

Novelist Fuentes finds new welcome in U.S.

By **JASON ZAPPE**
Copley News Service

Carlos Fuentes recently attended a dinner that at one time would have been against the law. It's not that the Mexican literary giant has a history of criminal activity, but years ago he was not allowed to enter this country due to his political leanings.

"What a difference now to have dinner with the president of the United States," Fuentes, 64, said. "It would have been inconceivable under Bush or Reagan or whoever."

Fuentes, who was in Martha's Vineyard to finish a novel, was joined by Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez and U.S. writer William Styron. The Clintons were staying with Styron.

"You know that law, the ideological exclusion clause of the McCarran-Walter Act, kept out people like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch and Michel Foucault. It was incredible the exclusions that took place under that proviso," Fuentes said.

If that law were still enforced as strictly, Fuentes wouldn't be coming to Tijuana today and San Diego tomorrow as part of inSITE94, the binational art project that runs through Oct. 30.

Fuentes' expertise is in relations

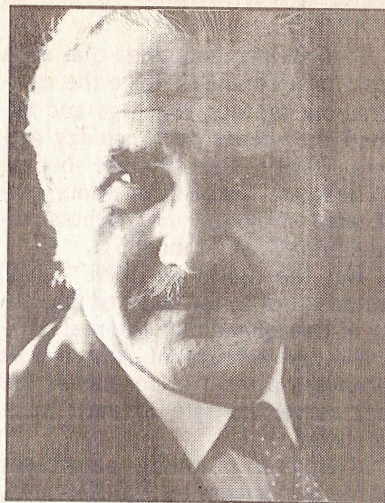
DATEBOOK

Carlos Fuentes

Lecture in Tijuana at the Centro Cultural Tijuana (in Spanish) at 7 tonight; and at Copley Symphony Hall (in English) at 1 p.m. tomorrow. Call: (011-52-66) 84-11-11 or 220-TIXS.

between the United States and Mexico and the rest of Latin America. At the Centro Cultural in Tijuana, he will address the U.S.-Mexico border and its culture. At San Diego's Copley Symphony Hall, he will speak on Mexico in general. Fuentes is one of Mexico's premier novelists and intellectuals. His critically acclaimed works include "The Death of Artemio Cruz," that staple of introductory Latin American literature courses, and "The Old Gringo," a popular novel later turned into an American film.

"In Mexico, art certainly plays a major role," he said. "The strongest thread of the national identity in Mexico is the art. There is no break in the artistic tradition of Mexico since the times of the early settlers. Since the Olmecs, the Mixtecs, the Maya and the Aztecs, we have had a continuity of art that is truly spec-



Carlos Fuentes:
Voice of a people.

tacular. You could not understand Mexico without that."

Even as Fuentes examines Mexico and its history and culture, that nation appears to be moving in a new direction.

"I think Mexico is going through the year of living dangerously," he said. "One of the most tragic episodes of the year took place in Tijuana — the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio."

Despite this, he sees this year's

elections as a positive sign of electoral reform.

"This is the first election the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) has not had an absolute majority," Fuentes said. However, he cautions Ernesto Zedillo in his electoral victory.

"You could not understand Mexico without (art)."

"I think the greatest mistake Zedillo and the PRI could make is to become triumphalist. Because they did not win by a majority and the problems are very big, it needs the participation of all the people."

Even though inSITE94's art projects spill between two countries, Fuentes doesn't see a disappearing border.

"Each country has a tradition and has much to give to the other, but on the basis of independence," he said, "they (the United States and Mexico) are two different political entities. But they should be very open cultural entities at the same time."