

OSWALDO ALVAREZ PAZ (cont.)

alienated and at the same time become subservient to his party (Acción Democrática) in implementing economic reform. It is noteworthy that Alvarez Paz is well regarded by the business community, both domestic and international. For example, the day after his victory in the open primary, the stock market reacted to his win by shooting up 11%.

In addition to economic liberalism, equally central to Oswaldo's political agenda are his emphasis on decentralization of government functions and his championing of direct by-name (as opposed to by-party-slate) election of congress members. These reforms are both burning issues in the country at this time, with strong popular support behind them but stubborn resistance being exerted by the party hierarchies and incumbent congressmen who see their vested interests threatened, especially as regards by-name elections.

Of special interest to Canadians is Oswaldo's connections with Canada. He is more familiar with and actively well-disposed towards our country than almost any other senior Venezuelan political leader and certainly than any other presidential candidate. He has visited Canada four times, including Ottawa as recently as November 1991 and again in March 1992 when he came as Governor regarding EDC-financed Canadian projects in his state. In fact in Zulia there are some \$ 200 million of Canadian contracts that have been or are in the process of being made. He is very conscious of Canada (both private sector and government) being Zulia's (and possibly Venezuela's) primary foreign partner in environmental, water distribution and irrigation development.