed 40 to 50 people will take his case to a nationwide television audience later this week.

Officials with both ABC's "20/20" and the syndicated news magazine "EXTRA" said Monday they will broadcast taped interviews with Efen Saldivar, the 28-year-old respiratory therapist who purportedly confessed to killing terminally ill patients at Glendale Adventist Medical Center.

Representatives of both shows said they offered no money for the interviews, the first since Saldivar's alleged confession was released March 27. They declined to give details.

"EXTRA" will air its interview Thursday. The "20/20" segment will be shown Friday.

Eddie Saldivar, Efen's brother and the family spokesman, has said in the past that Efen wants to tell his side of the story to the public. An independent story broker, who helps arrange network television interviews with elusive newsmakers, said he set up Saldivar's appearances. The broker, who asked not to be identified, also said no money changed hands but declined further comment.

In an interview last week, Eddie Saldivar told the Los Angeles Times: "When he comes out, my brother has to go in front of the cameras. They have to see his eyes."

In the first days after the allegations against Saldivar became public, Eddie Saldivar strongly denied that his brother had confessed to police. But

in more recent interviews, his denials have become more enigmatic.

For instance, Eddie Saldivar demanded that media outlets stop referring to his brother as the "angel of death," a term Efen Saldivar said described himself, according to the alleged confession. However, Eddie told The Times, "Angel of mercy" would be OK.

Asked whether the phrase "angel of mercy" allowed for the possibility that Efen Saldivar had actually confessed, Eddie Saldivar said such a revelation would have to wait for the proper forum.

Eddie Saldivar also declined to repeat his contention that the confession was false, instead emphasizing that it had been manipulated by police.

"How it turned out was how the police wanted it to sound," Saldivar said.

"They know they didn't have anything."

Hospital officials, meanwhile, are setting up a task force to deal with the hundreds of calls they have received from relatives worried that their loved ones may have died prematurely.

They have fired four other respiratory care workers, placed one on suspension, and begun restructuring the leadership of the respiratory care unit. They declined to give any reason for the personnel actions.

Police, however, said those fired were part of the ongoing police investigation. They declined to comment on whether they had given any information to the Respiratory Care Board, the state board that licenses respiratory therapists. The board also declined comment.

Court denies rights to father of married woman's baby

By Maura Dolan=(c) 1998, Los Angeles Times

SAN FRANCISCO — In a defeat for unwed fathers, the California Supreme Court ruled Monday that a man who fathers a child with a woman who is married to someone else may be denied all legal parental rights.

A man who "fathers a child with a woman married to another man takes the risk that the child will be raised within that marriage and that he will be excluded from participation in the child's life," Justice Joyce L. Kennard wrote. Nothing in the Con-

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Jerry Krcchmar

stitution overrules state law favoring the stability of marriages over a biological father's interests, the justices said.

With roughly a third of California children born to couples who are not married to each other, the case was considered a significant test of the rights of biological fathers. Lower courts in California had ruled in favor of the biological father even though a state law presumes a child born to a married couple is generally the husband's child, regardless of biology.

Courts in 20 other states have granted biological fathers in similar situations the right to assert their paternity, and some states have changed their laws to protect the interests of unmarried fathers.

Monday's ruling stemmed from a lawsuit filed by Riverside County roofer Jerome "Jerry" Krcchmar, 41, who lived with a woman referred to in the court's opinion as Dawn D. in 1995 while she was separated from her husband of nearly six years.

Dawn, a teacher, became pregnant a month after living with Krcchmar. The two had planned that they would marry when she divorced, and he had begun building an addition to their

home, he said in an interview.

Instead, however, after living with Krcchmar for almost four months, Dawn returned to her husband. Krcchmar tried to negotiate child support and visitation rights, took a parenting class, and filed a lawsuit a few months before the baby was born to assert a parental relationship. But Dawn and her husband refused to allow him to see the baby, Sam.

When Krcchmar and the couple met for a blood test, Dawn's husband punched him, Krcchmar's attorney said.

Krcchmar, his voice breaking, said Monday he was "devastated" by the ruling and planned to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I will never give up my son," said Krcchmar, who has a small organic farm. "My son is being lied to every day of his life about his genealogy and about who to call Daddy."

Marjorie Fuller, Krcchmar's lawyer, called his fight one of "an amazingly large number" of similar cases.

"It is telling a lot of young men who are stepping up to the plate, as they should, and wanting to take responsibility ... 'Forget it. Go away,'" she said.

But Diane Catran Roth, a lawyer for the married couple, praised the ruling for giving Dawn and her husband, Frank, a chance to be "normal and raise their children like normal people."

"There are a lot of similar cases going on, not only in our state but throughout the country," she said. "We believe it is important that married couples be protected from lawsuits that threaten their rights to raise their children within their marriage."

Krcchmar said he and Dawn had been excited about the pregnancy and even discussed names for the baby. But after he went out of town for a week on a job, she decided she no longer wanted to live with him and moved back with her husband, he said. Dawn has denied ever promising to marry him.

When Sam was born, Krcchmar went to see the baby in the hospital, he said. "I touched his cheek and I cried — until I was escorted out by a nurse," Krcchmar said. "I took a picture of him. I have it in my wallet."