

JAIME BEHAR

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Jaime Behar was the editor of *Iberoamericana* for 12 years, 1997-2008. It was through his efforts that the journal finally became a professionally managed outlet for international research on Latin America and the Caribbean.

Jaime was born in Cuba. His parents were Sephardic Jews who had come to the West Indies in 1928. Later, the Behar family emigrated to Uruguay. There, Jaime studied at the Instituto de Profesores Artigas and worked as a junior high school and high school teacher of mathematics, physics and chemistry. At the same time, he was politically active, in the *Movimiento 26 de Mayo*, the political wing of the Tupamaros and one of the parties in the *Frente Amplio*, an umbrella organization of left-wing parties, declared illegal after the June 1973 military coup. So was the woman that would become his life companion: Lilian Braslavsky. She disappeared after the coup and was held captive under harsh conditions in Uruguay, while Jaime had left for Chile, where he was caught in the middle of the September 11 military coup. He had to seek refuge in the Cuban embassy, at the time administered by Sweden.

Jaime came to Sweden as a political refugee in March 1974, leaving almost immediately for France, but when Lilian came to Sweden in 1976, he returned there as well. In the new country, both of them had to start from scratch. Jaime had to take up studies once more, take loans, clean day care centers and learn two new languages: Swedish and English. Neither Spanish nor French worked in Stockholm. In 1979 he obtained Swedish citizenship, and the same year he received his bachelor's degree, majoring in economics.

He had done it quickly: 40 to 50 academic credits per semester (20 was the norm). Jaime had decided to follow his own path, the one conducive to entry into the Swedish academic community, and he managed not to get involved with any of the politicizing Latin American communities which were common in Sweden at the time.

After working for two years as a research assistant at the Institute of Latin American Studies at Stockholm University, in 1989 Jaime defended his doctoral dissertation at the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI) at the same

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university. The title of his thesis was *Trade and Employment in Mexico* (Behar 1988), a fresh and unconventional study. It discusses comparative advantage and employment in the Mexican economy. In a survey of Swedish economic research on Latin America published in 1994, I summarized the book as follows (Lundahl 1994:35):

Behar conducts the analysis both on the national level and on the regional level of Nuevo León. The increasing role of industrial products in total exports is pointed out and it is demonstrated that variations in traditional manufacturing exports were largely a function of price fluctuations, while, in the case of non-traditional exports, instability derived from supply changes. Behar shows that manufacturing exports were positively related both to the level of effective protection and to changes in production capacity but negatively related to changes in the level of domestic demand, and offers the heterodox hypothesis (along lines originally developed by Staffan Burenstam Linder)¹ that exports tend to be a residual after domestic demand has been satisfied, that the expansion of domestic demand determines the rate of technological progress which in turn affects supply, and that protection may be a way of keeping domestic demand up. Mexican exports were found to be relatively capital-intensive, and employment growth in them was slow, in contradiction to what standard theory would predict. Behar attributes this finding to the fact that industrial production creates knowledge and that by industrializing Mexico has been 'trading up' the ladder of comparative advantage towards products that are more advanced technologically and which require a comparatively lower labor input.

On the regional level, manufacturing exports played a subordinate role. While more than half the industrial production was sold outside Nuevo León, less than 5 percent made its way out of Mexico. Thus, the employment-generating capacity of manufacturing exports, measured by constructing an input-output model for the state of Nuevo León, tended to be low during the period studied by Behar.

While he worked on his thesis Jaime was a visiting researcher for a year (1983-84) at ITESM (*Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey*). At the same time Lilian had an anthropological slum research project. The latter required participant observation, so she and Jaime lived in a *barrio*. Jaime had to go from there to ITESM every morning in a decrepit old Volkswagen, not too well dressed, to say the least, in order to fit into the local context. His clothing was impossible in the city proper, so he had to stop along the road every morning, like Superman turning into Clark Kent, and put on gear somewhat better suited to his own research environment.

After successfully defending his thesis, Jaime was Assistant Professor at SOFI for four years, 1989-93. The latter year, the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance (SASDA) was set up with the task of analyzing the results and effectiveness of Swedish development aid. One of the main activities of SASDA was four in-depth country studies of aid to countries where Sweden was a major donor. One of those countries was Nicaragua. Jaime Behar was selected to do the Nicaraguan country study (together with me).

Jaime turned all the stones there were to turn. He was indefatigable both combing the Swedish archives and interviewing in Nicaragua. There was depth in every research note and every draft that he produced. The study, *Now's the Time: An Evaluation of Swedish development Cooperation with Nicaragua* (Behar and Lundahl 1994a), examines the effectiveness of development cooperation both on the macroeconomic level and on the concrete project level. The relationships between aid, savings, exports, imports, growth, and balance of payments are analyzed and so is the micro impact through projects and import support. Finally, the study discusses the influence of Swedish aid on Nicaraguan economic policy and on the turbulent policy environment in which it had to be deployed.

The Nicaraguan study had to be presented in Managua. This was not the easiest pedagogical task in the world. The assistance had been given mainly during the period when the Sandinista government was doing its best to make a mess of the economy. *Comandantes* are seldom good economists, and this was amply demonstrated in Nicaragua, but the country was full of representatives of non-governmental organizations who supported the self-destructive policy. Both the NGO volunteers and the representatives of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) had determined that the report was negative and lacked understanding of the revolutionary liberation effort and had entrenched themselves heavily. The World Bank, in turn, did not like the main recommendation: that the foreign debt of Nicaragua, at the time the highest in the world on a per capita basis, ought to be written off. The pedagogic task of convincing the readers of the report that the conclusions were well researched and balanced was little short of Herculean, but Jaime dug into his bag of time-honored pedagogical tricks and managed to persuade many (but not all) of the NGO representatives that there were other ways than the purely ideological ones to look at development cooperation.²

Jaime was appointed *docent* (untenured associate professor) of economics in 1994 and associate professor of Latin American studies at the Institute of Latin American Studies in 1996. Four years later he was promoted to the rank of full professor. At that time, his research concentrated on economic integration in Latin America. This was a theme that had interested him for more than two decades. His first effort (Behar 1980), published in *Comercio Exterior*, was a highly polemical article against what he perceived as three basic hypotheses of integration theory, namely that the actual 'dependent capitalism' of Latin America was the only vehicle of integration, that integration should be an objective necessity of the capitalist system and that economic integration would be capable of saving Latin America and other parts of the world from crisis, inequality and stagnation. Against this, he held out an approach based on sector and class interests.

Jaime's first effort in the area of economic integration may not have been his most scientific piece ever, but it served the purpose of putting him on the track of a topic that would later become highly rewarding. A booklet in Swedish (Behar 1990) served to focus him on a more realistic setting: Central American integration in the concrete situation that prevailed in the region at the end of the 1980s, viz. debt and export problems combined with the necessity of structural adjustment, the prospects for a reactivation of the dormant Central American Common Market as well as the promotion of non-traditional export products. He would soon move into his 'own' orbit: though a qualified analysis of integration in the southern cone of Latin America (Behar 1991), between Argentina and Brazil, largely to the detriment of the former and to the advantage of the latter.

The end point of Jaime's studies of Latin American economic integration is his book on MERCOSUR, published both in Spanish as *Cooperación y competencia en un mercado común: estudios sobre la economía del MERCOSUR* and English as *Cooperation and Competition in a Common Market: Studies on the Formation of MERCOSUR* (Behar 1998, 2000). The book, which is essentially a collection of essays, incorporates the Argentina-Brazil study, but it also extends the analysis to all the countries of the MERCOSUR. The effect of trade on plant size is dealt with as well as the effects of integration on certain industries in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, within the framework of 'new' trade theory: scale economies, differentiated products and imperfect competition.

At the Institute of Latin American Studies, Jaime taught the economic parts of the courses on Latin America. He was an appreciated and generous supervisor and he was successful when it came to attracting Ph D candidates. Jaime always honored LAIS and fought for its interests, notably when the institute was transferred to the Faculty of Humanities in 2000.

Jaime Behar was one of the pillars of LAIS: an unpretentious and modest person without any ambitions of leadership or power, never pushy, always diligent and helpful, a man who always kept his word, hence appreciated. He was not very outgoing or social, but he had a strong empathy for other people and this made it easy for him to engage in their problems and he had a strong passion for justice and strong personal integrity. At the same time he had a wonderful sense of humor. It was difficult not to like him.

Jaime was well read – fiction and philosophy – and watching a football game infused him with new life. He was a music lover, not least of zarzuelas. *Me encantan*, as he would say. Most of his free time, however, he devoted to his beloved Lilian. They were a very close couple – in the very best sense of the term – both on account of their common Jewish background and because of their political experience in Uruguay, something that made them fight wrongdoings, wherever they occurred, and promote equality.

The last years at LAIS, Jaime spent commuting between Montevideo and Stockholm, and in the end he and Lilian moved back home for good – to a

Uruguay which had shed the last vestiges of the dictatorial yoke. Unfortunately the time allotted to him to enjoy his return was far too short. We had agreed to see each other in Montevideo in April 2010. It did not work out. An Islandic volcano got in between. And in the end, the brain tumor. We never got to eat that last *bife*.

NOTES

¹Burenstam Linder (1961)

² The World Bank was a much tougher nut. It continued to stress the necessity to put the Nicaraguan house in order while it simultaneously provided generous finance of the government budget deficit – a completely contradictory stance. The only ones who liked the report were the Nicaraguans who immediately arranged for the publication of a summary of the report (Behar and Lundahl 1994b).

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