

voices of MEXICO

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America



"The Problems
that Concern Us
Are Really Bi-National"

Is All Quiet on
the Chihuahua
Front?

Oil, the Crisis
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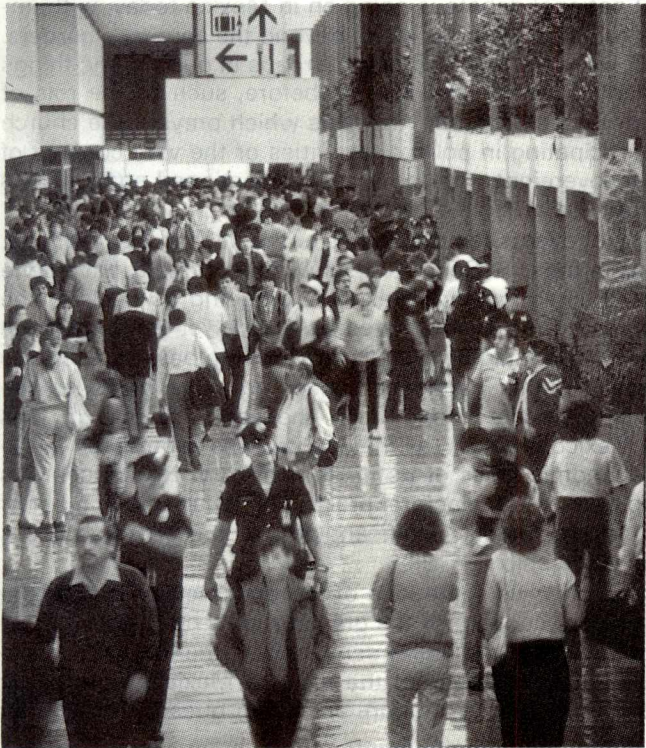
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of MEXICO

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A great national debate is going on in Mexico today, with important ramifications that reach beyond the country's borders. It's as if we were at a kind of crossroads in our history; things that seemed indisputable dogma before, such as the role of the State in the economy, the laws which prevent the church from participating in political activities or the very concept of national sovereignty, are now being questioned again across the length and breadth of the country.

A variety of events fan the flames of the debate. For example, hearings in the U.S. Senate, which would normally have gone unnoticed, charging that Mexico is dragging its heels in the fight against drug traffic, acted as a catalyst to worsen the already deteriorated diplomatic relationship between our two countries. All this happened while we were hosts to the month-long Soccer World Cup. Thousands of foreign fans visited Mexico during it, as the country was submerged in the worst economic crisis of its modern history. No sooner was the Cup over, when electoral processes began in a number of places, to renovate a significant part of the country's local, political leadership.

All of this gives us some idea of the extremely tense climate that serves as context for the great national debate. We Mexicans are on edge and highly sensitive: for the first time in sixty years the foundations of the modern Mexican state, as it emerged from the Revolution, are being questioned all over again.

In this number, *VOICES OF MEXICO* hopes to lay out some of the issues in the debate, such as the effects of the current economic policy that the government has implemented, the role of foreign investment in the country, or whether the political system is really ready for a change towards bipartisanship, to name a few.

In this effort, we are concerned with processes, rather than with isolated events. Thus, we've taken up topics that may seem to be removed from the flow of daily life in the country; the articles on the *maquila* industry along the northern border and on CONASUPO, the state-owned regulatory enterprise for basic goods, are examples. Writing about them doesn't constitute "news," in the strict sense. Nonetheless, these and other issues, such as the problems of the Lacandon jungle or Mexico City's pollution, are important in the context of the debate we've mentioned. The ways in which they are faced by the nation as a whole will leave a major imprint over the coming years. That's why we've chosen to talk about them, and about events in Latin America that share a part of the logic of our own situation.

Finally, we present a panorama of Mexican life and culture, in which we discuss books, films, theater and exhibits. To do justice to an additional element of richness and variety in our lives, we've decided to incorporate a section on Mexican cooking, proud legacy of our cultural tradition. We hope our readers enjoy it.

Mariclaire Acosta

Aftermath of a Tremendous Fiesta

The World Soccer Cup is over, but people are still talking about what happened in the city's streets.

The Mexican government's decision to hold the 1986 World Soccer Cup in our country gave rise to a national debate on the convenience of hosting the event, given the country's socio-economic problems. Yet the fact is that nearly everybody followed the games once the championship actually got underway, and the Mexican team's third victory was celebrated by a million people in Mexico City.

The reasons for holding the World Cup in our country are to be found in a peculiarity of the Mexican mentality: a need to show the world that any and all adversity can be overcome by the people's determination and unity. Ours is a fortitude tested over the centuries, now strengthened by the tragic September earthquake and by the exactions of a crisis suffered by millions. Only this can explain the need for the fiesta, *the urgency of the celebration.*

FIFA* president Joao Havelange anticipated the event's economic success a year ago when he announced that his organization expected earnings of \$57 million from ticket sales, and an additional \$34 million from the sale of television rights and publicity.

* The Federation of International Football Associations.

Guillermo Cañedo, president of the World Cup's Organizing Committee and high-ranking official of Televisa (the private Mexican television consortium), and Rafael del Castillo, president of the Mexican Football Federation, had both declared that the event would bring over 50,000 tourists to Mexico, would project a positive image of the country and "above all, it will not cost the government one cent."

Although some government officials publicly agreed with these ideas, the security aspect alone—according to the World Cup Security Plan—involved expenditures of close to \$1 million in installations, training for special forces, fuel and communications equipment. Under-Secretary of the Interior Jorge Carrillo Olea announced that 20,000 men, both security agents and military personnel, would be involved in the security plan, which also included an undisclosed number of FBI agents. The cost of this whole operation was around \$5 million.

Considerable expense was also involved in the use of the Department of Communications and Transport's telecommunications facilities, which were used to transmit television signals to some 8 billion viewers in 112 countries. The Department used its ground and space facilities (the Morelos Satellite System), to provide 12 television signals and 480 telephone lines. The cost of this service, and of building and operating the International Press and Radio Centers, has not been publicized.

Two further indicators should be added to this "great investment." One is the cost of remodeling the Azteca Stadium, the main arena for the matches between the 24 contending teams, and this was just over \$3 million. The other is the high price of tickets, (for local spectators, that is). The cheapest were between \$10 and \$15, while the most expensive, the opening and final games, with prices rising as the games neared the final, were \$280 a seat.

VOICES IN THE FIESTA

Given the expectations and contradictions, the World Cup was experienced by a population anxious for new events and protagonists, a community that both enjoyed and opposed it.



The euphoria of victory.

Photo by Jesus Carlos.

the nation

Two weeks before the games began, we carried out an opinion survey, talking to 62 people chosen at random in different parts of Mexico City. We asked them how they felt about our country hosting the World Cup and about the destination of income from the games. Of these 62 people, 33 were totally opposed to hosting the championship, 19 were in favor of it and 10 had no opinion. Here are some of the more typical answers.

León Gutiérrez, brick-layer, 5 children.

"We owe a lot of money, and that's what should turn the government's head, instead of hosting soccer matches. I'd like to know where all that money is going to end up. This tournament isn't going to benefit us at all, because the organizers are going to fill their pockets. The money could be invested in food, or in paving a lot of streets, they're full of potholes. My son and I couldn't afford to buy a single ticket even if we pooled our resources. All we're going to get out of the World Cup are some new foreign friends."

Oscar Riva Palacio, 28 year old doctor, single.

"Given our present situation, the World Cup is a show put on by Televisa, and will not benefit us at all. Psychologically, it will help people relax, but this doesn't mean it's a necessary event, since people have other means of getting rid of tension. The repercussions will be felt as soon as the championship is over. I would use the money from the games to improve health care and the Mexican people's diet, and also to create jobs."

Lupita Chávez, cashier, 26 years old, single.

I think the event will have positive effects because a lot of people will come from abroad and bring foreign currency, and this benefits the people, doesn't it? I'd use the money to benefit the people of this country.

The Tourist's Point of View

Many foreigners came to our country for the World Soccer Cup, and celebrated in the streets, alongside thousands of Mexicans. In the course of our informal opinion poll, we spoke with visitors from Colombia, Germany, New Zealand, Venezuela, the United States, France, Uruguay, Denmark and Ireland.

Most of those we interviewed thought the World Cup provided a good opportunity for the Mexican people to forget their daily cares and express their nationalism in a healthy and festive setting. There was also the idea that the sports festivities would cheer people up, following the earthquake and the stress of the economic situation.

"This is really incredible, I had never seen a people so moved and excited," said one German tourist. But other foreigners thought Mexico should not have organized the

competition, given the country's economic situation, though one added "I believe the Mexican people need to laugh, too." A Venezuelan professional gave the following opinion: "I think it is wonderful that the World Cup is being held here. I think it will cheer the people up after all the sadness they have been through."

On seeing the exultant street celebrations, a French visitor remarked: "I like the spectacle, I think the people need it, but I sense a strong undercurrent within it all. I wonder what will happen after the championship, the crisis is terrible and people need more than words to fill their stomachs." An Irishman added that the public celebrating "is impressive and fantastic. We feel happy among these people. Mexico has great inner strength; it is a great country that will soon be back on its feet."

Angélica Sandoval, 50 year old housewife, no children; she lost her home in the earthquake.

"Well, frankly speaking, I believe Mexico has enough serious problems without these people being here... Take the housing problem, for example... I would appoint technicians to build housing. If we are aware of the situation in Mexico, why do this, so that the government can dispose of the money and the rest of us never even see it? We are really sick and tired of this situation."

Oscar Ruiz, business administrator, 28 years old, three children.

"I believe the games are inadequate, given the country's situation. But the opinion of the majority is useless. Seeing how the community has so many problems, like housing, high prices..., I don't see why they want to distract people's attention, and also distract resources from the problems they should be aimed at. The games would be okay if the earnings were used to stop the increase in prices of basic goods to shore up the country's economy, but we all know this will not be the case."

Ana López, 47 year old street vendor, 7 children.

"We are kind of proud that the World Cup was held here, but all of us street vendors were hurt because we payed for permits, work clothes and name tags, and they won't let us work. It's not fair, we've been here since the Azteca was built. We thought the games would benefit us; all of us would like to be in the stadium, but we can't go in because it's too expensive. The way things stand, how are we going to cheer our team on?"



Celebration at the Independence Monument.

Despite opinions such as these, the celebrating that took place in Mexico City was unlike anything we had ever experienced. A million people came out to celebrate when the Mexican team defeated Bulgaria. Two hours after the game, the city's main streets —Reforma, Insurgentes, Tlalpan and the Beltway— all resembled huge parking-lots. Cars crept along at a snail's pace. People got out of their cars to chant and dance, joining others celebrating in the streets banging pots and pans, blowing trumpets and beating drums, all under the pouring rain.

Mexican music blared from car radios and household stereos. Many wore typical Mexican dress, while others, both men and women, painted their cheeks or even their whole face, with the colors of the Mexican flag. People of all ages joined the



Photo by Jesús Carlos.

"Pique", official emblem of the World Cup, parades through Mexico City.

celebrations. Women carried their babies, dressed in the red, white and green flag-colors. Some even attached tri-colored sashes to their pets and brought them out to celebrate.

There were, of course, different levels of consciousness. María Solís, a 31 year old housewife, said: "There is simply no connection between the country's crisis and this World Cup. PEMEX (the state-owned oil company) is responsible for the crisis, and soccer is just a sport."

"My girlfriend and I have celebrated in the streets. It's like a *fiesta*. Eleven people (the number of players on a soccer team) represent all of Mexico. If they win, we all win," exulted Francisco Javier, a 19 year old student.

Ramón Pérez, a 48 year old insurance salesman, had an opinion favorable to the government. "A victory of our national team makes me happy because they represent Mexico, and I am a Mexican. The government invested a lot of money,

they'll never tell us how much, but that money comes from the people. Yet they did organize a great *fiesta* for all of us and kept us happy for a while," was his comment.

The participants in the first street parties were mostly upper-class people who sped by in their cars on their way to the *Zócalo*, the city's central park. But people of all ages and social classes soon joined them. In different press reports, analysts agreed that the youth who partied in the streets to celebrate the victories were the same concerned, socially conscious and often heroic youngsters who helped out during the earthquake last year.

One such opinion came from researcher Dr. Manuel Villa, in an interview in the daily *La Jornada*. "Young people are beginning to feel that the streets are a common space where they can find kindred symbols, unifying symbols that contribute to the breaking down of social barriers so zealously erected by certain sectors. Just as in the aftermath of the earthquake, civil society felt confident about using public spaces again, and this is healthy."

Dr. Villa also believes that "the fact that (in the course of their celebrating) our young people destroyed patriotic symbols, is a painful reason for concern, but it can be explained. The masses tend to lash out at the symbols of power and authority, it always happens, it is part of their behaviour."

But, because of the country's dire economic situation, after the soccer *fiesta* comes the bitter awakening. After the temporary, collective amnesia, the country's harsh reality has pushed its way back to the forefront. ★

Luz Guerrero Cruz and Ernesto Rojas

CONASUPO, Lifesaver of Food Production?

Many complaints have been voiced recently about Mexico's "para-state" industry, but few ask how it works and why.

Some 50 million Mexicans enjoy the benefits provided by Conasupo (National Company for People's Subsistence) programs. After 21 years of activities as a para-state agency, Conasupo directs its programs toward that part of the population which receives an income of no more than twice the established monthly minimum wage.* About half of Mexico's 80 million people fall into this category.

During the past quarter century, Conasupo has handled some 100 million metric tons of basic goods. In 1986, the agency will have a 1.3 trillion peso budget (nearly 2.1 billion dollars),** representing 1.8 percent of the total federal budget.

* The established minimum wage in Mexico is the equivalent of 100 U.S. dollars per month.

** As we go to press, the exchange rate is 630 pesos to the dollar.

the nation

6 Conasupo presently has 4.5 million metric tons of products in reserve, enough to satisfy demand on a nation-wide scale. Conasupo's distributing agency, Diconsa, will buy close to 490 billion pesos worth of products from a great variety of industrial enterprises. And this year, Conasupo will also import 3.1 million metric tons of corn, sorghum, beans and

At a first level of operations, Conasupo buys crops produced locally, paying a guaranteed price to small farmers. It also imports the amounts of those and other food products necessary to assure that the needs of the people are met in a timely manner. According to its Director, José Ernesto Costemalle Botello, Conasupo has handled some 100 million metric tons of

Conasupo's retail marketing activities are carried out through Diconsa, with 17,000 outlets, 80 percent of which are located in poor urban neighborhoods. Some 20,000 different products are marketed in those stores. Savings range from 15 to 30 percent in relation to prices on the private market.

Conasupo's wholesale activities are carried out by

other activities, Conasupo runs Borunconsa, a system of rural warehouses, and Andsa, a nation-wide system of silos.

SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED INDUSTRIES

The past Vice-President of the National Association of Economists (Colegio Nacional de Economistas), David Colmenares Páramo, claims that Conasupo actually helps to reactivate the nation's productive plant by buying a variety of products from small and medium-sized industries.

Conasupo's Director, Costemalle Botello, points out, for example, that Diconsa has a special program just to support those sectors (PAPMI, Support Program for Small and Medium-Sized Industry). In 1986, Diconsa will buy products valued at 65 billion pesos from establishments in those sectors. In addition, Impecsa will buy some 2 billion pesos worth of products from the same kind of businesses. In this way, he explains, small and medium-sized industries are protected from decapitalization processes, while at the same time they are provided with a guaranteed outlet for their products.

OPINIONS ON CONASUPO

Mexico has a mixed economy (with public, private and social capital), and the Constitution establishes the state's role in the nation's economy. Within this context, Conasupo is a para-state enterprise that regulates and supplies basic products to low-income Mexicans. Its basic purpose is to prevent speculation, hoarding and intermediaries in the production and distribution of food.

President Miguel de la Madrid has said in this regard, "In a society such as ours, still underdeveloped in many aspects of its



Photo by uno más uno

One of Conasupo's ICONSA plants.

powdered milk, at a cost of some 250 million pesos.

Nonetheless, some private sector groups complain that Conasupo is their "disloyal" competitor, even though the Mexican state has been involved in the supply and regulation of food products for the past 56 years.

CONASUPO'S STRUCTURE

Conasupo works in the following areas: the marketing of agricultural products, wholesale and retail commerce, the industrialization of food production and related services.

basic goods in its 21 years of operations; that would be enough to feed the present Mexican population for the next four years.

Costemalle Botello adds that Mexico must import some 40 million metric tons of basic grains each year, mainly beans, corn and rice, as well as large quantities of other products because the country has yet to become self-sufficient in food production. One of the principal obstacles in this regard, he explains, is that the use of "most of our arable land depends entirely on seasonal rain."

Impecsa (Small Business Improvement Company). Some 95,000 small and medium-sized businesses are supplied through this system.

In its industrial activities, Conasupo will process 1.1 million metric tons of grains this year to produce wheat and corn flours, vegetable oils, bread, pastas, crackers and other products. Conasupo operates three businesses for this purpose: Triconsa, for wheat processing, Miconsa, for corn processing and Liconsa, for milk.

In the service sector, among

economic structure, the government must intervene and regulate the market in an adequate manner, so as to benefit and protect that same society." And Conasupo's Director, Costemalle Botello, asserts that "the state shall maintain its economic control, inflexibly and efficiently, as set out in the Constitution; not to do so, would be to renounce our history and to deny the principles which are at the very heart of the Constitution."

Thus, Conasupo will continue to guarantee a minimum income for small farmers (by buying their crops) and to strengthen small and medium-sized industries (by buying their products), as well as small businesses, in order to protect Mexico's consumers.

The Assistant Director of the Center for the Study of Agrarian History in Mexico, Everardo Escárcega, claims that the private sector cannot possibly operate as an institution to satisfy the needs of the majority of the population. "The private sector simply is not willing to offer milk, bread and basic grains at low prices to poor

people, especially to those who live farthest away from the country's major development centers." He adds that Conasupo's regulatory role is unquestionable when it comes to products related to people's most basic needs, since its interest "is social and yields no profit." He goes on to explain that Conasupo carries out its social function by purchasing products at a guaranteed price and through its subsidies "which are one way of redistributing income." Thus, it can guarantee that low-income sectors have access to basic goods.

Referring to state subsidy policies, Colmenares Páramo asserts that in principle, the state created "an irrational system of subsidies because it was designed to cover the private sector's inefficiency and its inability to fulfill its function" in this aspect of the economy. At the same time, though, he accepts that the subsidies have served to compensate for insufficient salaries: "A subsidy is a way of assuring a minimum of basic goods for low-income groups."

Nonetheless, according to

Colmenares Páramo, the current administration's policy is to eliminate subsidies for poor consumers, while maintaining those for the business sector. Yet there is already a trend toward monopoly, as five giant businesses control 80 percent of all business transactions in Mexico.

Conasupo's director points out, however, that the social part of the commercial sector (Conasupo, stores run by unions, etc.) accounts for 15 percent of Mexico's commerce. He adds that while this percentage is small, it helps to regulate markets in basic goods. He rejects claims by Mexico's Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (Concanaco) that Conasupo represents "disloyal" competition, explaining that it operates within the same framework as the private sector, abiding by the same legal, fiscal and labor codes, as established by law. "We have no advantage with respect to the private sector," he concludes.

And finally, President de la Madrid states in reference to the private sector's participation in the buying and

selling of basic food products, "We are not willing to allow private intervention to bring about a return to the inefficient, speculative practices that, unfortunately, have historically characterized this market."

FOOD: AN HISTORIC PRIORITY OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT

In countries with a mixed economy, the state plays a regulatory role between the private and public sectors. Even in the United States, where state intervention in the economy is minimal, there are state-regulatory mechanisms: the Commodities Credit Corporation and the Federal Reserve, to give two examples. Without them the U.S. economy would be in a state of constant chaos, running the risk of repeated crises such as the Great Crash of 1929.

In Mexico's case, regulating the economy alone would not be sufficient. The fact that significant sectors of the population live in conditions of extreme poverty means that the state must regulate other areas as well, in order to prevent a widen-



One of Conasupo's ICONSA plants.



Conasuper, the neighborhood store.

ing of the gap between those who have and those who have not. Not to do so, would be to run the risk of unleashing another blood-bath, as occurred with the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) when more than a million people were killed.

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Thus, in Mexico, the precedent for regulating and guaranteeing food supplies dates to October 1930, with the creation of the Consultative Committees for Primary Consumption Products, in charge of preventing price increases. Only through these kinds of measures has the Mexican state been able to assure a profit to producers and fair prices to consumers during the last fifty years.

Before condemning any and all forms of state control and demanding that all production mechanisms be turned over to the private sector as seems to be the case among certain business groups and leaders, it is important to reflect on the possible effects of such a decision for

Mexico. Would private control of all aspects of production help improve the economy, or would it exacerbate the situation by generating a new polarization between the few who would have everything and the many who would have almost nothing? The latter situation would clearly produce a new social explosion that could well surpass the proportions of the Mexican Revolution.

Perhaps the people who suggest simple solutions for Mexico's problems haven't realized that their recipes are based on a different model of society, with an economy that works on different premises. And we must ask, is it really possible to apply formulas derived from one model, to a different model, in a different context, without having to pay an extremely high political cost, without provoking a period of social upheaval that could easily affect the country's life for the next fifty years?★

Adriana de la Mora

No one really knows how it all started. It's been rather like death, spinning its web slowly, calmly, and finally catching everyone up in it, almost imperceptibly.

Many people say it's simply one more evil of our times, the debt come due on modernization, to be paid by all humanity, with no possibility for a moratorium, to borrow another fashionable word of our times.

The ancient lakes have disappeared from the valley of Mexico, given way to the buildings that shelter the thousands of people who have emigrated to the country's center. The rivers that criss-crossed the city have been diverted underground to make way for roads, and their waters now mix with industrial waste and sewage.

Those kinds of measures were once a "solution" to the city's immediate problems; but no one was thinking about the future then.

"We must look to history, and not just the recent past, to understand the roots of the deterioration of atmospheric quality in the valley of Mexico," says Fernando Ortiz Monasterio, an outstanding researcher concerned with the potential consequences of environmental deterioration. He claims that since prehispanic times, the population has tended to concentrate in the valley. "The same thing happened during the colonial period; and now we also confront a style of urbanization that concentrates the population here, that has attracted twenty percent of the country's total population."

Pollution in the City: Edging Towards Catastrophe?

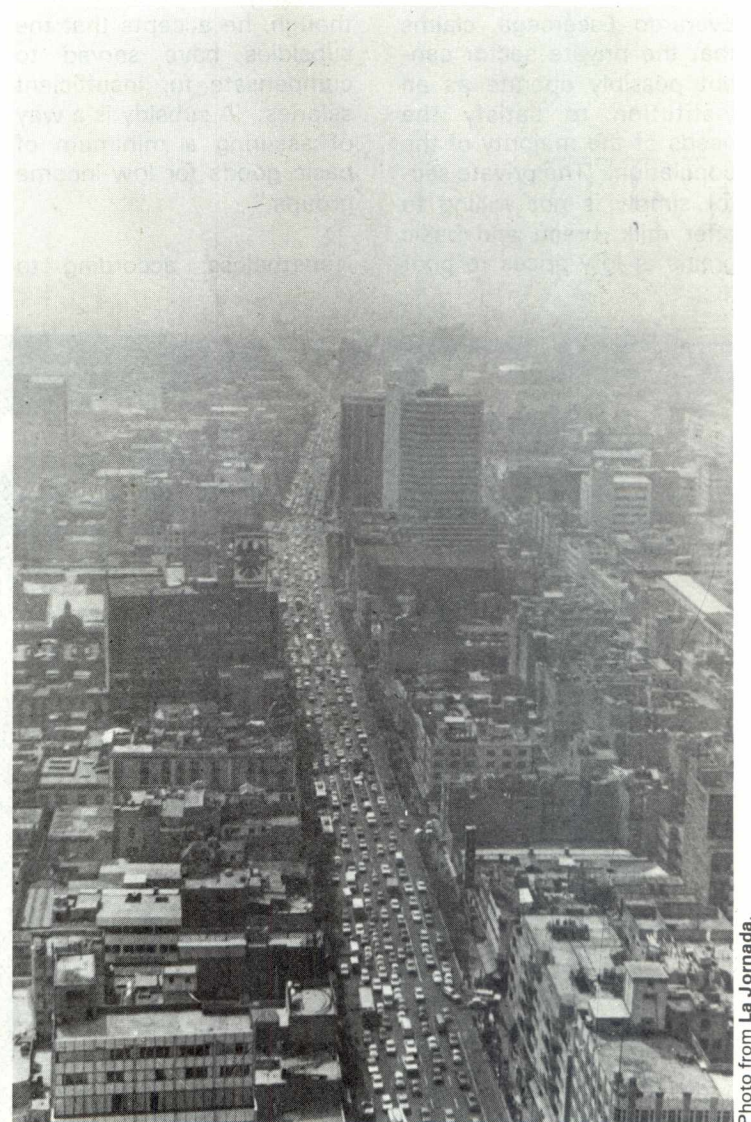
All Mexicans know the smog problem is serious; the question is, what can we do about it?

*The air bleeds on the city
Light dove that the falcon flies over*

*It's not yet night and the sky's
dense, as if with storm.*

José Emilio Pacheco

By now, no one among the 18 million inhabitants of the world's most populated metropolitan area can claim to be very far removed from the environmental havoc generated by six tons of contaminants suspended in the city's air.



Mid-morning in Mexico City.

Photo from La Jornada.

IN PURSUIT OF THE FUTURE

In 1900, Mexico City had 390,000 inhabitants living in the 250 square kilometers that fell within city limits. In 1930, there were 740,000 people, by 1940, there were one million and by 1950, the population had grown to 3.5 million. Today, 18 million of us live in a 1500 square kilometer area. From the figures it is obvious that urban growth has been extremely rapid. And to make matters worse, there has been almost no planning based on geographic realities.

Ortiz Monasterio explains that the city's problems are critically influenced by the fact that it is located in a completely closed hydrologic basin. Wind velocity is less than 1.5 meters per second, impeding the flow of clean air through the area,



Photo from La Jornada.

A difficult problem to solve

and to the contrary, actually trapping certain contaminants in specific zones.

Perhaps the only sound plan for a habitable capital city was designed during the Lázaro Cárdenas presidency (1934-1940). The 1935 Development Plan for Mexico City projected a population of 2 million for the city after a 50 year period of growth. It contemplated solutions for a series of key problems: the preservation of the city's historic center, a design for transportation and roadways, increased agricultural production and supplies for the city, an ecological reserve and most importantly, industrial development poles.

Today's reality is quite different. Cardenas' plan is but a nostalgic memory. Ten years after the plan was written, the city's population had already surpassed the goal set for 1985.

THE SPECTER IS WITH US

The problems that were not corrected in their due time are with us today: anarchic growth, terrible traffic, industrial concentration and the end result of all of these, pollution. Before, pollution was just a specter, whose mention would conjure up fears for the future. But now the specter is with us constantly.

A researcher at Mexico City's Metropolitan Autonomous University, Arturo Espitia, offers the following statistics: in 1976, some 1.6 million tons of contaminants were loose in the atmosphere; in 1981 there were almost 4 million tons of atmospheric contaminants. And according to data provided by Jorge Legorreta at the Eco-Development Center (a dependency of the National Council for Science and Technology, CONACYT), by 1983 there were approximately

5.647 million tons of particulate contaminants.

Ortiz Monasterio claims that the three million cars that circulate in Mexico City are responsible for more than 80% of the pollution, with local industry responsible for the rest.

Jorge Legorreta's study has produced alarming figures, even for the world's most polluted city, where virtually every known contaminant is present. "Industry contributes 20% of the annual production of atmospheric contaminants: approximately 393,000 tons of sulfur dioxide, 130,000 tons of hydrocarbons, 114,000 tons of carbon monoxide and 383,000 tons of a variety of particulate matter."

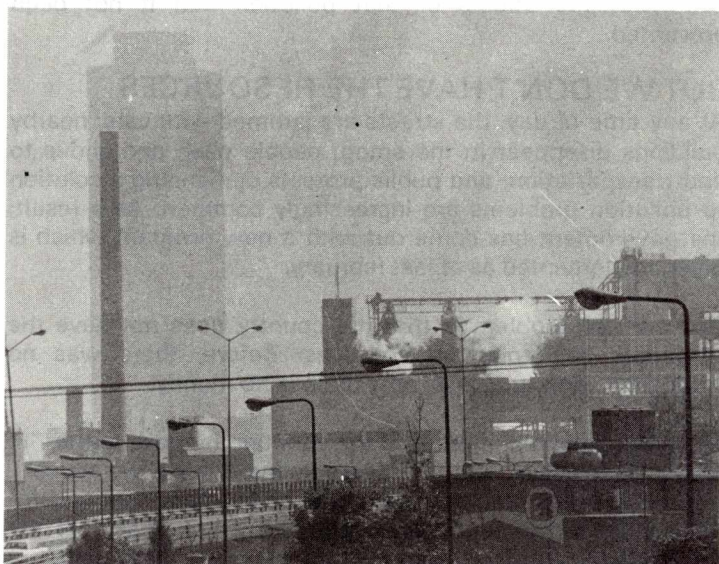


Photo from La Jornada.

Mexico City pollution.

At the same time, growth has provoked an almost insatiable predation on the green areas that once surrounded Mexico City. The average green area per inhabitant is only 0.4 square meters, compared to the 9 square meters recommended as a minimum by international standards. Seventy-five percent of the woodlands have been destroyed, almost entirely to make way for urbanization.

Another equally serious factor must be added to those already mentioned as part of the city's pollution problem: residual waters (only 70% of the sewage is collected by the city's sewage system). And there is yet another: 10 thousand tons of solid garbage are produced daily. That represents a titanic collection task, even under the best of circumstances.

IN SEARCH OF UTOPIA?

In spite of the situation, researchers, ecologists and the public in general have hopes that the pollution can be brought under control. Environmental quality is not a luxury to be enjoyed only by the developed countries, according to Ortiz Monasterio. He speaks of viable measures and of Mexico's capacity to design the needed technology given that economic reasons make it impossible to import technology used in other parts of the world.

As Coordinator of the environmental engineering program at the Metropolitan Autonomous University, Alfonso Espitia shares Ortiz's ideas and adds that there have already been important advances in the design of instruments to measure and control pollution.

Ortiz does not believe that prohibiting industrial production in the area is the answer. Rather, pollution control mechanisms must be adopted, using tax breaks to stimulate their implementation. In addition, a good public transportation system must be created to encourage people to leave their cars at home (on the average, 70% of the vehicles on the road at any one time are cars with only one or two passengers).

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Finally, Ortiz explains that some kind of investment must be made in relation to the problem, either to deal with the causes or to deal with the effects of pollution. For example, if the pollution remains very serious, then more money will have to be spent in the health sector. He adds that studies done in the U.S. have shown that for every \$21 million spent to prevent pollution, \$28 million would have had to have been spent to deal with the effects of that pollution had it not been prevented.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES

At any time of day, the streets are jammed with cars; nearby buildings disappear in the smog; people push and shove to find transportation; and public protests demanding a solution to pollution problems are increasingly common. As a result, the government has come out with a new program which is being implemented as of last february.

But the real problem is that the country does not have the resources to implement solutions. Before, there was no ecological consciousness; now there is no money.

Ortiz Monasterio summarized the situation in these terms, "In Mexico, especially with the severe financial crisis, we are confronted with the fact that one of the phenomena that accompanies economic dependence and the brutal reality of the foreign debt, is the destruction of the natural environment."

Within this context, then, the solution must lie in society's capacity to invest its scarce resources so as to resolve its most urgent needs, those needs that concern our survival as a species.

The specialists we interviewed have made the matter all too clear for us. If the pollution problem is not solved soon, one day we may all have to flee Mexico City, or face collective ecocide.★

Enrique Vargas Anaya

in solitude and vacant, and restaurant tables were left empty.

In fact, the average Mexican family now prefers to spend their vacations at home as the inflation rate makes the prospects of travel less inviting all the time. 1985 was a difficult year for the country, marked by diplomatic conflicts, natural disasters and economic

In some countries, they even thought that Mexico City had disappeared from the map, totally destroyed in the quake.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

Tourism is important for Mexico not only because of the income it generates, but also because it is a source of development for certain regions, which lack other



Hotel restaurant at mid-day.

Photo by Carlos Gatelli.

The Tourist Industry Struggles to Stay Afloat

A recent increase in air fares raises fears that the era of cheap vacations may be over; what is the real state of the industry?

Mexico's beaches longed for visitors last December. Taxi drivers dreamed nostalgically of the good old days when there was a tourist on every corner. Hotel rooms waited,

problems. Mexico City's streets bear bitter reminders of those difficulties. And tourism fell off. While this turn of events was slowly acknowledged by government officials, businessmen and other Mexicans who make their living from it, tourism has now become an important source of concern for the country. Just when Mexico most needs non-petroleum sources of income to help ameliorate the economic crisis, the flow of tourists to the country stagnated, and in many cases, decreased.

Drug traffic accusations, last September's earthquakes, disinformation campaigns and defamatory declarations all conspired against Mexico.

major productive activities.

While the reduction in tourism does not have the same dire effects for Mexico as the drop in international oil prices, nonetheless, the country has suffered important losses in this area. At the beginning of 1986, the Mexican National Bank stated that 17.5 percent fewer tourists visited Mexico last year than the year before, while 11 percent more Mexicans left the country for vacations. These figures imply a net foreign exchange loss of \$800 million. Border transactions had a negative balance of some \$340 million, and foreign exchange generated by tourism dropped by \$400 million.

In the first three years of the De la Madrid administration, tourism brought in a total of \$8.936 billion; that is, 20.2 per cent of non-petroleum earnings. In addition tourism related jobs provided employment, directly or indirectly, for 1.7 million Mexicans in 1985, a year in which unemployment was an immediate problem for millions of families. A wide range of government authorities and businessmen who work in the field have indicated that tourism is the country's principal source of foreign exchange after the sale of oil and its derivatives.

Nonetheless, the tourist industry's development has gone against the canons of economic logic. Everyone expected that the continued devaluation of the peso would mean an increase in the number of tourists; but the opposite has been the case. Since 1983, there are fewer international visitors to Mexico than before.

In 1985 our beaches, mountains, national parks, archeological zones and cities received 700,000 fewer tourists than the year before. And even though each of the 4 million visitors spent an average of \$429 during their stay (2.1% more than in 1984), the total income for the country declined by 11.7 per cent.

SOME EXPLANATIONS

People decide to visit a foreign country for basically subjective reasons. Thus, a negative statement by a government official of another country can mean millions of dollars in losses for a country with a large tourist industry.

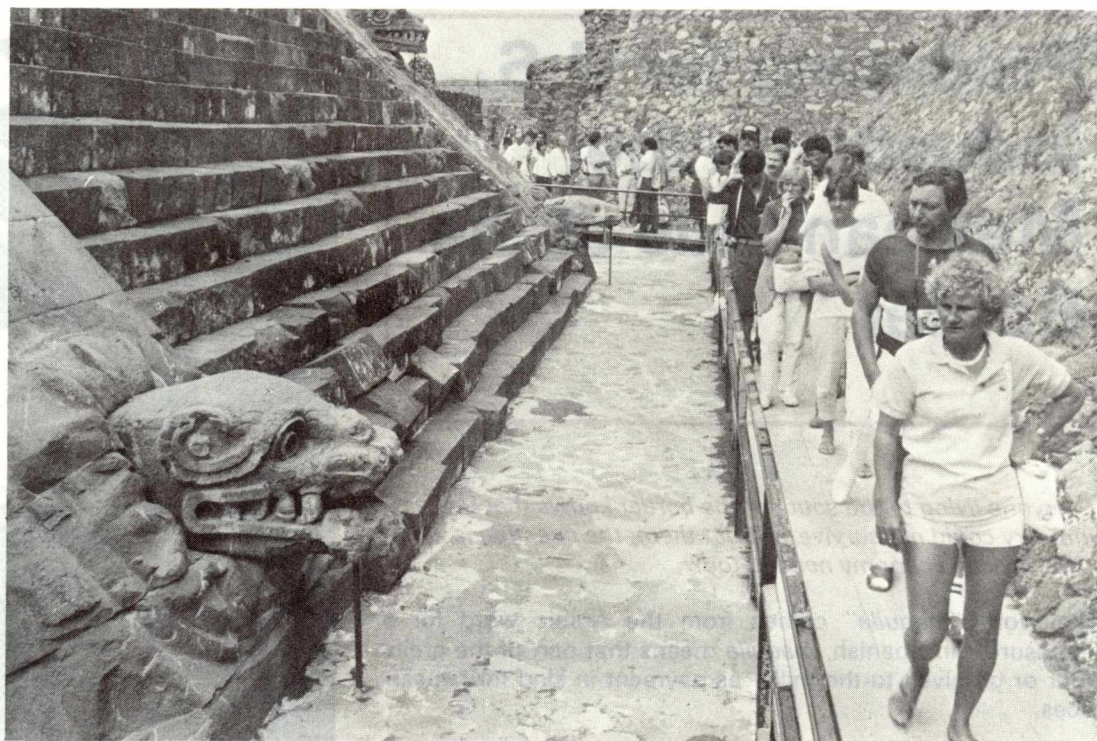
Mexican tourism depends not only on the country's beauty, but also on the international situation and disputes that may arise in that sphere. We need only remember the campaign against Mexico in the 70s when our representative to the United Nations supported a declaration that

condemned Zionism as a form of racism, or the diplomatic crisis that resulted when the U.S. State Department declared that it was dangerous to travel on Mexican highways. The latter phenomenon was almost repeated in 1984 when John Gavin, former U.S. ambassador, debated the possibility of issuing a new statement warning of the dangers of Mexico's

traffickers had established bases that were later left behind as a result of Mexican police and military operations, were temporarily abandoned by foreign tourists.

Six months later, one of the worst natural disasters in our history struck Mexico City. Yet, only five of the city's hotels were totally destroyed in the quake, eight

the fluctuating exchange rates by raising their prices inordinantly and asking that bills be paid in dollars. Yet even official controls have been unable to correct the situation completely. The lack of coordination between Mexican travel agencies and their U.S. counterparts has at times provoked other problems, perhaps most importantly, two sets of rates, one for national tourists and



Tourists visiting the Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacan.

highways. At that time, Mexico's Minister of Tourism stated that the country was being unjustly harmed and that "a joint analysis was needed regarding the decision to issue a statement which, in our judgement, does not correspond to the facts."

In February and March of 1985, Mexico was affected by the tragic death of Enrique Camarena Salazar, an agent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency working in Mexico to combat narcotics traffic. In the days following his murder, the U.S. imposed drastic customs measures throughout the border zone that cut overland tourism by 15 percent. Puerto Vallarta and Guadalajara, where drug

more partially collapsed, 22 reported major damages, 25 had minor damages and 51 suffered superficial effects. Forty-two hotels were not affected at all.

Understandably, this had an adverse effect on tourism; nonetheless, the government responded rapidly. The National Fund for the Development of Tourism immediately designated a fifteen billion peso credit for the reconstruction of tourist facilities damaged in the earthquake.

The decline in tourism has other explanations, as well. The government imposed controls on hotel rates in an attempt to correct problems caused by businessmen who were taking advantage of

the other for foreign visitors. This situation has meant that Mexico is less competitive in relation to other tourist-seeking countries and is actually an expensive place for tourists to visit.

WITH OPEN ARMS

Despite the serious economic crisis, the Mexican government is willing to appropriate significant funds for investment and to make policy changes that will help to improve services for tourists. A recently developed program calls for new promotional rates and vacation packages through airlines that fly to Mexico, as well as reductions in hotel and other service rates.

Fares will be lowered by 20 to 40 percent. New charter

the nation

flights, popular with foreign tourists, are being authorized. Mexico's highways now have more service stations than ever, and they're equipped to sell butane gas for campers. And a number of changes have been made in economic policies to stimulate investment in tourism.

help the country to meet its huge debt payments, and it is not only a source of jobs for tens of thousands. Beyond these pragmatic aspects, tourism provides the Mexican people with the opportunity to offer their traditional hospitality to visitors from around the world.★

12 Tourism not only attracts resources to Mexico that

Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán

Producing for U.S. Industry on the Mexican Side of the Border

Everyone living to the south of the border knows that U.S. industry could not survive without them; the question is, does the Mexican economy need it, too?

The word "*maquila*" comes from the Arabic word for a "measure." In Spanish, *maquila* means that part of the grain, flour or oil given to the miller as payment in kind for his services.

Today, the word is used to refer to the practice of subcontracting the production or assembly of certain goods to a firm, which will then be used in the productive process of another firm. This process was first introduced in the 1960s in Mexico's northern states, especially in Baja California, Sonora and Chihuahua. By the early 1970s, the practice had become entrenched, aided by new legislation referring to the *maquiladora* industry.

In Baja California, both private industry, as well as government-run enterprises, such as the Urban Development Agency of Tijuana, with federal, state and municipal government participation, use this process. In the early 1980s, the New Tijuana City Industrial Complex was built, and more recently construction began on two new industrial parks, *El Florida*, near Tecate, and *La Gloria*, on the road toward Rosarito, all of which serve *maquiladora* industries.

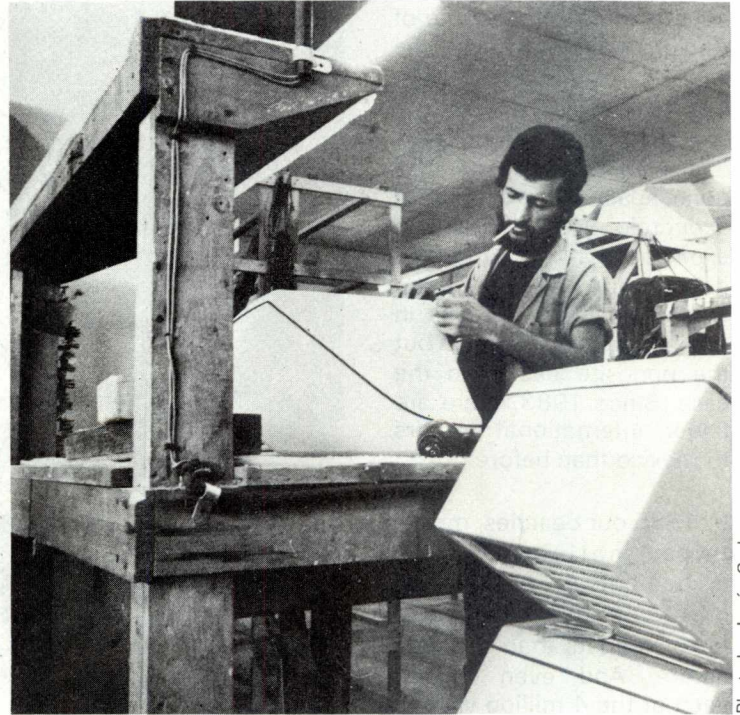
By providing official sanction for the *maquiladora* industry, the Mexican government hoped to slow the flow of migration to the U.S. and to create industrial development centers within the country. But twenty-one years later, can we say that the *maquiladoras* have either slowed the out-migration or contributed to reactivating the Mexican economy?

For Mexico, the *maquiladoras* represent the use of cheap labor working intensive work shifts; in other words, they generate jobs and foreign exchange. For the U.S., they represent the possibility to reduce production costs significantly, to

maintain competitive prices for its products on the world market and to have practically union-free shops. Thus, they have received preferential treatment.

Export-oriented *maquiladoras* have been established especially along Mexico's northern border. Eighty-nine percent of these plants are located in 34 municipal areas stretched across the 2,547 km.-long border with the United States. By the year 2000, some eight million jobs will be taken from the U.S. and reestablished in developing countries. Three million of them could well be in Mexico.

According to some calculations, Mexico has the potential to export more than \$5 billion in goods produced by *ma-*



Maquila industry.

quiladoras. In fact, *maquiladoras* already represent ten percent of all of Mexico's manufacturing activities.

Jesús Tamayo, researcher at CIDE (a graduate-level research and teaching institution that works in the areas of economics, public administration, international affairs, political studies and applied mathematics), states that the *maquila* moves forward because it is not a national project, but is rather, multi-national. "It grows in the midst of paralyzation." The problem is that the government has neither a sectorial nor a regional policy for the *maquila*, although Tamayo acknowledges that they have helped to create jobs and to produce foreign exchange, even though most of the dollars end up being spent in the U.S.

According to the CIDE researcher, the *maquiladoras* brought in about \$1 billion annually before the economic crisis. This year it is likely that they will once again bring in that amount of income. And he adds that what this means is that Mexico will earn about the same amount of foreign exchange for double the effort because of the falling exchange rate of the peso against the dollar.

According to Jorge Salman Haddad, President of the Coordinating Council of *Maquiladora* Industries, by 1992, Mexico will be the home for the largest number of *maquiladoras* in

the world. Growth in this sector has averaged twelve percent annually, and is the second-most important industrial earner of foreign exchange after oil. Haddad also maintains that *maquiladora* industries produced \$1.5 billion in value added last year, and that this year, the figure will reach \$2 billion.

Haddad explains that until now, only about three percent of the components used by the *maquila* are Mexican-made, "because quality is insufficient and because our costs are higher than those on the international market."

Jorge Tamayo has a different point of view. He claims that the only local input that is of interest to the *maquiladoras* is the cheap labor. "They're not looking for any other (Mexican-made) inputs," he states clearly. One of the most important reasons for this is Mexico's serious technological limitations, which are related both to governmental and private industrial factors.

The National Chamber of Transformation Industries, CANACINTRA, which represents 76,000 of the country's 130,000 industries, takes the position that the *maquiladoras* should complement national industries. "They are not really a valid alternative for the country's industrialization because healthy economic development requires sufficient independence to be able to implement our own development model," in the words of Gilberto Ortiz Muñoz, director of CANACINTRA's magazine, *Transformación*.

Francisco Báez, researcher and professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM, says that the solution for the country's economic and social problems will not be found in the *maquila* because it is so dependent on "the vagaries of international economics, and thus would affect our sovereignty in relation to economic policy." The idea with the *maquiladoras* is to tie Mexican businesses into foreign enterprises. He considers the *maquiladoras* to be a source of modernization, "a completely transitory element that provides foreign exchange, increases employment, and serves as a link

between the northern border integrated into the nation and Mexico's border integrated into the international market."

Since 1956, when the Border-Area Industrialization Program was set into motion by the Mexican government, the industries which have undergone the greatest development in the zone have been Hughes Aircraft, RCA Corporation, General Electric, General Motors and Chrysler, all transnational corporations that depend directly on their central offices in the United States for decision-making.

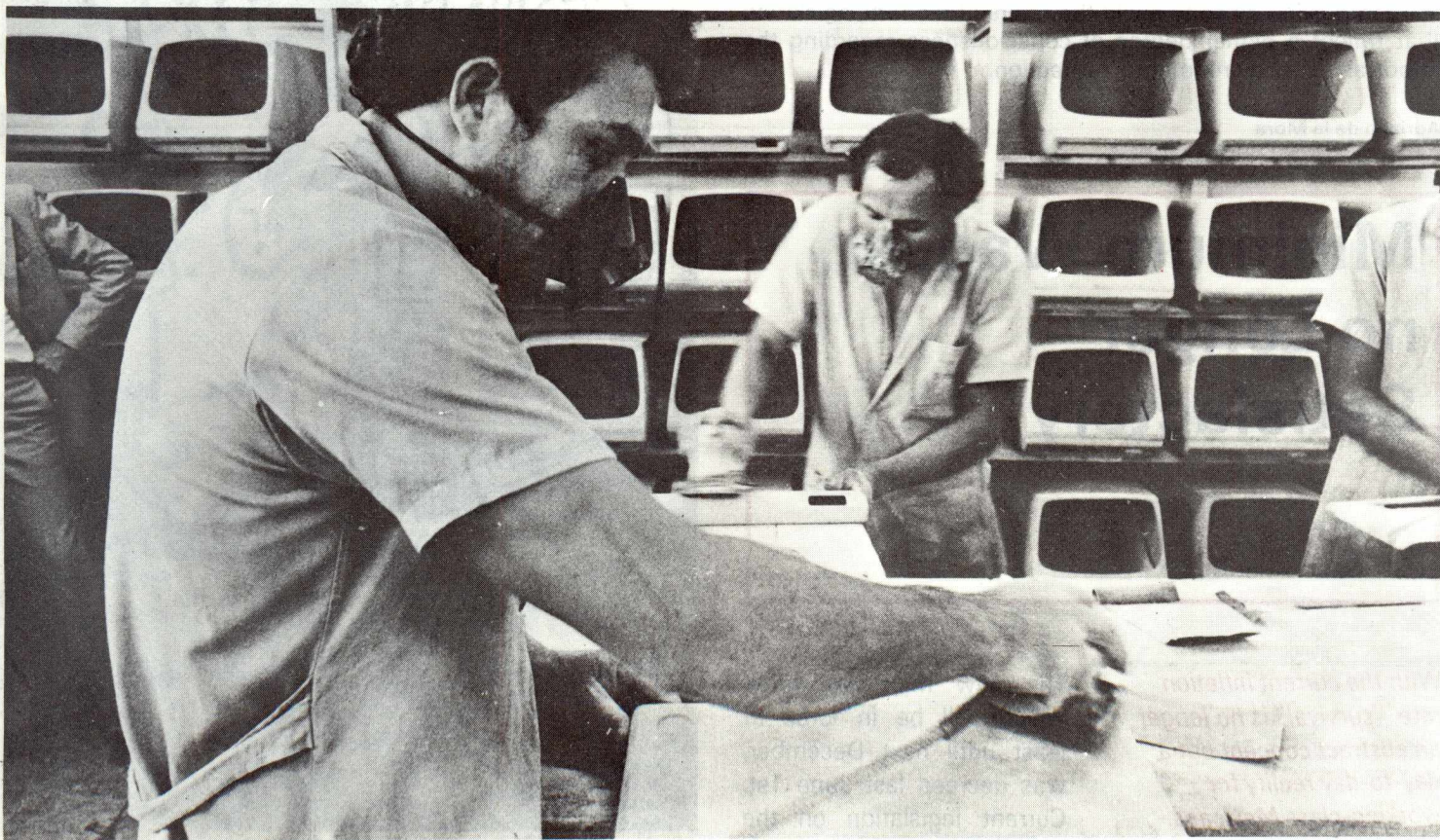
THE SITUATION FOR LABOR

Some 300,000 workers are employed in *maquiladora* industries. The majority of them are not unionized, and many are women.

According to data collected by SECOFI (the Ministry of Commerce and Industrial Development), female labor predominates in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the clothing, machinery, electrical devices and electronics industries. And in the same study, it was shown that since 1965 when the country began to encourage the establishment of *maquiladoras*, 77.3 percent of the workers employed are women.

Jesús Tamayo has found that in the *maquila* plants, women work for very low wages, at relatively unskilled jobs and with no job security. Workers are generally paid the Mexican minimum wage (2,600 pesos per day), although they may earn a bit more, depending on the specific location or type of industry.

Obviously, workers in the U.S. would have to be paid much more. In fact, the *maquiladoras* often have to confront strong opposition from local unions. And since 1967, the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO has accused U.S. business of giving preference to creating jobs outside of the United States.



Electronics plant on the border.

Tamayo explains that the weakness or simple non-existence of unions in *maquiladora* industries is one of their main characteristics. "The unions that do exist in the sector do not defend worker's rights, but rather actually serve to increase their exploitation. They are distorted in that way." Thus, he adds, it is important for workers to unite to organize and struggle for better working conditions in the *maquiladoras*.

Much of this goes on because the legislation regarding *maquiladoras* makes it easy for management to rotate the work force. A new worker in a *maquiladora* does not become "permanent" until she or he has worked in the plant for 90 days. Thus, it is possible to fire workers during this period without having to pay severance pay. Tamayo claims that this phenomenon is related to pressures from the United States that hope to use the northern part of Mexico as a platform for exports and to validate the presence of the U.S. productive plant in Mexican territory. "The *maquiladoras* are an extension of U.S. manufacturing activities; they absorb the ups and downs in the U.S. economy," he says.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

For Jesús Tamayo, the *maquiladora* industries present the following characteristics now and into the future:

- * by the year 2000, Mexico will be saturated with *maquiladoras*;
- * there are no training programs for workers in these industries;
- * its growth is related to totally exogenous-external factors, and there is no internal strategy to control those factors adequately.
- * they receive "liberal," exceptional treatment; and labor laws are adapted to the demands of the industry.

As a result, Tamayo believes that there will be profound changes in the class structure of the northern border area, specifically in Sonora, Northern Baja California and Chihuahua. As a part of the same analysis, Tamayo states that pollution will also increase dramatically in the region since many of the U.S. businesses that leave their country to set up shop in Mexico do so to avoid the rigors of modern legislation that reflect a higher degree of consciousness regarding the importance of environmental protection.★

Adriana de la Mora

Minimum Wages no Longer Satisfactory

With the current inflation rate, "survival" is no longer an abstract concept but a day-to-day reality for working-class Mexicans.

The new minimum wage which will be in force at least until next December, was decreed last June 1st. Current legislation on the matter defines this wage as

"The minimum amount that a worker should receive in cash for services rendered during a day's work," and also that "it should suffice to cover a family wage-earner's normal material, social and cultural needs, including mandatory education for his children."

This was the spirit of the law present in wage negotiations since 1965, the year when minimum wages were first enacted in response to demands made by the labor movement. At the time, Mexico wasn't plagued by its present-day economic and financial troubles. The minimum wage climbed steadily over the next ten years, the only period in history during which Mexican worker's basic income, and real purchasing power, actually increased.

The trend was reversed in 1976, and by 1982 the deteriorating purchasing

power of wages became the central problem the Mexican working class faced. By the first quarter of 1986 the real value of the minimum wage had fallen to its lowest level in 21 years, and an 80% wage-increase would have been necessary to recover the purchasing power worker's had in 1977.

The falling value of wages led the National Minimum Wage Commission, which gathers worker, employer and government representatives, to begin meeting on a yearly basis instead of every two years as had been the case. As of 1985 the Commission meets every six months to analyze the situation and set the mandatory increase in the minimum wage.

Thus, the minimum wage increased 32% on the first of the year, and in June it climbed an additional 25%, meaning that workers who



Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz; Imagen Latina.

Despite the slogans, the worst of the recession is not yet over.

earn this minimum currently receive about 61,000 pesos a month, approximately \$90.

The basic expenditures of an average six-member working class family with this level of income are on food and lodging, and to a lesser extent on clothing, recreation, health and education. The state covers some of these needs, education for example, to a certain extent.

no longer afford them. Fish and meat, for example, are substituted with pasta soup and eggs, milk is replaced by coffee or tea. This, of course, is detrimental to their nutrition.

The 5 million-member Confederation of Mexican Workers, the CTM, believes that one important measure to reactivate the economy is to increase the real value of

power falls, important areas of the internal market shrink, and this in turn affects investment." In other words: nobody will be interested in producing if there are no consumers.

Fidel Velazquez, the CTM's main leader, believes companies should increase their volume of production and sales instead of resorting to higher prices for reduced sales volumes. This, of course, on the premise that a satisfactory wage will be granted.

A high percentage of Mexican workers are not organized, and this limits their ability to develop alternative protective mechanisms. Some even have a hard time getting employers to pay the mandatory minimum wage. Organized workers, on the other hand, often negotiate wages above the minimum and obtain additional services in housing and transportation, low-priced basic goods and severance pay and pensions that are higher than the law requires. These conditions are worked out

between employers and the union, and are written up in a Collective Bargaining Pact.

Yet the minimum wage is still the basis for measuring the quality of life for Mexican workers in general. The Mexican people's struggle in defense of our country's sovereignty and independence, is complemented by the struggle to increase the worker's welfare.

Mexico will have the capacity to meet its foreign debt payments only if it reactivates its economy without losing sight of the social aspects of development. If these terms are not met, the country will be forced to adopt unilateral measures, and will have labor's firm support if this is the case.

Further reductions in their real wages are unacceptable to Mexican workers. "The weight of the crisis must be equitably borne," say their leaders. ★

Ariel Rivera



Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz; Imagen Latina.

Who can buy at these prices?

Others, such as housing and health services, are covered with resources provided by workers, employers and the government on a joint basis. Most of this type of agreements have been set up under pressure from the workers.

Nonetheless, over the last years prolonged economic recession and high inflation have meant the loss of Social Security coverage for many workers, something which under previous conditions allowed them a certain leeway in their family budgets. Constant increases in the price of basic goods, mainly of food, have further aggravated the situation. Minimum wage-earning families currently spend close to 70% of their income on food, and have lately reached the point where they have to substitute certain items because they can

wages. This, they add, must be accompanied by effective price-controls and other measures that protect the purchasing power of the majority of the population. While the unions continue to insist on a series of demands, they have also developed some original ways of protecting wages and worker's consumer patterns. Such is the case of worker-operated firms that produce and distribute basic goods.

The Mexican working class' largest organization is the Labor Congress, CT, composed of 33 representative union organizations, including the CTM. The CT's position is that it's impossible to recover economic growth by keeping wages down. CT President Rafael Riva Palacio reasons that "if worker's real wages fall, meaning their purchasing

Jesse Helms's Politics of Confrontation

The ultra-right Senator from North Carolina goes after Mexico's head, and relations between the two countries hit an all-time low.

As recently as February 1985, tension ran so high between Mexico and the United States that the Mexican government referred to the state of relations as being "hypercritical." And now, little over a year later, voices were again raised on either side of the border, and a new clash has occurred in the complex relationship between two truly distant neighbors.

The hearings held by Senator Jesse Helms in the Western Hemisphere Affairs Sub-Committee, featuring Reagan administration officials, were originally scheduled for April.

Twice postponed, the hearings finally took place at a time when the scouring criticism from its powerful northern neighbor most affected Mexico.

Senator Helms's hearings seem to have been scheduled with the specific purpose of stirring further difficulties at a time when Mexico was facing two tremendously challenging situations. On the one hand, given the precarious standing of the country's foreign reserves, Mexico faced the dilemma of whether to continue debt payments or to declare a moratorium. The second problem involved decisions concerning the handling of the electoral apparatus in the upcoming elections in the state of Chihuahua, where the right-wing opposition National Action Party, the PAN, has gained enough support to challenge the ruling party's hegemony.

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The problem of drug traffic and how to fight it was not the only issue dealt with during the so-called May crisis. Economic and political implications were so important that the very legitimacy of the Mexican government was called into question. Nor is the crisis limited to the scope of bilateral relations. It touches on delicate nerves of national politics, the Chihuahua elections, and of the regional situation, such as the question of whether Mexico keeps silent vis a vis the U.S.'s increasing intervention in Central America, or opposes it.

The hearings obviously recreated the hypertensive climate which had supposedly been overcome. And Mexico delivered a surprisingly strong response. The Mexican chancellery sent the State Department a "note of protest", which is the strongest language possible in diplomatic terms.

During the first hearing, criticism of Mexico coming from Senator Helms, from Under-Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliot Abrams, and from Customs chief Wil-

liam von Raab, all received great coverage. Testimony from the DEA and the CIA concerning the increase in drug-traffic activity, police corruption and electoral fraud in 1985, also received a great deal of publicity.

The Reagan administration was aware that testimony from these officials before the Senate sub-committee would irritate Mexico. Mr. Helms himself went public with something that should have remained confidential: that the Mexican embassy in Washington had called him several times to warn that the hearings would "provoke rifts in a highly sensitive relationship..."

These facts, together with the absence of direct, official excuses for what was said at the hearings, clearly show that Senator Helms' initiative was no stranger to the White House strategy toward Mexico. On the contrary, the hearings complement the game of pressure and gestures aimed at forcing the Mexican government into acting in accordance with U.S. interests.

On the other hand, there was an initially favorable response to Mexico's note of protest, though this was so only in the press. This was one of those rare occasions when the U.S. press picked up on the points of view of Mexican officials regarding matters of concern to both countries.

The Mexican note stated that the declarations heard in the sub-committee were of an "interventionist nature" and "constituted a clear and inadmissible violation of Mexican sovereignty." The Senate hearings were described in the note as "an unfriendly attitude toward my country."

But despite the strong terms used by the Mexican government in its protest, there was an attempt to keep the Reagan



The defense of national sovereignty brings together different political forces.

Photo by Rogelio Cuéllar

administration out of it: "My government expresses its displeasure at the lack of coincidence with the recognition President Ronald Reagan and his closest advisors have expressed in favor of Mexico's efforts to advance our bilateral relations."

The phrase was meant to overlook the participation of Abrams and Von Raab in the hearings, both of whom are Reagan administration officials, and by no means part of the

"small group of Senators" referred to in the communiqué. This generous concession on the part of the Mexican chancellery was not responded to with equal elegance by Secretary of State Shultz. He merely responded that he "took note of Mexico's concern," and immediately proceeded to restate the need for Mexico to recognize the gravity of the drug-traffic problem and to increase efforts to control it.

March to Defend National Sovereignty

On May 21, a large demonstration was held in Mexico City, called by an ad hoc group of public figures, representing a variety of progressive political, economic, social and cultural sectors. The march was called to express discontent over the declarations made in the Helms Senate Subcommittee a few days earlier. Writers, former government officials, current members of Congress, Ministers of State, governors, political delegates, labor leaders, businessmen and students participated to voice their response to pressures emanating from the U.S., regarding a series of internal Mexican matters.

Several thousand demonstrators marched from the Mexican Revolution's Monument to the Zócalo (main city square), where there was a short rally to denounce the U.S. campaign to defame our country, led by ultra-right sectors. The participation of people from very diverse political and ideological positions, as well as the strong anti-interventionist slogans coming from them, made the event particularly noteworthy.

Such important figures as Mexico's former representative to the U.N., Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, the director of CREA, Heriberto Galindo, PRI Congressman, Juan José Bremer, the director of ISSSTE* Alejandro Carrillo Castro, the Under-Secretary of Banks, Carlos Sales, and former ambassador to Cuba, Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá were present at the march and rally.

Just before the rally began, a communiqué was read, issued by the Permanent Commission of the Congress, which

acknowledged the right of members of Congress to participate voluntarily in the demonstration. It also expressed their open repudiation of the interventionist attitude of certain groups in the U.S. Senate.

The only speaker was actress Ofelia Medina. She read a statement representing the official position of the march's sponsors and participants. Interrupted several times as the crowd shouted anti-interventionist slogans, Medina recounted the numerous forms of pressure being exerted on Mexico from the United States. And she explained the logic behind the kinds of statements made in the Senate Hearings: "They've been quite explicit in saying that they'll pressure Mexico from all sides to make us conform to their interests, their prejudices, their messianic ideology, their desires to dominate our nation."

At the close of the rally, the participants all sang the national anthem, but not before first chanting party slogans and others supporting the President's foreign policy and criticizing international financial institutions.

As the participants slowly dispersed, the event's sponsors stayed around to exchange their impressions with other political, economic and cultural leaders. Several of them talked to us about their opinions on the Senate Hearings and the kinds of reactions they've sparked throughout Mexico.

Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, formerly Mexico's ambassador to the United Nations, stated that the march demonstrated

national solidarity in support of our country's basic principles, and that in fact, it represented the formation of a national democratic front for independence and the preservation of national values.

A number of people expressed the opinion that the march unified the interests of diverse social and political sectors in defense of the nation. Heriberto Galindo, director of the National Council of Resources for Youth (CREA), stated that a variety of different political and ideological positions were represented among the groups that participated in the Zócalo rally and that made it a landmark event. He continued by saying that mass mobilizations can be a form of support for the government.

Héctor Aguilar Camín, winner of the 1986 national journalism award, argued that some of the opinions expressed in the Senate Hearings were in line with historical efforts to make Mexico conform, to define the course of its institutional development and to align its foreign policy to that of the U.S. During the VOICES interview he reaffirmed his view that national unity is the best response to those kinds of pressures.

Rolando Cordera Campos, noted Mexican economist, offered his view that the recent proceedings in the U.S. Senate form part of a policy designed to intervene in affairs that are only for Mexicans to discuss and define. That's why the response was so broad. The real problem, he believes, lies in the fact that this kind of intervention finds its echo in some minority political groups. Nonetheless, the majority response has been to reject those efforts, and that is positive. This rally is a clear demonstration, he concluded for VOICES, of the consensus in Mexican society against intervention in our

national affairs.

Some public officials, such as former Under-Secretary of Culture and current member of the National Congress, Juan José Bremer, were also present for the demonstration through Mexico City's streets. In an exclusive interview, Bremer declared that the march was an event of great political importance. It showed that despite ideological differences or differences in political perspective, members of political organizations or unions, artists, intellectuals, teachers, students or just ordinary citizens -the vast majority of Mexicans- have the right to resolve their own problems, to debate over how to organize our society and our economy and to deal with the great challenges ahead. And it also reflected our right to energetically reject any attempts to interfere in our affairs.

The country's patriotic sectors have responded with great indignation. That's how Eraclio Zepeda put it. The well-known writer and member of Congress declared that the march marked the beginning of a new possibility for a grass-roots alliance. The country is in crisis and in danger. We must advance toward a new national solidarity, involving new social forces. He continued that any possibility to forge unity in defense of the nation is always exhilarating, it excites us and recaptures the best of Mexico's traditions. Whenever the country has been united, it has always won. Any time that our enemies have detected strong divisions among us, they've tried to weaken us. The time has come to unite.

Ernesto Rojas and Jorge Luis Sierra

* Social Security Institute that provides health care for Mexican state workers.

Nor have subsequent statements by other U.S. officials, as part of an ongoing verbal war, clearly distanced themselves from the central point of the accusations. On the contrary, those points of view have been reiterated. The accusations made by Von Raab, John Gavin and Helms to the effect that two Mexican governors, Antonio Toledo Corro of Sinaloa, and Félix Valdés of Sonora, produce drugs on their ranches, have not been retracted, nor have they been proven, either. Attorney General Edwin Meese has yet to distance himself from these accusations.

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But the effects of Mexico's note of protest were short-lived. Shortly after the note was sent, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Bernardo Sepúlveda expressed satisfaction over Mr. Shultz's response. A national-level anti-intervention demonstration took place in the Zócalo in Mexico City, and was attended by leaders from the PRI* and left political parties.

Significantly, the PAN refused to join the chorus of voices that condemned Jesse Helms. The National Action Party no doubt counts on its allies in the north for support of its strategy, announced following the elections in Chihuahua. It was obviously not going to join in a movement that ended up expressing support for the Mexican government and confronting the very same sectors in the U.S. that the PAN hoped would support them in their charge of fraud in the Chihuahua elections.

An additional factor that Mr. Helms probably has in mind is President De la Madrid's forthcoming visit to Washington. The memory is still fresh of how President Reagan made drug traffic the central issue when the two heads of state met in Tijuana in December of last year, despite Mexico's diplomatic efforts to the contrary.

Presidents Reagan and De la Madrid have opposing points of view on this issue. The U.S. government's concern for fighting drug traffic has been raised to strategic priority level and likened to terrorism; and this is an expression of the current administration's profoundly conservative point of view.★

* The Institutional Revolutionary Party, in power.

The Vanishing Jungle

Despite legal measures to protect them, Mexico's jungles are still shrinking; if the trend continues we may face a major ecological disaster

President Miguel de la Madrid established the Commission to Protect the

Lacandon jungle as part of Mexico's participation this year in International Environment Day first instituted by the United Nations on June 5, 1972. The Presidential Decree was the first step toward having the nature reserve, "Sian Ka A'n," declared part of the



Photo by AFP

Jesse Helms attacks Mexico from the U.S. Senate.

Mexico, on the other hand, holds the position that the responsibility of consumer-countries should be linked to the problem of countries where drugs are produced and illegally traded. This means the U.S. should accept the responsibility of reducing internal consumption of drugs. This policy is not in agreement with the emphasis U.S. policy places on fighting drug traffic, rather than dealing with the causes and consequences of widely extended drug-addiction in U.S. society.

The discussions in the Senate sub-committee have obviously brought the drug traffic issue to the forefront again in bilateral relations. This is the situation on the eve of the presidential meeting, despite Mexico's efforts to keep the problem within the bounds of judicial and law-enforcement relations between the two nations.

Blanche Petrich



Photo from INAH, the National Anthropological and Historical Institute.

The jungle gives way.

patrimony of all humanity. Just a few days later, the Commission announced the indefinite suspension of credits for range cattle operations in the zone, the intensification of controls to prevent the logging of precious woods species and the total prohibition of hunting in the region.

A CRUSADE TO SAVE THE LACANDON JUNGLE

In 1448, the skies above Lacandon jungle began to cloud over, the Aztecs conquered the Chiapa and Choconochco empires and the omens of destruction drew close on the horizon.

Years later, in 1527, the second Spanish expedition to the region finally managed to subjugate the Chiapan Indians. The first expedition had been turned back after

three years of fierce resistance by the Indians. The first direct assault on the jungle occurred when Catholic religious groups uprooted the Indians from their native habitats in the zone in order to "christianize" them and to set up new towns in parts of the area that had already been colonized. Nonetheless, Spanish domination was not strong enough to subjugate the might and immensity of the jungle, which silently contemplated as its most highly developed children were conquered, subdued by the sinister *encomienda** and sold as slaves to serve the Spaniards.

Some Indian groups were able to escape and return to their native homes. Two of them had the greatest luck and still survive today: the Quejaches and a small group of Choles. They first oc-

cupied an area called Lacamtum, which the Spanish called Lacandon. This is the name they used to baptize the most hostile region, the region which they could not conquer.

THE HEARTBEAT OF THE JUNGLE

The region known as the Lacandon jungle lies between 16°04' and 17°56' north latitude and 90°22' and 92°42' west longitude. It represents some 15 percent of the jungle area in Chiapas. Recently it has been the victim of a voraciously destructive process that goes far beyond the jungle's regenerative capacity or the ability of concerned authorities to assure its conservation.

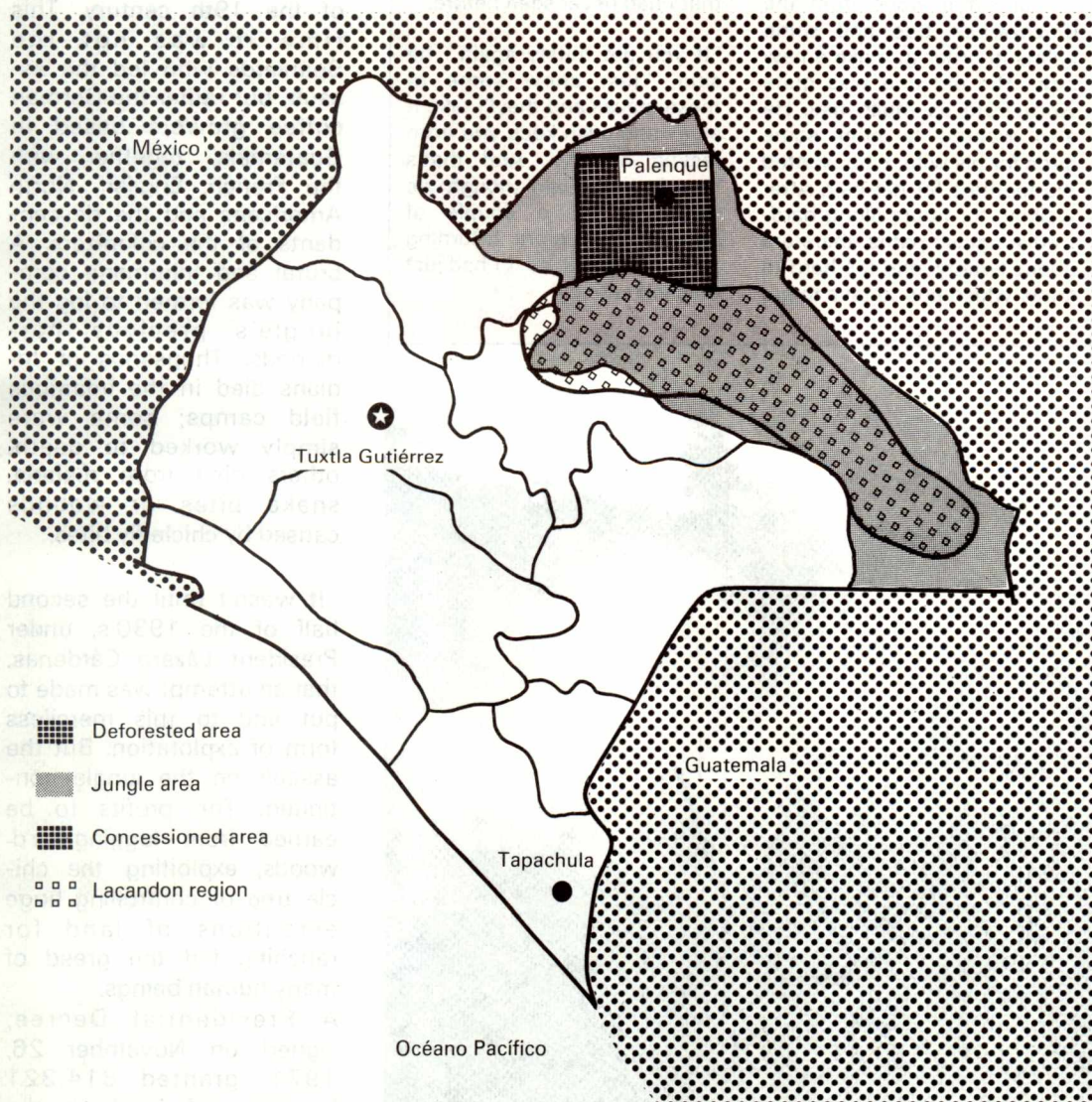
As old as America itself, the densest of jungle vegetation stretches as far north as the

state of Tabasco, as far south and east as the Guatemalan border and as far west as the Chiapan Highlands. A multitude of animal species live within its 614,321 hectares, and together give the jungle its unique voice. There are sounds that express anger, joy and sadness; combined, they are strong enough to swallow up anything that dares to defy the jungle.

Of the 25 million hectares of jungle that existed before the conquest, only 3.5 million still exist today in Chiapas. This includes the low jungle, or scrub vegetation, which covers those areas that have already been deforested and which have little possibility of being regenerated; and the high, or closed jungle, with its mahogany trees that take 200 years to grow to maturity, and that give the dense jungle part of its special character.

The closed jungle has two principal predators today. First, the Tzeltal, Chol, Tzotzil, Zoque and Lacandon Indian groups, who exploit the jungle because they have no land and no other job opportunities. Thus, they have been forced to move into the least productive parts of the forests. They use the age-old "slash and burn" method to plant corn, chiles and beans. "Slash and burn" consists of clearing the land that will become their cornfields of all vegetation, felling the large trees, letting everything dry in the 42° heat, average temperature in the zone, and then setting fire to it all. The leftover ash serves as fertilizer for the newly-cleared soil. The average productive life for a cornfield in the zone is only five years, after which the people who planted

*The *encomienda* was a system developed during the colonial period in which large groups of Indians were assigned to specific Spanish landowners, who were encharged with their conversion to Christianity. In return for their salvation, the Indians were required to provide labor, goods and services to the Spanish.



State of Chiapas, Mexico.

there will have to choose another site and begin the cycle once again. It is estimated that with each planting season, some 40,000 hectares of jungle, with its wealth of plant and animal life, fall victim to this activity.

The other major predator is the Lacandon Forest Company, which logs precious tree species and razes everything that lies in its path. The company works in eleven communities or municipal areas, including Yajalón, Sitala, Tumbalá, Salto de Agua and Palenque.

The jungle area receives an average of 2.1 meters of rainfall annually. There are deep rivers, such as the Lacantún that flows into the Usumacinta, lakes inhabited by fish and crocodiles, foliage that covers everything and twelve species of high canopy trees, including mahogany, cedars and pines, whose huge trunks provide dens for numerous animal species. The dense foliage of the canopy species prevents sunlight from penetrating to the lower levels, thus maintaining the moisture levels that permit the formation of humus. In turn the humus is crucial for soil fertility levels

Walking Through the Jungle

Marie Odile Marion, researcher at the National Anthropological and Historical Institute, has worked in the Lacandon Jungle, living among its inhabitants for the past ten years. She sits in front of me now, behind one of those desks that are so common in public offices, Odile's face expressing her enthusiasm as she talks of her most recent experiences among the Lacandon people. Her eyes are filled with the same excitement that marks her reflections on the complexity and grandness of the jungle. In our interview she describes what is a single instant in the marvelous richness of jungle life.

"We left early. K'inbor wanted to cut some wood from the *Chicozapote* tree and some palms in order to make a new bow. His old one was quite worn from so much use. He also wanted to hunt some birds for his wife, who wanted the feathers for her hair. After walking for hours along hard-to-distinguish paths, there are about twenty, and it's hard to know which one to take to get

to where you want to go...It is extremely difficult to maintain your sense of direction among so many plants and trees of the same type...

"It was already past noon; I began to feel the pangs of thirst and hunger. I couldn't stand it any longer and decided to admit my weakness."

"K'inbor, I'm hungry and thirsty; I can't go on."

"Don't worry; wait here for me."

"He leaped through the vegetation with the agility of a wild animal; in a moment, I lost sight of him. I didn't wait long, but had just enough time to reflect for a moment: despite my ten years of experience in the jungle, I wouldn't be capable of moving in it with that kind of agility. And then K'inbor reappeared with a gourd filled with water, fruit and some leaves that I had never seen before."

"If you get thirsty again," he said, "just chew some of these leaves and they'll take it away and even keep you from feeling hungry." And that's how it was. Even though we continued for a couple of hours more before returning home, I felt full, as if I had just finished eating."

since jungle soils, in themselves, tend to be rather poor.

Private companies hold 70 percent of the concessions permitting the exploitation of jungle areas, yet they have not made proposals for reforestation. The richness of the jungle has made it possible to develop precise exploitation regimes. Production now averages 275,366 cubic meters of lumber annually, or five percent of the total exploitable resources. Even at the present rate and without including clandestine logging operations which avoid official controls, the jungle flora will be totally depleted within the next eighty years.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

The penetration of the jungle accelerated rapidly throughout the second half of the 19th century. This time it was not the Spaniards who led the assault, but rather the German coffee growers based in Guatemala, together with the French, English, North Americans and the descendants of the colonizers. A brutal and inhumane company was formed to log the jungle's precious hardwoods. Thousands of Indians died in the infamous field camps; some were simply worked to death, others died from malaria, snake bites or wounds caused by chicle fly bites.

It wasn't until the second half of the 1930's, under President Lázaro Cárdenas, that an attempt was made to put end to this merciless form of exploitation. But the assault on the jungle continued. The profits to be earned from logging hardwoods, exploiting the chicle tree or controlling huge extensions of land for ranching fed the greed of many human beings.

A Presidential Decree, signed on November 26, 1971, granted 614,321 hectares of land to the Lacandon Indians as a



Slash and burn.

natural biosphere reserve. Nonetheless, these lands are once again threatened. A highway is being built that slices through the jungle from north to south, splitting the region and further facilitating the excesses of the hardwoods operations.

The jungle has eighty more years to live, before it is totally destroyed, together with the four Indian groups and hundreds of animal species which inhabit it. For more than a century now, the jungle has used its natural defenses against sophisticated forms of deforestation, but the toughest battles are yet to be fought. The death of the jungle would signify the loss of a part of our cultural heritage, the extinction of hundreds of plant and animal species and the

destruction of one of the country's most important "natural lungs," endangering adjacent areas of Guatemala and Mexico at the same time.

This is the imminent danger in the case of the ancestral Lacandon jungle. The situation demands that we develop a new consciousness of our **relationship** to nature: while it is true that people should take advantage of the environment for our own benefit and development, it is also true that we must do so in a programmed and responsible manner; if not, the environment will be ravished and the human species, too, may be threatened with its own extinction.★

Ramsés Ramírez

Is All Quiet on the Chihuahua Front?

Contrary to all predictions, a tense calm reigns in the northern state following their recent elections

The first week in July some 300 local and foreign correspondents, along with political observers from all over the country and abroad, thousands of soldiers, policemen and plainclothesmen gathered in the state of Chihuahua. The press, political parties and authorities all believed the scheduled elections would have a tragic, violent outcome that would set Mexican politics on a new course. Both the main contenders, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, and the opposition National Action Party, PAN, stated that these elections would be a landmark event in the history of Chihuahua.

Yet these previsions failed because they never took into account the possibility of what actually turned out to be the key factor: the people of Chihuahua's civic maturity. Not a single person was killed, nobody was wounded, and the confrontation never went beyond words and into action.

But not all was Chihuahua on Sunday, July 6. Elections were held in six other states, with gubernatorial races in Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas and Michoacán, and the overall selection

of 109 mayors and 92 local representatives.

Despite opinions expressed after the fact, the PRI won all four races for governor, 106 of the mayor's positions, and almost all of the local representatives.

The opposition's complaints centered on Chihuahua, where the PAN, the Catholic Church and the organized business sector all demanded that the elections be annulled. The Mexican Unified Socialist Party, PSUM, and non-affiliated sectors belonging to the Democratic Electoral Movement, headed by a priest named Camilo Pérez, PSUM leader Antonio Becerra Gaytán and the mayor of Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, Humberto Ramos Molina, all made the same demand.



Voters in Chihuahua wait patiently to cast their vote.

Photo by Pedro Valtierra; Imagen Latina.

By the end of the campaign, both the PRI and the PAN anticipated a close vote with uncertain final results, with violence in the picture.

Both campaigns came to an official close on Monday, June 30th. PRI candidate Fernando Baeza Meléndez wound up in the state capital, while PAN's Francisco Barrio Terrazas did so in the border-city of Ciudad Juárez.

Facing a town square overflowing with sympathizers, Baeza insisted he would be the winning candidate because, "we have an historical project, we have the right political message, and we have deep moral reasons for aspiring to victory." In a fit of enthusiasm over the large attendance at his rally, Baeza took to the microphone to shout: "We will win, we will win..."

Francisco Barrio filled the square in Ciudad Juárez, and told his supporters that "nothing can take the certainty of victory away from me: we shall win." And he asked that his followers show "a noble and understanding conduct toward the PRI's people, they'll have enough with the weight of defeat on their shoulders. We should not be sarcastic, nor should we take revenge on the losers."

On the following day, PAN-member Luis H. Alvarez, at the time still mayor of the city of Chihuahua, began a hunger strike. His reasons were to "exert legitimate pressure so that all abuses against the citizenry come to an end, and so that the people's will is totally respected during the elections. I mean to appeal to the people to fulfill their duty by voting and guaranteeing that their vote is respected, despite all that has been said and done."

There was an additional bad omen on July 1st. Without further explanations, the State Electoral Commission ousted all of the PSUM's voting-poll representatives in the state's two main cities, Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez. The measure affected 400 people, and the Unified Socialists were deprived of their right to have observers present during the balloting.

On the same day, through its bishop, Msgr. Manuel Talamán Camandari, the Church in Chihuahua warned that "It is dangerous for rulers to ignore the sign of the times. The people are anxious for democracy, and who knows what will happen if their signs are ignored. The final demonstration will be rebellion."

The hour of rebellion seemed to have arrived on July 3rd. Tension reached its highest point when the state-highways were closed down by followers of the Democratic Electoral Movement, as proof of "our capacity to mobilize around the people's discontent and their refusal to accept electoral fraud."

Speaking to some 200 journalists, Francisco Barrio also raised fears. "We are convinced there will be serious attempts at fraud, but we cannot be certain it will actually take place. We will mobilize the people during the elections to counteract (fraudulent intentions), and so that our victory is so overwhelming that any attempt of tampering with the people's choice will be impossible."

On July 5th, just two days before the elections, the Chihuahua Business Center agreed they would paralyze all economic activity if there were serious irregularities in the voting process. For its part, the Christian Family Movement issued a communiqué calling for public, collective protest if and when fraud actually took place.

Tension was high in the state on the eve of the elections, and each of the contenders insisted he would be the victor. Baeza based his campaign on images, few words and a lot of pictures. His campaign-speeches evolved around the promise of an all-out fight against corruption, and on how a vote for his party meant a vote for a political program. The PAN centered on denouncing corruption and the system's decay. They accused Baeza of being part of being an accomplice to corruption because he belongs to the ruling party.

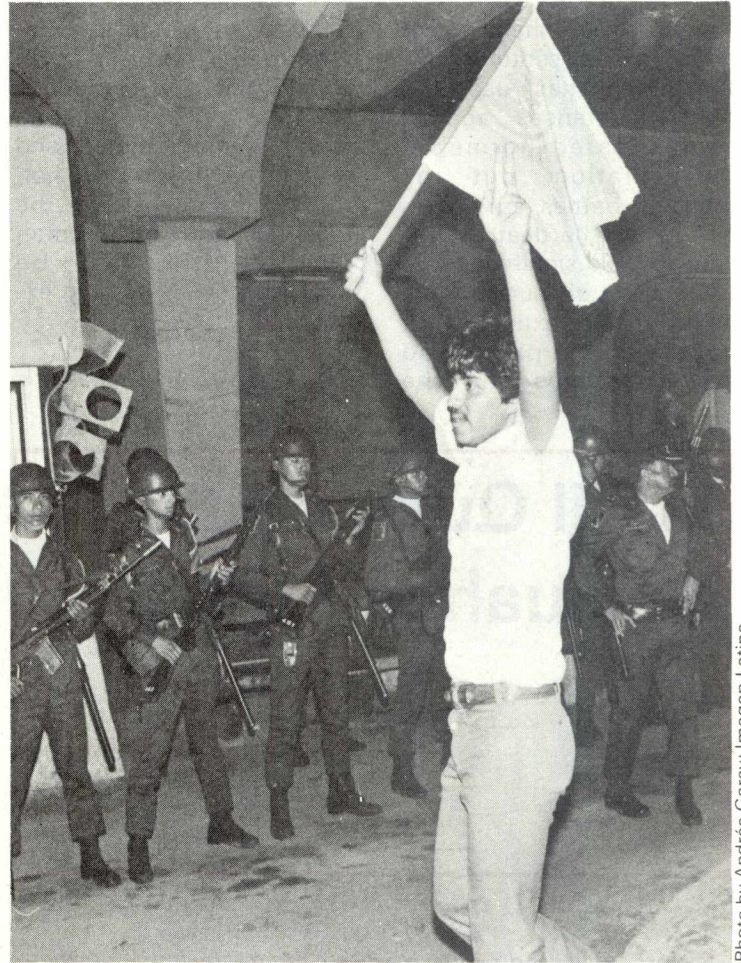
But violence failed to materialize on election day, and both candidates cautioned their followers against anticipated triumphalism.

That same afternoon, Manuel Gurría Ordóñez, the PRI's general delegate in Chihuahua, announced total victory for his party. But a couple of hours later Fernando Baeza held a press conference in which he said: "I have not come to proclaim

victory. I want to be careful, and let the polling authorities say the final word." He asked that his followers abstain from public demonstrations, to avoid incidents.

PAN candidate Francisco Barrio, also refused to declare victory, "because we don't have enough facts to go on." And he asked the same of his followers: no public demonstrations.

But events took a different turn on July 7th, when Barrio announced that there had been generalized fraud during the elections, and that his party would demand an annulment: He also said the PAN would unleash a civil disobedience campaign against the PRI's pretense of having won all of the posts disputed on July 6.



Guarding the border crossing at Ciudad Juárez.

Photo by Andrés Garay: Imagen Latina.

On Tuesday the Chihuahua business community voiced their support for the annulment petition and announced a shut-down. The Catholic Church acted in kind, and decided to close all church doors on the 20th, suspending religious services.

The two business shut-downs were failures, since 80% of the affiliates ignored the measure. The caravans of vehicles waving PAN flags, which at one point seemed to dominate the streets, slowly disappeared.

Thus, calm returned to Chihuahua. The PRI was declared the winner with 401,905 votes, against 223,063 for the PAN

The certainty exists, though, that soon the elected representatives will set themselves up as the Electoral College, and will proceed to analyze any and all proof brought before them, of anomalies in the electoral process.★

Pablo Hiriart

"The Problems that Concern Us Are Really Bi-National"

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An interview with Senator Hugo B. Margáin

While the right-wing hysteria generated by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) in the United States widened the gulf between the two countries, some cooler heads have prevailed on both sides of the border. Recently, the creation of a new Bi-National Mexico-United States Commission was announced to take on the difficult problems that separate us. The Mexican side of the Commission will be presided by Senator Hugo B. Margáin, a leading expert on bi-national relations who has twice been posted as Mexican ambassador in the U.S. (1964-70 and 1976-82). Finance Minister from 1970 to 1973, Senator Margáin has also been governor of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and ambassador to Great Britain from 1973 to 1976. Amid preparations for the Commission's first session, to be held in October, Senator Margáin recently spoke with VOICES OF MEXICO's Director, Mariclaire Acosta. Excerpts:

In the last several months, there has been talk of setting up a Mexico-U.S. bi-national commission. What can you tell us about it?

A group of experts and public figures from both countries who share concerns regarding our bilateral relations decided to design a project, which has taken the form of a commission to study the future of Mexico-U.S. relations. The commission is autonomous. That is, its members participate as individuals, and not as institutional or governmental representatives. It is a non-profit association, which receives both private and public funding.

Our commission has the following objectives: to study and be able to anticipate the possible characteristics and trends in Mexico-U.S. relations during the next twenty-five years; to draw up recommendations for the citizens and governments of both countries, which promote mutual, long-term interests for both Mexico and the United States; to improve communications between influential citizens from both countries; to promote mutual understanding between present and future

generations of both countries; and to encourage the exchange of information, as well as of research regarding problems of common interest. It is important to emphasize that the project will in no way intervene in the internal matters of either country.

Senator, how is the commission structured?

The commission is composed of an equal number of distinguished citizens from both countries. It will be jointly presided by the honorable William D. Rogers (Secretary of State during the Nixon Administration) and myself. Mr. Rogers has a deep understanding of Mexico, acquired through his years of private law practice, which brought him into repeated contact with us.

In addition, the Mexican commissioners include well-known figures from academic, intellectual, political and business circles. They are Mario Ojeda, Carlos Fuentes, Hector Aguilar Camín, Socorro Díaz, Ernesto Fernández Hurtado, Juan José Bremer, Fernando Canales Clariond and Gilberto Borja. They represent a mosaic of the country's most important political schools of thought. We also know that Robert McNamara, Mayor Henry Cisneros, Roger Heynes of the University of California, Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum and communications union leader, Glenn Watts have agreed to be commissioners from the United States. And we are still waiting for further confirmations.

Each country will have an office with its respective academic committee. On the Mexican side, the director will be Rosario Green, a specialist in our country's external financial relations. The U.S. counterpart will be Peter Smith, who has a profound understanding of the Mexican political system. Jorge Bustamante, Cassio Luisselli, Carlos Rico and Guadalupe Gonzalez will make up the committee from our side, while Wayne Cornelius, Martha Tienda, John Coatsworth and William Cline will participate from the U.S. side.

Senator, what are the most important issues that the commission will discuss?

We hope to identify the fundamental problems between the two countries. We

have an open agenda, in which we will include such issues as pollution, border problems, commerce, drug trafficking, the migration of Mexican workers to the U.S., the understanding needed by Mexican-Americans in the United States, technology and cultural exchanges.

Our method will be to begin by identifying the problems in each of these areas. Then, we will attempt to project their development over the next twenty-five years. It will really be a reflection group whose basic premise is that the problems which we are examining are truly bi-national. That is, they depend on the interaction between both countries. As a result, they can only be resolved by bilateral actions that take into account the interests of both countries.

We want to hold periodic working meetings to discuss the studies being carried out by the members of our respective academic committees. These meetings will alternate between Mexico and the United States. They will be closed sessions, in which we will be able to air different points of view, in the hopes, of course, of reaching some agreements. The results of our discussions will be made available for the general public in both countries, at opportune times.

For now, we expect to present a document with our findings by about the end of 1988. It will be a kind of "position paper," to take advantage of a special moment for Mexico-U.S. relations: new administrations will be inaugurated in both countries at about the same time (in Mexico, on December 1, 1988; and in the U.S. on January 20, 1989). Ob-

viously, we hope to have a positive effect on decisions to be made by the new governments.

What do you consider to be the most urgent problems for the commission to deal with?

There are several. Migration, for example, is one. There, a substantial difference lies in the fact that for us, Mexican migratory workers are "undocumented workers," while for the United States, they are "illegals." In this case, the solution is not only for Mexico to resolve its employment problems. The United States must also stop needing and attracting cheap labor.

Another problem is drug traffic. Here, as in the previous case, we have a shared problem that can only be resolved through parallel and complementary actions. The enormous drug consumption in the U.S. must be attacked, and not only production in Mexico. Mr. Helms (Senator Jesse Helms, North Carolina Republican) is only seeing one side of the problem when he thinks that if drug production is stopped in our country and in the rest of Latin America, the problem will disappear in the U.S. That is entirely false. As long as the United States is one of the major consumers of drugs in the world, there will continue to be drug producers.

Let me give you an example of this. With the Nixon administrations' famous "Operation Intercept," the only thing that happened is that the price of marijuana went up in the U.S., thus improving business for drug dealers. To give another example. What were the results when, under pressure from the



Senator Margáin: Our problems are really bi-national.

U.S. government, we fumigated marijuana plantations with paraquat? Marijuana users demonstrated in front of our embassy in Washington and threw acid on the flowers in the embassys' gardens in protest for the harm caused by smoking "our" marijuana. The pressure was so strong that U.S. officials finally asked our Attorney General at that time, Oscar Flores Sánchez, to please stop spraying the plantations. "What do you want us to do," responded Flores Sánchez, "give them vitamins?"

We also have problems in our commercial relations. For example, so long as the U.S. does not modify its protectionist schemes, **Mexico's** needs to develop and expand its exports will continue to create a conflictive climate. In addition, Mexico is preparing to enter the GATT. This will require a reexamination of the conditions for trade between the two countries, and the situation will need to be studied.

There are cultural problems as well. Despite the fact that we are neighbors, we really don't understand each other. We need to open channels for cultural communication though exchanges of professors and students, through the press, radio and television, etc.

Another interesting problem arises here, which has to do with the border: the question of the identity of Mexican-Americans, who represent that part of Mexico which the United States has not been able to absorb, even after so many years.

Each **country's** foreign policy is another important area.

I remember one Christmas, when I was still Ambassador, we were all together at Mr. Kissingers' house (former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger). Then Mr. Haig (former Secretary of State, Alexander Haig) came over, took me by the arm and as we moved away from the group, asked me why our position on Central America is so important to us. I answered that negotiation based on the principles of self-determination and non-intervention is a dogma for Mexico. He responded by saying that for them, containing Soviet expansionism is also a dogma. Well, I said to him, I guess we **can't** do much else but respect each others' dogmas; but **don't** forget that force is ineffective, that dialog is the irreplaceable road to peace.

And that is the most difficult aspect of our bilateral relations: when we must make it clear to the United States that our principles have an historical basis. We have been dismembered. And they want us to forget that. And that is the case because they have a hegemonic position which they have yet to fully assume. That is, they do not have the technical, and especially, the cultural resources to be able to exert their hegemony.

It is different from the situation of Spain or Great Britain, who in their time, did fully assume their imperial nature.

Mexico is, then, a country mutilated from the south and from the north, but which is beginning to break out from its tendency to only look inward. We have, for example, the Tlatelolco Agreement, which establishes Mexico as the only nuclear-free zone on the planet. Or we can take our efforts as part of the Contadora Group, the only option for a peaceful and negotiated settlement for the Central American conflict. All of these efforts are guided by principles deeply rooted in our history. Porfirio Díaz (**Mexico's** President from 1876-1910) said it all, years ago: "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States." And also Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada (Mexico's President after the revolution led by Benito Juárez in 1857), who commented regarding the construction of the northbound railroad, that it would be better just to build the rail lines from coast to coast; that way we would be able to maintain the desert that separates us from the U.S. **'Between** Mexico and the United States, the desert, 'he said. Well, all of that is part of the historical legacy that will surely come up and that will be debated bilaterally for the first time.

How is this commission different from others established in the past to deal with bilateral matters?

Well, not everything has been negative in Mexico-U.S. relations. We have a legacy of precedents for good bilateral relations. For example, regarding El Chamizal, desalinization, and the Waters and Territorial Limits Commission,* these were unique models of bilateral understanding. The fight against hoof and mouth disease is another example. We will study all of these experiences, refer to them in the work we do and evaluate their positive and negative features. It is necessary to draw on this rich experience in the search for joint solutions to our mutual problems, systematize it and transform it into a common legacy. We will be working with ideas, which is very important. Ideas have tremendous power. Besides, in the realm of ideas, we are all equals. Like all the rest of the commissions' members, I have great trust in the strength of ideas; and I am convinced that we can air our different points of view within the implacable logic of reason★

*El Chamizal was an undefined zone along the border between the two countries; a settlement defining the dividing line was reached and an agreement signed by Presidents John F. Kennedy (1960-63) and Adolfo López Mateos (1958-64). The desalinization refers to the process by which the salt was extracted from the Colorado River so that it could be used for irrigation without harming crops in Sonora. The Waters and Territorial Limits Commission is a permanent commission that deals with any territorial disputes that may arise along the border between Mexico and the United States.

Oil, the Crisis Evolves

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Oil producing countries dream of a slow but steady rise in prices, but realize that it will take years to recover from this year's shock

In our previous issue, VOICES OF MEXICO presented a government specialist's analysis of the events that led to this year's oil crisis. This article presents a slightly different analysis: the same crisis and its effects on Mexico's economy today, as seen by a private specialist. Irving Roffe is a leading expert on Middle East affairs and a member of ANAFACSA, a privately-owned think-tank. Mr. Roffe's views:

Like all really important news, it came across the wires in just a few words. The Oil Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Mana Said El-Oteiba, declared last November that "from this moment on, each member of OPEC is free to produce the amount of oil that they so desire...There will be no more sacrifices."

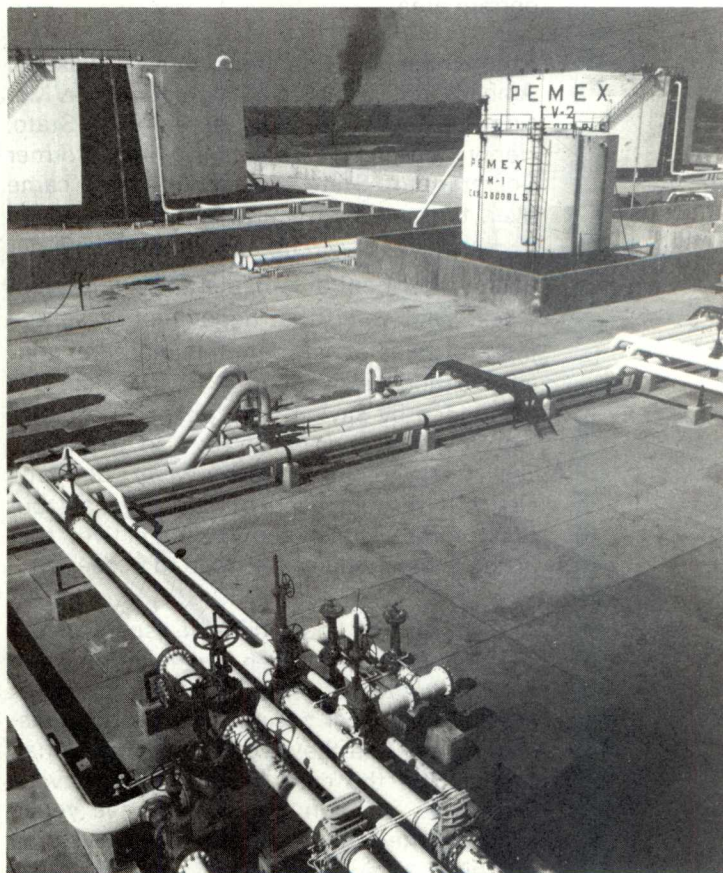
The announcement came as no real surprise to anyone directly involved in the process. But it did confirm peoples' worst fears; what had been mere pessimistic speculation, became a reality to be confronted. If not, national economies might plummet, the international banking system might be endangered and quite unpredictable political consequences might result. Thus, those simple words set off what is now being called, the "third oil shock." Some of the implications have yet to be played out completely, and the problem is far from resolved.

SIMPLE WORDS AND MAJOR EVENTS

Mana Said El-Oteiba's statements did not, in and of themselves, unleash the third oil shock. Rather they simply described an already existing situation whose development had begun some five years ago. New oil producers such as Mexico, Great Britain and

Norway had entered the market, cutting into those that had previously been dominated by OPEC. For example, in 1979, the oil cartel controlled more than sixty percent of the world oil export market; by 1985, the figure had dropped to thirty percent. This reduction had profound effects on the cartel because it implied that the member countries would have to limit their production. If not, they would run the risk of having prices plummet.

It was in this context in 1981 that OPEC established a system of production quotas for member nations. But from the very beginning, the quotas were systematically broken by all of the members, with the exception of Saudi Arabia. In fact, the Saudis voluntarily assumed the role of limited, stable production, exporting between 2.5 and 9 million barrels of oil per day. But the decision brought them more headaches than advantages, and they were constantly faced with the dilemma of having to produce more or



PEMEX facilities

Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

suffer noticeable restrictions in their economy. By mid-1985, after an uninterrupted, ten-year boom period, the Saudis had a \$30 billion deficit in their current accounts.

Given the situation, it was totally predictable that OPEC would try to do something to break out of their trap. That "something" was guided by two basic objectives: first, to force their competitors to reduce production, thus opening the way for OPEC to win back some of its lost markets; and second, to force cartel members to abide by the rules of internal discipline as a measure to prevent a potential definitive split in OPEC.

According to an OPEC study published in the cartels' magazine, *OPEC Review* (Spring 1986), their only option for confronting their competition was to cut prices. If they had raised prices, as they did during the "oil shocks" in 1973 and 1980, they would only have made the situation worse for themselves, allowing their competitors to gain even greater advantages on the world market. Thus, OPEC took into consideration the fact that their production costs are the lowest in the entire world; for example, fifty cents a barrel for Saudi Arabia and \$1.20 a barrel for Kuwait. If OPEC (or at least the Persian Gulf members) were to increase production, and thus lower world market prices, they could cut out some of their major competitors. This is particularly true in relation to North Sea producers, where production costs vary from \$5 to \$10 per barrel, and to Alaska, where production costs are possibly the highest in the world, \$25 per barrel.

By the end of 1985 and beginning of 1986, there were occasional reports of increased Saudi production, which Riyadh systematically denies. Nonetheless, prices began to plummet at a dizzying pace. From an average price of \$25 per barrel in mid-1985, prices dropped to \$9.90 by mid-February 1986.

A VERY SPECIAL CASE

OPEC's major competitors entered the world oil market beginning with the second "oil shock" in 1980. Prices had soared to such an extent (almost \$40 per barrel on the spot market) by then, that consuming countries and multinational companies began to seek alternative supply sources. The high prices meant that certain regions, like the North Sea and Alaska, where production costs had made operations there economically unfeasible in 1973, could now be opened for profitable production.

But that was not the case with regards to Mexico, even though the country had also entered the market in 1980 and seen its share grow, at least until the beginning of this year. Before 1980, Mexico had confronted the problem of how to self-finance an adequate oil platform. But the problem was finally resolved with relative ease. As Alan Riding tells it in his book, *Distant Neighbors*, major

banking trusts literally fought among themselves to loan money to Mexico. The country had all the characteristics of a secure and profitable investment.

Nonetheless, while Mexico was in fact an OPEC competitor, it had opted for a rather prudent, non-confrontational policy. Unlike Great Britain, and until recently, Norway, who refused to limit production to sustain prices, Mexico not only participated as an observer in major cartel meetings, but also maintained close communication with OPEC in designing its own market strategy.



Alfredo del Mazo, Secretary of Energy, Oil and Nationalized Industry with Mario R. Beteta, Director of Pemex.

Photo by uno más uno

THE DAMAGE IS ALREADY DONE

The third "oil shock," however, has already set off a process that will profoundly change the market. For now, it means that most countries view the question of pricing from a different optic. At first, importing countries saw the plummeting prices as a blessing. A U.S. government official even declared that "the price of oil is a tax that countries have to pay to make their economies function." Cheap oil would mean less inflation, a real drop in prices to the consumer and the possibility that consumers, and not producers, would now determine prices and contractual conditions.

But these advantages appear only when the situation is analyzed from a purely economic point of view. In political terms, cheap oil presents a rather more somber picture. Contrary to what happened with the second "oil shock," now some oil producing regions have become unprofitable. To this, must be added the fact that banks had invested huge sums in oil development ventures, many of which had yet to report a profit. The end result is

that importers are once again increasingly dependent on the Middle East for oil.

There is another economic issue that has important political implications. International banks not only financed oil projects in their own countries, but also in other countries, whose major source of wealth in most cases were their petroleum deposits. Their economies soon became dependent on their capacity to export oil, in such a way that foreign exchange income hinged to a large extent on export levels. This is the case for Norway, where 40% of its foreign exchange comes from oil exports, for Venezuela (95% of its foreign exchange) and for Mexico (75% of its foreign exchange).

The drop in oil prices has cut foreign exchange income for these countries in half, thus greatly reducing their capacity to meet debt payments. In the majority of cases, they have been forced to implement severe austerity programs, which have been accompanied by growing public discontent. Many countries which had been considered politically stable, now potentially face the prospect of social unrest. And this possibility is not just restricted to developing countries; in industrialized Norway, for example, the oil question played an important role in bringing about the change from a Conservative government to one headed by Laborite Gro Harlem Brundtland.

The Mexican case has received special attention because of the eloquence of the figures. Its foreign debt is \$95 billion, and it is likely that the country's income will fall by some \$4.5 to \$6 billion this year. In order to make payments on its debt, the country would have to make further cuts into its already greatly restricted budget. In 1983, Mexico was considered to be a model debtor by the international banking system, regularly fulfilling its obligations. Nonetheless, the current situation is influenced by factors beyond Mexico's control. In particular the drop in oil prices is due to a more generalized crisis, which in turn is determined by a diversity of factors. The fact that Mexico controls five percent of the world oil export market has meant that the country has been severely affected by the overall crisis.

From Mexico's point of view, then, it would be futile to implement unilateral measures in an attempt to correct the situation. In February, the ex-Minister of Energy, Mining and Para-State Industries, Francisco Labastida Ochoa, stated to the Mexican press, "If we were to unilaterally reduce our oil exports, as has been suggested, we would simply leave the market open to others, who would immediately move in on it." Recognizing the fact that a surplus of some two to three million barrels of oil are offered on the market daily, Labastida added, "Solidarity and coordination among exporting countries is more important today than ever before."

His last statement may seem rather dramatic, but more and more countries are taking the idea seriously.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The oil market has been quite erratic recently, experiencing significant fluctuations. In February, the barrel price had dropped to \$9.90, the lowest level in 13 years. Two months later the price was back up to \$17, only to drop once again, shortly thereafter. A number of different reasons have been given to explain this phenomenon, although no single one provides a complete explanation. Perhaps the most plausible of explanations, however, lies in the fact that a strike in Norway paralyzed that country's production (almost one million barrels per day), while Britain closed down two of its platforms for maintenance, taking an additional 200,000 barrels off the market every day. These two situations brought about the increase in prices. But when the strike was settled and England's platforms went back into service, prices plunged again.

The temporary price increase injected new spirit into producing countries. OPECs' most recent campaign has been to make contact with independent producers, especially Egypt, Malaysia, Angola and Mexico. Their objective is to get these countries to agree to reduce production by some 100,000 barrels per day. The negotiations have already produced some results, among them, Mexico's stated willingness to reduce the rhythm of its exports. And Norway has also begun negotiations with Venezuela, accepting in principle the need to restrict its share of the market.

In general, it seems that major producers have drawn a series of conclusions from the third "oil shock." One of them is the need to optimize prices; the current low prices have caused serious economic problems for a number of countries. Yet, the soaring oil prices of the second "shock" were really counterproductive, especially for OPEC, in that they brought so many new competitors onto the scene and as a result, produced the present super-saturated market. A number of statements have been issued in recent weeks, both by producers and consumers, calling for a \$20 per barrel price.

That is not an impossible goal, although it is still a distant prospect. In the meantime, debtor nations will have to try to repair the damage already caused by the third "oil shock." One thing they must confront is the need to modify debt payments in accord with the current situation. For Mexico, this has meant seeking new agreements with its creditors to retain a certain degree of flexibility in its efforts to promote economic growth. And even though predictions call for a gradual recovery in oil prices, nations with oil-dependent economies will have to work for years to reestablish their stability.★

Confronting the Debt: An Update

The economic crisis is far from over, and the stakes get higher as Mexico's alternatives narrow

Strong pressures are being exerted on our country to reshape its economic structure. This situation has grown so tense that former Finance Minister Jesús Silva Herzog resigned. Nevertheless, the problems haven't gone away for new Minister Gustavo Petricioli. Given the limits of Mexican tolerance and the failure of orthodox policies to resolve the foreign debt problems, VOICES OF MEXICO asked two specialists on Mexican economic affairs, Edna Lydia Santín and Jorge Quezada del Río for an update on the economy. Their views:

No doubt this is the decade of the debt. By the mid-eighties the foreign debt of the developing countries was close to one trillion dollars. The United States debt is over \$500 billion, and among Europeans, the French owe close to \$60 billion. Economic growth, however slow and unequal, has obviously been achieved by massively resorting to credit. Among the most significant factors contributing to this situation are an overabundance of money on the world capital market (due partly to high oil prices between 1973 and 1979), an unrestrictive monetary policy on the part of the United States, and the increasing international activity of both banks and multinationals.

In this context, Mexico's debt went from \$34 billion in 1978 to \$85 billion in 1982. Net payment of principal and interest tripled over the same period of time and by 1982 represented over 50% of the country's total exports.

1982 was the decisive year. Payments due according to the structure of the debt placed the country on the cutting edge of a moratorium. The loss of confidence in the peso and in the national financial system, generated unprecedented speculation. As a result there was large scale capital flight, and current accounts deteriorated under the impact of high imports and falling exports. In

order to support the rate of exchange, both expenditures and capital exports were financed by means of foreign loans.

Total chaos erupted a few months later when in August of 1982 Mexico, Argentina and



Demonstrators demand a moratorium.

Brazil declared a suspension of payments. The three accounted for 70% of the developing countries' public debt contracted with the international banking system. The crisis during the summer of '82 and the so-called "Mexican weekend" in August of the same year, led to generalized consciousness of the danger lurking in the excessive indebtedness of the developing countries. Many of them were forced to adopt rigorous policies designed to correct their foreign accounts and their fiscal deficits.

1) When the principal of the debt was restructured, payments were deferred into the future. This was done by renegotiating the public debt, through the Fiduciary to Cover Exchange Risks (Ficorca, a mechanism put into effect for the private sector's debt), and through the Paris Club. The plan called for refinancing payments as they came due, meaning that a new loan would be contracted in order to cover them. Thus, the required payment was legally covered, and at the same time a new long-term debt was contracted. The process is repeated over and over again, and this is also the case with other countries and with private enterprise.

2) Mexico figured the possibility of meeting its foreign commitments estimating a level of imports sufficient to achieve adequate growth levels even after servicing interest payments. The plan estimated that during the 1986-1990 period exports would yield a balance of \$135 billion. Thus, together with surpluses from tourism, assembly plants, etc., total income in foreign exchange over this period would come to \$145 billion. On the other hand, the imports needed for industry over the same period were estimated at \$90 billion, which added to the \$55 billion that would be paid out to service the debt during those five years, seemed to square with the expected income.

Nevertheless, in order to have contingency reserves on hand, the plan also called for \$20 billion in foreign loans. With these figures, by the end of 1990 Mexico's total foreign debt would have reached \$115 billion, approximately 30% of the gross internal product (versus the 50% it constituted in 1985), and less than 3 years worth of exports (versus 3.5 years at present.) On the other hand, the foresight was that by 1990 interest payments would be equal to less than a third of income from exports of goods and services, while at present they account for 40%. This meant that a greater proportion of income from exports could be used for imports to stimulate economic growth.

This plan was part of the National Program for Development Financing, and has been repeatedly ratified by President De la Madrid. The President stated this clearly in a recent interview: our problem, he said, is not how to pay the debt but rather how to contract more in order to service the debt.

Yet today the plan's viability is in danger because of significant changes in the situation. The drastic fall in income from oil exports is a major factor. Secondly, and to a certain extent related to the plan's deteriorating feasibility, is the resignation of Jesús Silva Herzog as Finance Minister.

Oil provides close to 70% of Mexico's income from exports, and 50% of fiscal income. Both a significant part of the country's internal development, and the possibility of meeting

Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz: Imagen Latina.



Pawning their tools and their livelihoods.

In Mexico's case, Miguel de la Madrid's new administration (1982-1988) embarked on a plan based on a letter of intentions signed with the International Monetary Fund in December of that year. The plan was meant to reduce the fiscal deficit to 5.5% of the gross internal product in 1984 and to 3.5% in 1985. The fiscal budget would be slimmed down, fiscal income would increase and total net indebtedness would be \$5 billion.

The results were not really encouraging. Inflation began to climb again (it was 63.7% that year), there was a reversal in the accumulation of foreign reserves, and by the end of 1985 the deterioration of the balance of payment's current accounts had become more acute (\$541 million against \$4 billion in 1984.)

Nonetheless, the Mexican debt-payment plan persisted. When in late 1985 the question arose as to whether, given prevailing conditions, it was possible to service the foreign debt, the answer was yes, on the basis of the following:

our foreign financial obligations, depend on oil sales. Yet during the first five months of the year, the price of Mexican export oil fell by about \$12 a barrel.

This has a violent impact on Mexico's economy. If the current trend is maintained, and estimating the stabilization of oil prices at between \$10-12 per barrel for the rest of the year, income from oil during 1986 would be, half of what had been estimated. This means some \$6 billion less, an amount equal to 80% of the yearly foreign debt service. The fall in income from taxes levied on oil exports will mean \$1.5 billion less will enter government coffers, creating additional pressure on the fiscal deficit and on the balance of payments.

Collapsing oil prices—and deteriorating conditions of exchange on the world market—together with a scarcity of foreign financing, have finally forced both the government and the private sector to finance their needs almost exclusively with internal resources. The obvious consequence of this is greater pressure on financial markets and increasing higher interest rates.

The unstable world oil market led to uncertainty, and original plans were modified to average oil exports of 1.3 million barrels per day at a price somewhere between \$11 and \$14 per barrel. Thus, the country's income from oil exports would be little over \$5 billion, a figure that alters foreign exchange forecasts for the year. The federal budget for 1986 estimated the country would need \$4.1 billion in foreign loans. The collapse in oil prices means this amount increases to \$10 billion.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Finance, in charge of overseeing the country's foreign debt, estimates that net savings of \$4 billion can be achieved as follows: \$1.5 billion can be saved by reducing total imports; an additional \$0.5 billion can be obtained by increasing exports other than petroleum; \$0.8 billion can be saved because of falling international interest rates and, finally, reducing the amount of foreign exchange incoming for reserves by \$1.2 billion. Thus, for 1986 Mexico would need a total of \$6 billion in incoming foreign exchange, and this is the current figure for negotiations with multilateral institutions and international private banks.

With prevailing international conditions in mind, the Mexican government reiterates its thesis that in order to pay, the economy must grow. The possibility of a moratorium has also been dealt with politically, stating that negotiations will be carried out according to the country's capacity to pay, through dialogue and without confrontation. The search for financial resources has come up against difficult conditions, and both multilateral institutions and the usually less strict private banks are imposing strict requirements.

Although the most recent agreement with the IMF expired in December of last year, it is probable that a series of recently enacted measures are part of the general economic policy conditions that the IMF requires in its letters of intent. These include a fiscal adjustment of 1.2 billion pesos made public last April 23; the process of either shutting down or selling state-owned enterprises, the elimination of a series of government subsidies and of many internal price controls, among others.

Given the situation, the Mexican government seems to be facing three different alternatives: One is to sign a new agreement with the IMF, meaning stricter compliance with its demands, while opening the door for the government to contract new loans and continue servicing the debt. Another possibility is not to sign with the IMF and declare a temporary suspension of payments, such as occurred in 1982, or to arrive at some kind of agreement that would exempt Mexico from some or all debt-service payments this year. There could also be a combination of options along the above lines. The third alternative would be to negotiate directly with the creditors, without an agreement with the IMF, in conditions similar to those of Brazil, a country with which Mexico is keeping in close touch.

The first alternative is the one Mexico has followed since 1976, and this was clear under former Finance Minister Jesús Silva Herzog. Given the economic situation—recession, high inflation and deficits, etc.—the IMF's prospects are controversial because the institution's backing is a necessary guarantee for private banks to provide fresh credit. The government has responded to the IMF's demands by saying that it has already applied all possible measures, and that the Mexican people "have reached the limit of their sacrifices."

The second alternative, a temporary suspension of payments, depends on international conditions, since Mexico is rapidly integrating into the world economy through the opening of its external sector. The whole of the na-



The paradoxes of poverty.

tion's productive plant is being organized around this process, and a trade blockade, for example, would be a catastrophe.

The third alternative has been gaining force, particularly since the resignation of Silva Herzog and the appointment of Gustavo Petricioli as Finance Minister.

There are two hypotheses concerning the change-over. The first is that a consensus is forming around the thesis that payment of the debt must be compatible with both external conditions and national reality. In the same vein, the idea that there must be economic growth in order to pay, would gain force. This position is sustained by President De la Madrid and by Secretary of Programming and Budget Carlos Salinas de Gortari. With the presidential campaign only 18 months away, it's also likely the government will try to create conditions for a smoother change-over. This implies limiting austerity measures imposed by the IMF because they have a negative effect on relations between the government and broad sectors of the population.

Additionally, it seems that Silva Herzog's resignation also points to the failure of negotiations with the IMF. Given Mr. Petricioli's broad experience in banking, we may also assume that the country will seek direct negotiations with the creditor banks, with or without a previous agreement with the IMF.

On the other hand, although Petricioli means to keep his positions very close to presidential policy, he has come out against IMF policy on numerous occasions. "Mexico, like all Latin American countries, must be extremely careful in applying adjustment policies, most of which have been recommended by the IMF, so that economic problems don't lead to social and political conflict. "Latin America is not only engaged in an economic process. It is also struggling to further democracy and social justice," said Gustavo Petricioli recently. Whatever the final outcome, no one doubts that Mexico's relations with its international creditors—both private banks and multilateral institutions—, will be defined over the next few months. And to a great extent this will determine the country's economic project over the next years.★

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Who Is Gustavo Petricioli?

The new Minister of Finance and Public Credit has a long history in Mexican public life. Before the Gustavo Díaz Ordaz administration (1964-1970), Gustavo Petricioli had started his career at the Bank of Mexico (Central Bank), where he moved quickly through the ranks, serving first as Economist's Aide, then as Assistant to the General Manager, later as Technical Advisor to the General Director, then as Manager and finally as Sub-Director of the institution.

He began his public service career during the Díaz Ordaz administration as director of financial studies at the Ministry which he now heads. Later, he was named Under-Secretary for Income in that same institution by President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). He was also the country's National Soccer Commis-

sioner during that period.

Under President José López Portillo (1976-1982), Petricioli first served as President of the National Stocks and Bonds Commission and later became the General Director of Multibanco Comermex, one of the country's largest banking institutions. During that period, he was also named President of the Mexican Banking Association.

At the beginning of the De la Madrid administration, Gustavo Petricioli held the post of General Director of Nacional Financiera (NAFINSA), the largest finance enterprise in Mexico. From there, in mid-June he was named to replace Lic. Jesús Silva Herzog as the country's new Minister of Finance and Public Credit.



Finance Minister Gustavo Petricioli.

Photo from La Jornada.

The Contras Get their Aid

War seems inevitable in Central America as the mercenary bands get what they asked for

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a presidential request for \$100 million in military and economic aid for the counter-revolutionaries who are trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. The June 25 vote was the culmination of one of the most difficult campaigns yet undertaken by the Reagan administration to achieve foreign policy objectives.

It was an arduous campaign. Reagan used countless forms of pressure, arm-twisting and disinformation, to finally break the resistance of a considerable sector of the House that opposed the policy as another step toward war in Central America.

In their quest for the aid, Reagan and his team ignored the Contadora Group, the Socialist International, the European Economic Community and the Non-Aligned Movement, among others. All of those organizations had declared their opposition to more aid for the contras and struggled to find a negotiated solution for the Central American crisis. But for the Republican administration, the only way to achieve peace in the region is via the overthrow of the Sandinista government.

The Congressional decision to support Reagan's war against Nicaragua will have consequences of an historic dimension for the region, as

well as for relations between Washington and the democratic governments of Latin America. Mexico's Foreign Minister, Bernardo Sepúlveda, stated that the House decision represented "an historic mistake that could damage relations in the Americas," because the principle of non-intervention "is not only a legal question; it is also a political matter."

The Nicaraguan government reiterated its position that aid to the contra will lead to a Vietnam-style war in Central America and to the eventual involvement of U.S. troops in combat. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega called Reagan "a new Hitler, a true fascist" who murders people who disagree with him.

In the campaign to convince Congress, Reagan's efforts followed three main lines: to convert the regional conflict into an East-West confrontation in which Nicaragua is supposedly the beach-head for the Soviet Union; to neutralize the Contadora Group's efforts to gain a negotiated settlement; and to clean-up the contra image as a corrupt force with strong ties to the deposed Somoza dictatorship, in order to make them into "freedom fighters."

In addition, Washington constantly accused the Sandinista government of maintaining ties with Middle East, European and South American terrorists, as well as with narcotics dealers. Both Reagan and Secretary of State George Schultz repeatedly claimed that Nicaragua is another Libya just next door to the United States. Schultz went so far as to assert that "Nicaragua is a cancer, and we've got to cut it out."

The day before the final vote, Reagan spoke personally to a number of Congressmen, who finally tipped the balance in the President's favor. The administration's package, which passed by a



Contra groups display their high-caliber weapons.

221 to 209 vote, also includes authorization for the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA, to direct the activities of the "contra" forces and allows the Pentagon to train them.

34 Led by House Speaker Tip O'Neill, the sector of the Democratic Party opposed to Reagan's policy worked hard to block the President's plans. In the March 20th vote, O'Neill and his group managed to defeat the administration's request. Later the Democrats moved to have the \$100 million aid request tied to a supplementary aid package, knowing that Reagan opposed that bill. Republican Congressmen were able to undo the move.

In general terms, the Democrats who opposed the policy tried to buy time in order to allow the Contadora Group to advance in some important way. O'Neill admitted at the beginning of April that if Contadora did not achieve a settlement soon, it would be impossible to stop Reagan's policy.

For that very reason, Washington turned its efforts in the region toward achieving one basic objective through its Central American allies: to get a peace agreement that would meet the administrations' interests and block any initiative that recognized the legitimacy of the Sandinista government.

The White House also worked to neutralize the efforts of Latin American governments who opposed aid to the contras. The fact is that the majority of these countries, represented in Contadora and its Support Group, held firm in their positions. Every declaration produced after meetings of the two groups this year has included a section that affirms their opposition to any support by extra-regional powers for irregular forces seeking to overthrow any Central American government.

When the Contadora process bogged-down, the Reagan administration was able to make important political capital of the situation. As part of its propaganda, the administration claimed that peace efforts had failed because of the Sandinistas' intransigence.

With the \$100 million in contra aid approved, the

Nonetheless, the international community has raised its voice to protest the Congressional decision to approve contra aid. Two days after the vote, the International Court in The Hague declared that the United States had violated international law in its aggression against Nicaragua. In the United Nations there were also statements that censured the decision that



Civilian militias dig trenches to protect their homes in northern Nicaragua.

possibilities for a negotiated solution for the Central American crisis have become even more limited. Immediately, Nicaragua implemented a series of security measures that make it practically impossible for any internal political opposition to continue operating. The closing of the daily newspaper, *La Prensa*, and the denial of entry into the country for Catholic priests with ties to opposition forces, are among the most noteworthy of them.

In Reagan's logic, these actions by the Sandinistas confirm their lack of interest in political solutions and open the door for the intensification of military pressures. Within this framework, the space for peace-seeking efforts such as Contadora is drastically reduced.

provides aid to the anti-Sandinista forces.

A number of democratic governments around the world have expressed their concern regarding the Reagan administrations' violations of international law. And yet another cause for concern in the international community is the possibility that with the CIA and the Pentagon's participation, Washington is advancing rapidly toward its own direct involvement in a regionalized war.

It is significant that even governments and political forces with close ties to the U.S. have expressed their disapproval of the recent House decision. For example, the American Christian Democratic Organization (ODCA) deplored the decision to give aid to the anti-

Sandinistas. And the Costa Rican government stated that it does not share the White House position that military pressure will force the Sandinistas to negotiate with the contra.

Ignoring international opinion, and given his obsession with destroying the Nicaraguan government,

now with Congressional support and a vast military infrastructure already built in Honduras, Reagan has a free hand to fully implement his plans for the region. It seems that the tragic hour for Central America has finally arrived.★

Horacio Castellanos Moya

El Salvador, Napoleón Duarte, of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias Sánchez and of Guatemala, Vinicio Cerezo. According to many reports, Erick Arturo Del Valle, President of Panama, was also invited, but declined the offer since Panama is one of the four member nations of the Contadora Group.

There were four points on the meeting's official agenda: the creation of a Central American Parliament, negotiations surrounding the signing of the Contadora Treaty, the restructuring of the regional integration process and the region's foreign debt. Nonetheless, most analysts agreed that the critical point would be the Contadora Plan. Prior to the summit, Nicaragua's position had been that it could not sign the Treaty unless the United States promised to end its aggression against the Nicaraguan government.

Even before the meeting started, the Chiefs of State had begun to emphasize their differences. This led many to believe that the

A Presidential Summit in Central America

The Esquipulas meeting of Central American presidents didn't solve the region's problems, but it was a small step towards a non-military resolution of their differences

Despite enormous political and ideological differences, and in the midst of the tension that pervades the region, the Presidents of Central America's five countries held a summit meeting on May 24 and 25 in Esquipulas, Guatemala. Guatemala's President, Vinicio Cerezo, was the meeting's sponsor. Since he took office in January, Cerezo has repeatedly expressed his desire to promote a neutral foreign policy, in hopes of facilitating a solution to the region's crisis.

Three other countries in the area had also just inaugurated new governments (Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica), and this helped reduce tensions somewhat, just in time for the summit. But above all, the Central America President's Meeting should be understood within the context of the Contadora peace process. It was not at

all coincidental that the summit was held just two weeks before the proposed June 6 deadline for signing the Contadora Pact.

The summit meeting was attended by the Presidents of Honduras, José Azcona, of



Esquipulas: The holiest Catholic temple in all of Central America, was chosen as the site of the presidential summit.

summit would be extremely tense and confrontational. President Arias Sánchez threw the first stone. At his arrival in Guatemala, he announced that he would refuse to sign any declaration that recognized President Daniel Ortega as freely elected by the Nicaraguan people.

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Nonetheless, following two days of talks, the Presidents agreed to sign a joint statement called the Esquipulas Declaration, which includes five basic points: their willingness to sign the Contadora Treaty, although without fixing a deadline; the creation of a Central American Parliament, chosen through free and direct elections; the recognition that peace in the region will only be achieved through authentically democratic, pluralist and participatory processes; and the commitment to review regional plans for economic and social integration and to bring them up to date.

President Cerezo stated that the most controversial aspects of the meeting were related to the issues of "political development, pluralism, democracy and verification mechanisms for the Contadora Treaty," although he recognized that "all of the presidents were sincere, and in the end everyone made concessions in order to reach an agreement." President Duarte commented that "the meeting helped to break the ice."

During the meeting, President Ortega gave each of his peers a proposal regarding the kinds of weapons that his government would be willing to negotiate, within the arms reductions sections of the Contadora Treaty. Ortega explained that the proposal was made "in the hope that the Presidents of Central America would take it into account as a starting point for the discussion of issues still pending in the Contadora Peace Plan." The Honduran government immediately rejected the proposal.

It is rather revealing that one day after the summit ended, Honduran President José Azcona flew to Washington to meet with Reagan and other high-level U.S. officials. After providing a detailed report on the Esquipulas summit, Azcona agreed with Reagan that the Contadora Pact should not be supported in its present form, arguing that there can be peace in Central America only if Nicaragua carries out democratic reforms and if there are verifiable reductions in its military strength.

While the presidential summit was underway, the heads of the military forces of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras were also meeting in Esquipulas. They were discussing the possibility of reactivating the Central American Defence Council (CONDECA), a regional military alliance founded by deposed dictator Anastasio Somoza and inactive since the brief war between El Salvador and Honduras in July 1969. The Salvadoran Army Chief of Staff, Adolfo Blandón, disclosed that with the reactivation of CONDECA they hoped to draw up "a tactical-strategic doctrine to assure our defense from any kind of Nicaraguan aggression."

The Esquipulas meeting also served as a kind of individual forum for El Salvador and Honduras, whose Chiefs of State signed an agreement by which their long-standing border conflict will be placed under the jurisdiction of the World Court in the Hague. The two countries had been unable to reach an agreement during the last five-and-a-half years, a period which they had previously established for negotiations regarding the matter.

On balance, the most solid achievement of the Esquipulas summit was the decision to create a Central American Parliament, which will doubtless become the most important forum for regional debate and com-

munication. As the summit ended many analysts also claimed, rather hurriedly, that another very important achievement had been the President's unanimous decision to express their total support for the Contadora process. Nonetheless, Azcona's joint statement with Reagan, combined with difficulties in the negotiation process, which arose shortly after the summit, have since demonstrated that the decision was really quite fragile.

One thing that was made clear in the summit, according to the correspondent from the Mexican newspaper *Novedades*, was that President Ortega "became a full member of the Central American club." Beyond whatever differences and conflicts may exist, the fact that Ortega was able to sit down at the same table with his peers in the region to discuss issues of importance to all of them, lent *de facto* recognition, both to his government and to his role as President. In addition, the Nicaraguan Chief of State showed flexibility by committing himself in principle to signing the Contadora Pact, without conditioning his signature to an end to hostilities by Washington, although that had been his government position prior to the meeting.

On the whole, analysts agreed that the Esquipulas meeting had positive effects for peace. Despite the fact that radically different positions still separate Washington's allies in the region (the "Tegucigalpa Group," composed of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras) from Nicaragua, and that the region's governments remain intransigent regarding aspects of the Contadora negotiations, the presidential summit allowed the five leaders to come together in a forum for dialog and mutual understanding.★

Horacio Castellanos Moya

Contadora's Tortuous Path

When hopes were high for a peaceful resolution, new pressures once again prevented the signing of the Contadora Treaty

Contadora's efforts toward a peaceful, political solution to the Central American crisis increasingly resemble an endless race. Each time the contestants seem to be reaching the end of the track, the finish-line gets pulled further back. Time and time again, obstacles appear in the path of new peace proposals.

In their search for a breakthrough, the foreign affairs ministers of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama (the countries that make up the Contadora Group), as well as their counterparts from Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (the Contadora Support Group), met in Panama last April 5 through 7. They agreed on a two-month ultimatum, ending on June 6, for the five Central American nations to conclude peace negotiations and sign the Contadora Treaty for Peace and Cooperation in Central America. Thus, the Group's efforts would end on that date.

Discussions were tense at the April meeting. Reports indicated there were three main points of disagreement: arms controls and reductions, suspension of international military maneuvers, and treaty verification mechanisms.

The main point of tension at the diplomatic summit was Nicaragua's refusal to sign a joint communique agreeing to a set date for the Peace Treaty's signature. Managua argued that it could not "dismantle its army at a time when it is under attack from the number one economic and military power in the world."

Significantly, three Democratic congressmen from the U.S., and a representative of the European Economic Community, were present at the meeting as observers. Contadora issued a formal petition to the United States Congress requesting that the vote on President Reagan's proposed \$100 million in aid to the contra "at least" be postponed.

Between the April 7 meeting in Panama and the Central American presidential summit held in Guatemala on

May 25, two positions arose around Contadora's ultimatum. On the one hand, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica stated their willingness to sign the Treaty on June 6. Nicaragua, on the other hand, insisted it would sign only if Washington ceased its aggression.

Guatemalan president Vinicio Cerezo said that Nicaragua's position would mean an end to Latin America's peace efforts in Central America. Likewise, in his inaugural address on May 8, the new Costa Rican president, Oscar Arias Sánchez, stated that the Contadora Treaty was the only alternative for the region, "or an apocalyptic war will destroy us all." Honduran head of state, José Azcona, took a similar stance.

Yet this eagerness to sign the Treaty changed, following the presidential summit in the Guatemalan town of Esquipulas. On May 27 Rodolfo Castillo Claramount, who is both vice-president and minister of foreign affairs in the Salvadoran administration, declared that his government would ask Contadora for an extension on the time-limit. On the following day, the Costa Rican government said they considered the June 6 deadline "utopian."



From left to right: Fernando Cardoze (Panamá). Bernardo Sepúlveda (México), Augusto Ramírez Ocampo (Colombia), Isidro Morales Paul (Venezuela).

The fact that the Nicaraguan government had changed its position was what led Washington's Central American allies to bring up new obstacles to the signature of the Treaty. In Esquipulas, the Sandinistas not only agreed to sign, they presented a list of weapons and security aspects they would be willing to "reduce, limit, regulate or do away with."

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Washington's attitude, on the other hand, wavered between statements of support for Contadora and open opposition to the peacemaker's activities. Presidential envoy to Central America, Philip Habib, first said that the U.S. would suspend aid to the contras if Managua signed the Peace Treaty. Present at Oscar Arias Sánchez's inauguration in San José, Vice-President George Bush declared that the United States would abide by the Contadora agreements if they were "global and verifiable."

Nonetheless, a week later, on May 14, White House spokesman Larry Speakes indicated that Washington would not withdraw its support of the contra even if Nicaragua signed the peace accords. The following day, President Reagan confirmed this position. Meanwhile, Washington analysts spoke of struggles within the administration concerning the official position *vis a vis* Contadora.

The differences came to light when on May 20 the *New York Times* published a Pentagon document which argued that the Peace Treaty would lead the United States to a costly policy of containment of Nicaragua, as well as risking a generalized regional war. The Defense Department immediately disowned the document. The conflict was apparently resolved when the White House reconfirmed the official position: support for a peace treaty will be conditioned to the

restoration of democracy in Nicaragua, that it cease to support subversion, that it break off military ties with the Socialist countries, and that it reduce its military apparatus.

Thus, June 6 loomed closer and closer. Five days before the controversial date, Guatemalan president Vinicio Cerezo announced that none of the five Central

"negotiating modifications to the Treaty has come to an end, since all that remains is to implement and execute the agreements, given the political goodwill of the countries concerned."

As for the Panama Declaration, the document states three basic commitments: Central American nations will neither lend their territory nor support irregular



Nicaraguan children defending their national sovereignty.

Photo from La Jornada.

American nations would sign the Peace Treaty on the programmed date. He explained that the decision had been made at the Esquipulas presidential summit. So June 6 came and went, and nothing was signed.

But there was one other meeting between Contadora, its Support Groups and Central American representatives, to discuss pending aspects of the agreement. Out of this gathering came two documents: a definitive version of the Peace Treaty, and the Panama Declaration. Jorge Abadía, Panamanian Foreign Affairs Minister, declared that the time for

forces; no country will join military or political alliances that threaten peace and security in the region; no power should provide military or logistical support to irregular forces or subversive groups, nor threaten the use of force as a means of overthrowing a government in the area.

Reactions to the final version of the Peace Treaty and to the Panama Declaration were diverse. The Sandinista newspaper, *Barricada*, said the documents were a "political bomb for the United States." On the other hand, Guatemalan foreign affairs Minister Mario Quiñones, declared that Contadora's

new proposal, "rather than closing gaps between the positions of the Central American countries, in certain aspects opens them even further."

But the harshest criticism came from El Salvador and Costa Rica, where the final version of the Treaty was referred to as "an incomplete, gray and somewhat intranscendental document." At the same time, it was announced that together with Honduras and Guatemala, they would work on a new plan to resolve the regional conflict. "Contadora's tutelage has disappeared," said Salvadoran Minister Rodolfo Castillo. And Rodrigo Madrigal, head of Costa Rican diplomacy, accused Contadora of creating an aura of complacency around the Sandinistas. "We leave behind the realm of complacency to enter the realm of peremptory demands."

Most regional analysts believe that the Reagan administration's policy of support for the contra continues to be the "crucial element" hindering the Contadora agreement. And it's probably no chance coincidence that on the same day Secretary of State George Shultz stated that the Central American countries might reject the final version of the Peace Treaty, the Salvadoran government called a meeting to discuss the formation of an alternative to Contadora. Nicaragua was pointedly excluded from the initiative.

The road to peace in Central America is long, winding, and full of obstacles. Once more the peace-making group's proposals come up against seemingly insurmountable difficulties. But the members of Contadora have reaffirmed their determination to continue their mediating efforts. The firm support of the world community is with them.★

Horacio Castellanos Moya

Arguments that Favor a Theology of Liberation

Many people think the Vatican totally opposes liberation theology, yet recent Church documents have actually endorsed some of its ideas

Latin America's liberation theology has been legitimized by the highest levels of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Pope, himself, now considers it to be "a new stage" in Catholic theology, for all times and all places. Those who have wanted to have it branded as heterodoxy have been unsuccessful.

In March and April of this year, John Paul II made several references to liberation theology, as a Christian reflection that "is not only opportune, but also useful and necessary." Speaking to a representative group of 21 Brazilian bishops, in a unique meeting at the Vatican's Hall of Congregations on March 13, he said, "The Church recognizes that its obligation is to continue that reflection, to bring it up to date and to deepen it, as a reflection that tries to respond to the serious problems related to social justice, equality in interpersonal, national and international relations, peace and disarmament, freedom, the fundamental rights of the human person, etc."

In a special message to the Brazilian Bishop's Conference on April 9, he added, "We are convinced, you and we, that liberation theology...must constitute a new stage—closely linked to previous ones—in that

theological reflection begun with the Apostolic tradition and carried on by the great Fathers and Doctors, with the ordinary and extraordinary Magisterium, and in the most recent period, by the rich patrimony of the Church's social doctrine, as expressed in a series of documents that go from *Rerum novarum* to *Laborem exercens*."

On April 5, the Vatican also published its "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" (*Libertatis nuntius*), signed on March 22, with the Pope's approval, by Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It reaffirms that freedom and liberation are "the center of the Gospel message" (Nos. 1 and 2), and it once again recognizes the fact that "one of the principal phenomena of our times, that affects entire continents, is the awakening consciousness of people who, burdened by the weight of secular misery, aspire to a life of dignity and justice and are willing to fight for their freedom" (No.17).

Extending the theme of liberation to a world-scale, the same document denounces the development of "dependent relationships" that result from the "concentration of economic power" which includes: the "technological power" of the contemporary world (No. 12); the use of technology to "perpetrate genocide" (No. 14); and the establishment of "new relationships of inequality and oppression"

among nations "endowed with might and those that are not" (No.16).

It adds, "The new technological power is united with economic power and leads to its concentration. Thus, both within a single people, as well as between peoples, new dependent relationships have been created in the last 20 years that have produced

serve instead to increase those threats. The machines of death that confront each other today are capable of destroying all human life on earth."

At least eight of the "Instructions" one hundred points speak of the Church's experience with the poor, of their Biblical and theological conceptualizations and of the Church's mission among

close their hearts, cannot be within God's charity" (No.56). In the a similar spirit, the document adds, "For the same reason, those oppressed by misery are the object of the Church's preferential love, which from the very beginning, and despite the errors of many of its members, has never ceased its work to aid, defend and free them. This has been done through

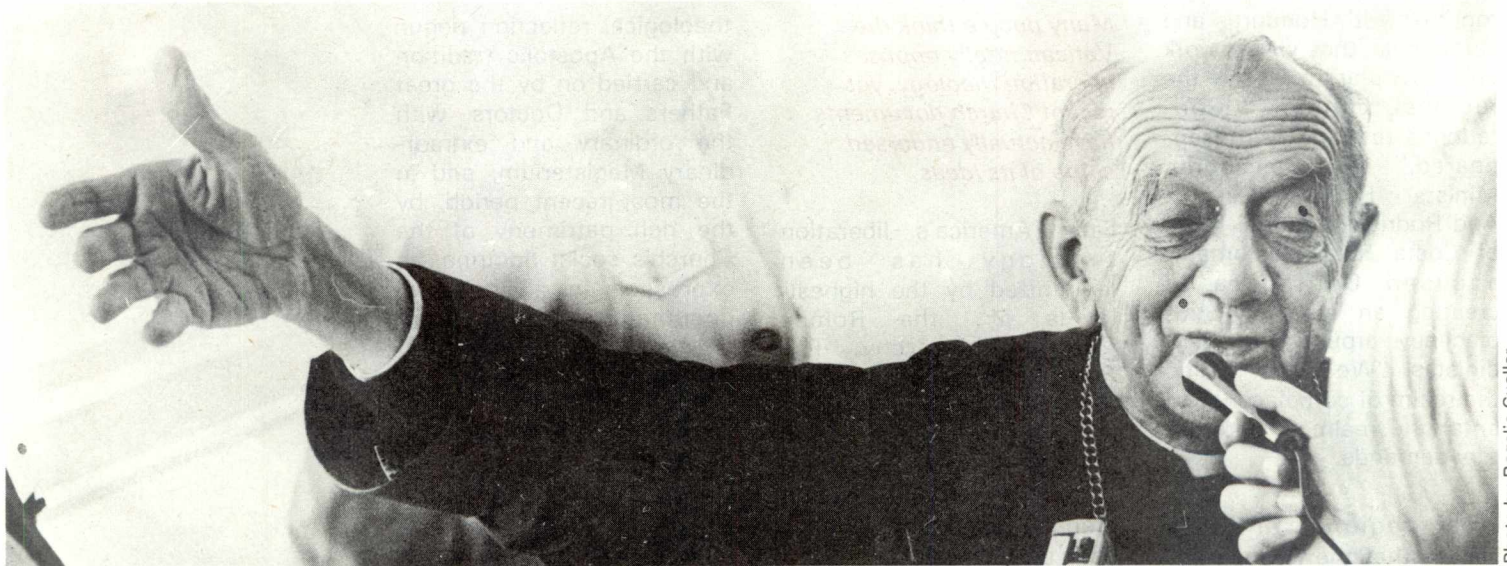


Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

Dom Helder Camara, archbishop of Recife, Brasil. A leading exponent of Theology of Liberation.

the new demands for liberation." And it asks, "How can we prevent technological power from being turned into a force of oppression against human groups or entire peoples?" "The search to fulfill self-interests seems to be the norm for international relations, ignoring any consideration of the common good for humanity." In the same tone, it acknowledges the destructive capacity of the modern "machines of death" and warns against the weakness of "recognizing a juridical order as the sole guarantee for the relationships within the great human family" (Nos. 15 and 16).

"When trust in the law no longer seems to offer sufficient protection, security and peace are sought through mutual threats, representing a danger for all of humanity. The forces that ought to serve for the development of freedom,

them (Nos. 21, 22, 45, 46, 47, 66, 67 and 68). The third chapter, entitled "Liberation and Christian Freedom," repeats that "the Prophets vigorously denounced the injustices against the poor" and that "they became God's spokesmen on their behalf;" that God "is the supreme recourse of the weak and the oppressed, and the Messiah shall have the mission of defending them;" and that "injustice against the weak and the poor is a grave sin, which breaks the communion with Yahweh" (No.46).

On the topic of "love, the gift of the Spirit," the document again insists that "the love of God, instilled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, implies love for one's neighbor" (No. 55). And in the light of that commandment, "the Apostle James severely reminds the rich of their obligations, and Saint John affirms that they who have worldly goods and seeing their brother in need,

countless works of charity, which always and everywhere are indispensable. In addition, through its social doctrine, whose implementation is urgently needed, the Church has tried to promote structural changes in society in an effort to obtain decent living conditions for people" (No. 68).

The importance of many of these topics and aspects of the approach used, had been developed and emphasized by liberation theology in Latin America since its birth around 1967.

Liberation theology seriously and systematically applied the teachings of the universal assembly of Catholic bishops known as the Vatican Council II, held in Rome between 1962 and 1965. The Council declared, "Before all else, fulfill the demands of justice, so as not to give as charity that which is really justice; abolish the causes and not only the effects of evil; and organize aid

in such a way that those who receive it *are progressively liberated from external dependence and begin to be able to care for themselves*" ("Decree on Secular Apostleship," No.8).

Thus, in addition to the Bible, the Tradition and the Church's Magisterium, liberation theology began to use the social sciences. By then, social theory no longer explained poverty, oppres-

colonization was coupled to, reinforced and maintained by the internal forms of colonization in our own countries, headed by the oligarchies and ever-smaller power elites.

Liberation theologians began, then, to read the Bible, the Tradition and the Magisterium with new eyes, from the optic of Latin America's poverty, exploitation and oppression. They

hunger, misery and oppression; in a word, from the injustice and hatred that are born from human selfishness" (Second Latin American Bishops Conference; Medellin, Colombia; August-September, 1968).

Clearly this authentic manner of living and preaching the Gospel represents hope for the poor, the majority of people in the continent, but it also questions those who



Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

Which way the Church?

sion and Latin America's underdevelopment as the result of *natural causes or pure chance*—which would definitely make God responsible for injustice—. Nor was it explained as the product of some *historic and passing backwardness*, as traditional Latin American culture (urban-rural) facing the modern culture of the rich countries (industrial-urban). Rather, it explained those conditions as the *product of ancient and new forms of foreign colonialization* by the countries of the First World in military, political, cultural, social, commercial, technological and financial matters. This external

reclaimed the Gospel's historical and public character, going beyond the interpretations that often tended to reduce the Gospel to idealism and privatization. For liberation theology, God's salvation through Jesus Christ is not only a question of that which goes beyond history, nor that which is solely spiritual—understood here in its dualist sense, as the opposite of the material— but rather it involves man's individual and social reality. "It is the same God who, for all times, sent his Son in the form of a man to liberate all men from the slavery that results from sin, ignorance

hold power. Thus, in some places in the world, liberation theology is the victim of "persecution for the cause of justice," both inside and outside the Church. Nonetheless, as the Pope said recently, the Church "recognizes its obligation to continue that reflection, to bring it up to date and to deepen it, as a reflection that tries to respond to the serious problems related to social justice, equality in interpersonal, national and international relations, peace and disarmament, freedom, the fundamental rights of the human person, etc."★

Miguel Concha

Things Get Rough for Alan García

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The prison massacres caused an uproar for Alan García's government; will Peru's new democracy survive the challenge?

The incident didn't attract much attention at first. Some 300 members of the Peruvian guerrilla group, *Sendero Luminoso* (known in the U.S. media as "Shining Path"), inmates in the Lurigancho, El Frontón and Santa Barbara prisons, all near Lima, rioted simultaneously to demand better conditions in the prisons and to prevent their transfer to a maximum security installation in Cantogrande. But events soon took a dramatic turn.

The government, headed by President Alan García, sent a commission to negotiate with the riotors. Maintaining their loyalty to typically intransigent *Sendero* positions, the inmates refused to negotiate. Thus, the government decided to send in army and police (the Republican Guard) forces to restore order in the prisons.

No one expected the security forces to act with such a vengeance. In El Frontón, the army and navy attacked with artillery. In Lurigancho, the military communique' was concise and macabre: "There were no survivors." The total number of victims from the three prisons has not been made public, but estimates range from 150 to 300. Included in the total are at least 60 who were summarily executed after having surrendered.

The military's wrath partially obscured other factors related to the incident. For example, the prison areas used to hold members of the guerrilla organization were virtually territories controlled by the inmates, with authorities having no access to them. They were operated under a set of rules established by the prisoners, who held political activities, carried out high-level meetings of the organization's leadership and even had their own cells where they punished members who broke discipline. In El Frontón, *Sendero* had created an arsenal stocked with arms carried in by inmate's relatives, as well as a system of trenches and parapets.

News of the massacre, combined with news of *Sendero's* logistical privileges in the prisons, provoked a situation that was summed up in the following manner by the French newspaper, *Le Monde*: "In just a few short days, President Alan García has lost the prestige that he had so arduously worked to gain during his eleven months in office." That prestige was symbolized by the fact that the Socialist International was scheduled to meet in Lima just one day after the massacre. It was the first time that the socialist organization was to hold its meeting outside of Europe. They had chosen Peru because of its young and dynamic president who had adopted original and independent measures to confront his country's \$12 billion foreign debt. It must

be added here that the meeting was held without further problems; but that was the least of the government's worries. For now, the governing APRA party (Peruvian Alliance for Revolution in the Americas) faces its worst crisis since coming to power, and it is still too soon to know what the final outcome will be.

CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO FIRES

When APRA won the 1985 elections, it took over a country facing serious problems. Peru had been governed for an entire decade by a series of military juntas of varying political persuasions, before a civilian government was finally reinstated in the early 1980s. That first civilian administration, headed by veteran, right-wing politician, Fernando Belaunde Terry, had more vices than virtues, inflating the country's foreign debt from \$8 billion to \$12 billion. Peru's traditional social contrasts had become even more striking: the Andean region, submerged in shocking poverty and the coastal region, with a significantly higher economic level. All of this was combined with the rise in 1980 of one of the world's most violent guerrilla organizations and the intensification of narcotics trafficking. Both the guerrillas and the drug dealers focused their recruitment efforts on the Andean population, where the lack of job opportunities made people willing to consider desperate solutions.

When it first took over the government, APRA seemed to hold promise for dealing effectively with the country's multiple problems. The new President, Alan García, announced the first important measure in his inauguration address. He revealed that Peru would make payments on its foreign debt at a fixed rate of 10% of its export earnings. That provoked an uproar in the international banking community, the applause of others and scep-

ticism of the majority. But thirty-six year old García has proven that it wasn't just talk. He took on the international banks, and especially the IMF, and has managed to improve some of the nation's economic indicators. Funds destined originally for debt payments were reoriented to help beef up the country's monetary reserves, cut the inflation rate, subsidize basic goods and increase salaries.

Nonetheless the country's most serious problems were, and continue to be, internal ones. García took some steps to address these problems when he merged the three police forces into one and when he fired or retired military officers known for their abuses of power or corruption. Other measures were taken to attract investment and funds were set aside for development programs in Peru's southernmost, Andean provinces.

Some of these steps helped to reduce internal pressures, but the country's most serious problem continues unchanged. *Sendero Luminoso* intensified its operations, and actually controls some parts of the Andes, organizing what they call "liberated territories." The attacks have been so serious that the García government decided to impose a curfew in Lima and Callao in February, although it has since been lifted. Similar measures had been implemented earlier, allowing the army to establish effective control in 19 provinces. The complexity of the situation has meant that APRA is really caught between the frying pan and the fire. On the one hand, it is necessary to control *Sendero's* growth; but as long as there are not enough funds to create jobs in the rural areas, the government must turn to the army. And thus, the army grows more and more powerful, to such an extent that it has repeatedly demanded that García do something about

the security situation in Lima and Callao. Even more worrisome, after the massacre at Lurigancho and El Frontón, a number of leaders, Willie Brandt among them, warned of the imminent possibility of a coup.

QUO VADIS, ALAN GARCIA?

For now, Peru's democratic institutions are being eroded, as part of a process that seems to be a necessary evil. But "necessary evils" always imply risks. It is acknowledged, for example, that the Peruvian press has a gentleman's agreement with the government to apply self-censorship in an attempt to limit public knowledge of *Sendero Luminoso's* activities.

In addition, the APRA government's relationship with Izquierda Unificada (Unified Left, IU) had taken a difficult turn even before the prison massacre. Several APRA legislators had accused the IU of collaborating with the guerrillas. Since then, relations had soured, and after the massacre, the IU accused the government of having acted with

precipitation and demanded that the cabinet resign. When García ordered trials for ninety-five policemen involved in the incidents, the IU reacted indignantly, charging that APRA was ignoring those who bore the greatest responsibility and who were to be found within the army's ranks. It is important to recall that the IU is the country's second strongest political force and that its leaders hold important public posts, among them the mayor of Lima.

APRA has definitely felt the effects of recent events in its own ranks. After the massacre, the Minister of Justice and several other high-level officials from the Ministry, resigned. There are persistent rumors of other imminent resignations, including the Ministers of the Interior and of Defense.

Given this situation, if Alan García loses political support from major parliamentary forces, he may be obliged to take measures that could cost him what *Le Monde* called his hard-won prestige or even his popularity in the country. While other parties,



President Alan García of Peru surrounded by elements of his Army.

particularly those of the center-right, also criticized APRA's handling of the prisons incident, they haven't written off the possibility of taking advantage of an opportunity to draw closer to the governing party. Another option would be to tie the army more closely to the government, in an effort to control it through the

alliance. But that, in effect, would mean to cut a deal with the devil. In any case, García will have to draw once again on his proven political prowess. He is a man who must play with two fires at once, both of them voracious and burning on highly flammable terrain.★

Irving Roffe

non-orthodox economic plan.

"When José Sarney became president earlier this year, he tried to contain inflation by resorting to traditional means," said the ambassador. He admits that failure of these mechanisms led the government to adopt more radical measures.

Latin America's most populous nation was the first to sign letters of intent with the International Monetary Fund, but it has also been known for bending the letter of the institution's "recommendations." During 1981 and 1982, Brazil underwent the bitter experience of applying liberal monetary policies which led the country into its worst crisis in history, with three-digit inflation and outright insolvency by the end of 1982. The economy had a negative growth rate of 3.4% in 1983, while the debt swelled by 10%. Despite all of this, Brazil still signed another four letters of intent between December 1982 and the end of 1983, but never fulfilled the commitments.

Brazil signed its seventh letter of intent with the IMF during the last quarter of 1984 and managed to meet conditions half-way.

Brazil's Controversial "Cruzado" Plan

As payment of Latin America's vast debt becomes increasingly difficult, all eyes turn towards the southern giant's bold experiment to check inflation

Is spontaneous public support sufficient guarantee for the success of a long-term economic plan? This is a question being asked about the Brazilian Cruzado Plan. Whereas the government is euphoric over the plan's initial results, critics are frankly skeptical.

Brazil is more than the home of the samba, carnivals and soccer; it is also the nation with the largest debt in the world. The South American giant owes \$104 billion, and must pay out \$12 billion a year in interest, as well as another \$8 billion on account.

The effort to meet payments to the more than 600 creditor banks was dragging the economy into chaos and runaway inflation, which in 1985 reached 235%. Estimates for 1986 indicated the inflation rate could reach 400%.

Geraldo Holanda Cavalcanti, Brazilian ambassador to Mexico, granted **Voices of Mexico** an interview on the subject. He explained that the plan, put into effect last February 28, is basically a mechanism aimed at wiping out the tremendous loss in the purchasing power of wages because of inflation. He also made clear the reasons why it was necessary to put into effect such a

SOME FACTS ABOUT BRAZIL

	GNP	Inflation	Trade	Foreign Debt Interest and	Foreign Exchange Reserves	Net foreign Debt
	% annual	% annual	Balance USmillions	Principal Payments	USmillions	Export Earnings
1958	9.2	23.8	- 1128	2 942.7	4 502.3	1.7
1978 (1)						
1979	6.4	54.0	- 2717	11 732.2	9 688.7	2.6
1980	7.2	98.0	- 2823	9 753.6	6 912.5	2.3
1981	- 1.6	110.0	1594	16 741.5	7 506.8	2.3
1982	0.9	100.0	817	19 502.1	3 994.4	3.3
1983	- 3.4	211.0	6472	19 383.0	4 562.9	3.5
1984	4.5	224.0	13068	17 917	11 995.3	4.0
1985	8.5*	235.0 *	12000 *	10 700 *	8 200 *	3.8 *

Observations: (1) Average for the period
* Estimates

Sources: FEV, Brazil
IDB

Although inflation ran out of control, the GNP grew 4.5% that year, and there was a trade surplus of \$13 billion, all of which placed the Brazilian economy in eighth place world-wide. In 1985 Brazil ignored the IMF's prescriptions and negotiated its debt payments on the side. The economy showed real growth of 8.3% and the third highest trade surplus in the world, some \$12 billion, surpassed only by Japan and West Germany.

These figures explain, to a certain extent, the decision made by José Sarney's government to implement a program that makes a clean break with the IMF's orthodox conceptions which include cuts in public spending, the sale of state-owned firms, elimination of exchange controls over a country's currency *vis a vis* the U.S. dollar, elimination of price controls and keeping a lid on wage increases, and above all, the imposition of advisors.

In contrast, the new plan consists of a freeze on prices, goods and services and on all factors of the economy, plus the establishment of the "Cruzado", the new currency that replaced the cruzeiro. The freeze also includes wages and the cruzado to the dollar exchange rate.

The new plan also contemplates several mechanisms to benefit the population. Salaries, for example, are not totally frozen, but merely stabilized. In case of inflation, current legislation calls for automatic adjustment in wages of up to 60% of their loss in purchasing power. The remaining 40% is open to negotiation.

"On the other hand, unemployment insurance was also established, and this is something very agreeable to wage workers," adds the ambassador.

MAGIC OR REALITY?

The plan was a success from the very beginning; the ob-

jective was quickly met. Whereas in February inflation was 14.36%, it was only 2.08% for the first quarter after the plan was put into effect (March, April, May). In March the economy grew 5%, employment increased by 2.9%, sales went up 18% and exports 3.4%

Mr. Holanda Cavalcanti recalls the first few days. "There were attempts at fraud, changing price tags. But, the government was strict in bringing down the law on infractors. There were also attempts at hoarding products, and the government confiscated them. Some workers went on strike demanding higher wages, but these were resolved through negotiations."

The surprising amount of popular support for the plan showed in the attitudes of consumers, many of whom turned into volunteer "inspectors." The government empowered them to enforce compliance with the price-freeze, and this led to a radical change in attitudes. Whereas a few months ago angry crowds of hungry people pillaged supermarkets to steal food, now they keep watch so that goods don't disappear from the stores and prices are not hiked up. The CUT, the labor federation which openly opposes the Sarney government, explained this attitude in a document criticizing the Cruzado Plan:

"The price-freeze led to popular mobilization, a greater role in discussions and a broader base of support for the government. Why? In the first place, a freeze on prices is a secular demand of the working class. It means, if only for a short time, the disarticulation of a mechanism that complements the exploitation of labor and the accumulation of monopoly capital."

AGAINST THE WORKERS IN ORDER TO PAY THE DEBT?

Mr. Holanda Cavalcanti points to the success factor:

"Our economic conditions allowed the government to take steps that are difficult to accept: there was a climate of growth and optimism, not one of depression or recession. There was also a climate of political renovation, and this too contributed to the support the government obtained."

But the opposition, particularly the CUT, says the



The other Brazil.

plan also seeks to generate broad support for the regime as a forerunner to next November's elections for the Constituent Congress. The municipal elections held in late 1985 showed a clear trend toward political polarization in favor of opposition left parties, in detriment to the government's Democratic Alliance.

These would be the political reasons for concern. But as regards the labor movement, the CUT believes that - "towards labor and unions, the plan seeks to stem the growing tide of labor and union struggles and to undermine the victories achieved through mobilizations and strikes." In this vein, the objective is to "create the necessary economic and political conditions to adjust the Brazilian economy to the needs of the world market," and to "accelerate the necessary mechanisms to be able to meet interest payments on the foreign debt." The ambassador disagrees, and says emphatically: "The plan is internal. It is not geared towards paying the debt."

DOES THE PLAN HAVE A FUTURE?

Thus far the results are obvious, and superior to those of other similar plans which also sought the same "zero-inflation" goal. In Peru, for example, inflation reached 43.8% in the four months after their plan was put into effect; in Argentina the rate was 14.23% and the country was forced to devalue its currency by 30.5%.

The situation has evolved differently in Brazil, despite all the bad omens.

In a first, overall assesment of the plan delivered on April 14, Sarney recognized that in social terms, "we are in the same group with African and Asian countries, and this situation cannot continue because it is a terrible illness of our society." His diagnosis is supported by irrefutable figures that appear in a report prepared by Brazilian political science professor Helio Jaguaribe: over half of Brazil's 138 million people live in poverty; the current unemployment rate is close to 25%, even if the government only admits to 4%; illiteracy stands at 30%; half of the population receives only 14% of the national wealth, while 5% own 33% of the nation's income, and this is one of the

most notorious rates of inequality in the world.

Unlike the more traditional medicine, this unorthodox shock treatment has produced results. The government is confident that the inequalities in Brazilian society will gradually be resolved thanks to this effort. The official outlook is that the economy will continue to perform strongly, that the trade surplus for 1986 will reach \$14 billion and that for the first time in many years the balance of payments will be in the black. The GNP will increase 4.5%, although economic growth will be lower than in 1985.

For its part, the opposition Worker's Central is less optimistic, and believes the government will be hard pressed to control inflation for much longer. The CUT expects to see further strikes and mobilizations in favor of worker's demands, just as soon as the population realizes that the Cruzado Plan is just a mirage. Or as the Worker's Party leader Luis Ignacio da Silva, "Lula," says: "The Cruzado Plan doesn't resolve the problems, it just puts a freeze on them." Time will tell.★

Enrique Vargas Anaya

Rediscovering Democracy in Uruguay

President Sanguinetti's visit to Mexico draws attention to the achievements and challenges of democracy after years of military dictatorship

FROM TRANSITION TO CHALLENGES

Democracy has won the day in Uruguay, and a new course is being set. With



President Sanguinetti at the National Palace.

Julio María Sanguinetti heading the new government, after twelve years of dictatorship, the Uruguayan people must now face one of the worst economic crises in the country's history.

The military junta that seized power in September 1973 left an extremely difficult situation in its wake: increasing unemployment, deep economic recession, an annual inflation rate of at least 59% and increasing social unrest due to the loss of real wage value. The external situation looks no better: Uruguay faces both a foreign debt of close to \$6 billion and the consequences of the country's international isolation following the establishment of the *de facto* government.

The path is a difficult one. Since taking office in March 1985, President Sanguinetti has often referred to the gravity of the Uruguayan crisis. In a country that must dedicate 50% of its export earnings to pay the interest on its foreign debt, and where 90% of those who are retired or living on pensions receive a monthly income of less than \$50, the challenges take on a social and political character. It is necessary to negotiate with the labor movement, to restore political rights to all sectors of society and to deal with the widespread demand for a clear definition of the army's new role within the state.

With the removal of the armed forces from power a broad consensus was formed within the more advanced sectors of society concerning the need to open up political spaces, in the hopes of restoring democracy. The coming together of the country's four main political forces—The Colorado Party, the National Party, the Broad Front and the Civic Union—to form a strategic front against the military regime, is widely regarded as one of the most memorable political developments in the country's political history.

FROM CHALLENGES TO CONCERTED STEPS FORWARD

The new government's most important challenge is, first of all, the economic situation; the political situation comes second. It must deal with the economic crisis and with an all but inevitable renegotiation of the foreign debt. As for the political situation, the new ad-

This process requires the active involvement of the different social sectors within an institutional framework. "We believe that systematic opposition, or a situation of intense confrontation between political parties, could undermine our democracy. We believe in a policy of harmonizing and building consensus. We have carried out every possible effort to arrive at all



Sanguinetti visits the Mexican Congress.

Photo by Rogelio Cuellar.

ministration will have to deal with problems such as an amnesty or trials of those responsible for the repression during the dictatorship, something which has yet to be resolved.

Because of the strategic nature of the convergence of forces during the last years of military rule, the greatest challenge of all is, no doubt, the search for consensus around the main issues. The fact that this must be done without undermining the government's objectives, the newly acquired political stability or the country's still precarious democracy, constitutes an additional challenge.

This is the context within which President Sanguinetti conceived the consensus-building process as a means of exercising state power.

feasible points of coincidence...", stated Mr. Sanguinetti shortly after the 1984 elections.

Nonetheless, this drive towards unity has been questioned by important sectors of society, such as the influential Broad Front, a coalition of left and Christian Democrat parties that unified back in 1970, and which is headed by Wilson Ferreira.

A well-known Uruguayan theater director who has lived in Mexico since 1976, Blas Braidot, believes Uruguay is going through a political transition in which the dictatorship's apparatus is still in place, and in which the labor and grassroots movements are increasingly active. According to Braidot, the government has "the option of relying completely on

the broad, popular sectors, and gaining their support through political and economic measures that favor democracy and satisfy the people's basic needs."

48 Daniel Turner is a Uruguayan mechanic who came to Mexico at about the same time Braidot did. He believes that not enough is being done to pull the country out of the crisis and get it back on the track toward growth and development. "Many of us (Uruguayans) are not in agreement with (the president's economic policy) because the workers are not to blame for the crisis, nor for the coup, nor for the fact that the country has been mortgaged. Certain groups or sectors may agree with the government concerning political issues such as the National Pact, but there is no basic agreement over the way the country's resources are being dealt with."

A COMPROMISING OBLIGATION

Uruguay's foreign debt is over \$5.5 billion, roughly equal to 90% of the country's gross national product. At the time President Sanguinetti took office, each Uruguayan owed \$1,800 to international banks and financial institutions. A technical commission, composed of specialists from the different political parties, reported the following conclusion: "The resolution of all other economic and financial problems, as well as the country's future social and political evolution, will depend mostly on the solution to the problem of the debt."

In the same vein, and along with other social and political sectors, the specialists agreed that "unless we want to reach socially intolerable living conditions, that would threaten both our image abroad and our internal political stability, Uruguay must defer the payment (of its foreign debt) and should subject interest payments to

the evolution of the country's economy and to its surplus-generating capacity."

Inflation and social unrest have been unleashed by the high rate of unemployment, above 14%, the drastic fall in the real value of wages, and the dramatically high debt level in the business sector which is now over \$3 billion. Sanguinetti's response to the waves of strikes and protests called by the Inter-Union Worker's Plenary (PIT-CNT), the country's most important labor federation, has been to prudently maintain the course of his government's economic policy.

RECOVERING A TRADITION

Despite the dissent, most of the population seems to agree with and support Sanguinetti's foreign policy. He has opened the country to the world again, thus stilling the echos of the military regime's isolation.

Blas Braidot illustrates this point: "So far the new government's attitude toward our international relations is a positive one, even taking into account the conflictive times and despite tremendous pressure, like the barriers against Contadora. I am proud that Uruguay's foreign policy seeks its basic alliances with other Latin American countries, which is what it should strengthen."

Two fundamental ideas underline Mr. Sanguinetti's foreign policy: Latin American integration, and a new emphasis on relations with Third World countries. Thus, the new energy in Uruguay's international policy has led it to join the Contadora Support Group and the Civil Observation Committee of the Panama Declaration, which concerns armaments and military maneuvers in Central America. Sanguinetti has repeatedly voiced his support for the Cartagena Consensus, which refers to the economic recovery and

transfer of resources toward developing countries. Along with five other Latin American nations, Uruguay subscribed the Montevideo Declaration, a proposal to strengthen and intensify economic ties among the countries of the region.

President Sanguinetti recently carried out a two-week tour covering Spain, Egypt, Israel, Mexico and Costa Rica. His aim was to draw up technical and economic agreements, and to further develop economic ties with those countries.

The new government's foreign policy is determined by an independent point of view that includes aspects such as direct support for Contadora's peace-seeking efforts in Central America, reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba, the reacknowledgment of existing ties with Nicaragua, and the promotion of mutual interest policies with Argentina and Brazil, among others.

PARALLEL PATHS

During his official two-day visit to Mexico, Mr. Sanguinetti met with President Miguel de la Madrid, with congressional leaders and with businessmen. The issues dealt with ranged through the Central American crisis, problems stemming from Latin America's foreign debt, and the current situation in the world oil market. Above all, his purpose was to increase commercial, political and financial ties with Mexico.

Sanguinetti's was the first visit ever by a Uruguayan president to Mexico, despite the fact that diplomatic ties have existed for 148 years. During his stay in our country, Sanguinetti defined the foreign debt as a political problem that needs to be reviewed in its true context. Both heads of state expressed their support for the pacifist stance of the Group of Six constituted in New Delhi last year (Mexico is a member of the group, along

with India, Argentina, Greece, Sweden and Tanzania.) Both presidents also praised the agreements reached in the Latin American Parliament, as expressed in the Montevideo Declaration, which state the regional consensus concerning the foreign debt.

The Uruguayan president's visit to our country also opened the way for several short-term commitments, such as the reactivation of the Confederation of Latin American Political Parties (COPPAL) and the agreement to set up a system of Latin American institutions to further unity among the peoples of the region.

After little over a year in of-

face, Julio María Sanguinetti faces what are perhaps the most serious challenges in the country's history. Social unrest over current economic policy, together with the labor movement's mature attitude, are complemented by an irreproachable, foreign policy of broad scope.

The same strong democratic spirit the Uruguayan people showed during their struggle against the dictatorship, could be, as is currently the case with the country's foreign policy, the source of unity both of ideas and practice, for the solution of the problems facing the nation.★

Ernesto Rojas

A Chilean Exile's Difficult Odyssey

Government atrocities and massive protests mark the slow decline of a fascist dictatorship

Chile, one of the two South American countries still under military dictatorship, is changing. It is almost 13 years since terror and anxiety became the only possible way of life for Chileans. Today, thousands of men and women are protesting in the streets in search of a dream that has not vanished despite the state of siege: the return to democracy.

The military today are forced to face their own doings: economic bankruptcy, misery, prostitution, illiteracy and the loss without trace of what was once a sovereign and democratic country. The grassroots opposition not

only has the strength to survive the repression and imprisonment of its leaders, it also finds new forms of struggle and expression. Not even the state of exception is capable of imposing total silence on the press, and political parties are unifying against the regime that overthrew constitutional president Salvador Allende.

"When I returned, Chile was no longer the country I had known." Exiled in Mexico for ten years, Ximena Ortúzar returned to her country in October of 1983. Ximena had been one of the most enthusiastic young television journalists, and was part of the editorial board of the state-owned publishing firm, Quimantú (sun of wisdom.) She was also a reporter for the magazine *Paloma*, aimed

at housewives who suffered the effects of the international economic boycott set up by governments opposed to Salvador Allende.

The Popular Unity government (Unidad Popular) published literary classics through Quimantú. Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Dickens, to mention but a few, were read during work-breaks in factories, in school and at home. At the time, Chile had a population of 10 million. By 1973 Quimantú had sold some 10 million books, an impressive record that surpassed even some of the developed countries.

"The military junta took over Quimantú after the coup; they burned its books and we were all dismissed from our jobs. We never returned. Now the government publishes nothing," says Ximena, "and publishing activity died a natural death. The country's economic situation is so bad that people don't even have enough

Despite repression, the opposition paper, *Fortín Mapocho* resists.

Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

money to buy a newspaper. Many of us who worked at Quimantú are in exile, others were imprisoned, others were murdered."

Did Ximena Ortúzar go into exile voluntarily? Just a few days after the military takeover the new government flashed Ximena's picture on television and demanded that the people denounce bad Chileans like her. "There was an order out for my arrest," Ximena tells us. "I knew I could end up in the National Stadium where thousands of Chileans were concentrated and never be heard from again. And the lives of my four children were my responsibility."

As in other cases, Ximena's capture could also lead to the apprehension of her fellow oppositionists. "What can I say? As I sit here in my home I can imagine they could run a train over me and I wouldn't give anyone away. But when you know that a woman was raped by fourteen soldiers in a single night, when a political prisoner tells you how he was handcuffed and tied to a chair while his wife and five-year old son were raped in front of him, or when they're pointing a gun at your head, would you or wouldn't you talk? My friends said. 'You can stay in Chile, but you must be aware of the risks, your life is more valuable in exile.' What could I do? Stay there and see what would happen?"

A somber chapter in history unfolded after 1973. Five thousand political and labor leaders were murdered during the first 75 hours after the coup, just in the city of Santiago. The junta shut down Congress and took over all state powers. Labor unions were banned, and the government assaulted and confiscated all the belongings of the Worker's Central. Unions were remorselessly persecuted and their open activity became impossible.

Ximena Ortúzar never imagined the odyssey she

would live through over the next ten years. She boarded a plane bound for Mexico, and with her four children faced the shock of exile suffered by a million other Chileans. They would no longer see the Aconcagua volcano that rises above the Andes, nor would she see her mother and the old family home in Santiago. It would be ten long years before she could walk down the shaded avenues that Allende envisioned full of free men, shortly before his death.

The huge protest demonstrations that began in 1983 heralded Chileans's loss of fear, and military authorities were forced to allow the return of some exiles, among them Ximena and her children. The list authorizing her return in June of that year, was the government's response to the first national protest called in May by the National Worker's Leadership. "I believed it was my duty to relieve some of the Chileans who had endured the dictatorship for so many years and who had sustained a heroic struggle to rescue democracy," said Ximena.

Ximena and her family arrived in Santiago de Chile in October. "People were out in the streets, risking their lives to shout 'Down with Pinochet!' I knew then that something was still alive. History is curious, sometimes. The democratic project is not forgotten despite muzzles, death and bombs."

Thus, back in her country, Ximena became a journalist again. There was no opposition newspaper in Chile at the time. Since it is forbidden to report on strikes, demonstrations or the activities of the resistance, publications frequently appear with blank pages or spaces because of censorship. So, along with other journalists, Ximena founded the only legal daily that sides with progressive struggles against general Pinochet's government.

A peaceful-looking old man turned up one autumn afternoon at the office of Jorge Lavanderos, a Christian Democrat leader. He handed over an envelope containing the official legal registration papers of a sports daily, valid since 1943. The newspaper was *Fortín Mapocho*, the name of a soccer team, and it had gone unnoticed when all other dailies had been suppressed.

The old man needed money but had been unwilling to sell his registration to just anyone. He wanted someone who would make a unified opposition newspaper out of his sports daily.

Ximena recalls: "What would you think of having an opposition newspaper?, I said to Jorge Lavanderos. 'It's a midsummer night's dream,' he said, 'but we've been unable to do it for ten years.' Well, now we can do it, I said. 'You're crazy! How can you even imagine such a thing?'"

But Ximena was right. The military junta couldn't stop the publication of a daily that had been legally registered since 1943 without breaking its own laws. So, enthusiastic journalists decided they would work without wages. They found a press that would print the paper, they devised legal distribution mechanisms and a style of writing that could bypass the censors.

The first issue was printed in March of 1984 and ran 100,000 copies which sold out in two hours. The junta shut down the newspaper, broke into the printing press and took the editors, Lavandero and Ximena Ortúzar, to court. The case reached the Court of Appeals, which took into account the complaint presented by *Fortín Mapocho's* owners and came up with a surprising decision: the newspaper was legal, and its circulation could not be prohibited. The defendants were extatic, they had won their legal battle.

The junta shut down the newspaper again after its second issue. The editors took the case to the Supreme Court, and the five judges unanimously declared that the paper was legal.

A rumor circulated in Chile at the time about a house built by General Pinochet in a valley at the foot of the Andes. The mansion, known as "the little house on the prairie," was located in the town of Melocotón.

"One day some one came to *Fortín Mapocho* and told us that we could prove that Pinochet had usurped state-owned lands by checking the deeds in the Public Registry. His purchase of the mansion was a fraud against the nation. We hired a team of legal advisors who very cautiously obtained copies of the deed. We found that Pinochet had expropriated the lands for government use. The property was then purchased by an army colonel and sold to Pinochet in a private transaction. There was fraud against the nation."

The documents were handed over to Jorge Lavanderos, the legal owner of *Fortín Mapocho*. Lavanderos left his office one tragic evening, with the documents in his briefcase. He got into his car and headed home to analyze them carefully. Little did he know that he would soon embark on a futile escape attempt.

"Jorge noticed he was being followed by 12 men in two cars without license plates and with radio antennas. He was intercepted after a desperate chase through the streets of Santiago. The briefcase containing the documents on 'the little house in the prairie' was taken from him, and he was beaten with rubber-covered steel clubs."

The medical report following the attack on Jorge Lavanderos stated that the inner bones in his left ear

had been ruptured, leaving him permanently deaf; there was displacement of the cerebral mass, a fractured skull and epilepsy. The military junta immediately decreed a state of emergency and banned all newspaper publications that had not previously passed censorship.

Fortín Mapocho's lawyers got another copy of the

agree with hounding communists, but we will not stand for a thieving government." Some in the military said they could not stand the accusations of stealing and corruption. There were unprecedented reactions because never before had a Chilean head of state been accused of corruption.

Ximena Ortúzar entered



Journalist leaving the Presidential Palace of La Moneda (Santiago) after demanding freedom for Catholic priest Renato Hevia and two other photographers.

deeds. The documents were annexed to the copy of the newspaper's next edition, sent to the authorities for permission to publish. There was no editorial comment on the matter.

"Some of our people were opposed to publishing the material. Yet public deeds in themselves could not be classified as journalistic material, so the junta couldn't censor them without creating a legal scandal. Our front-page headline would read 'The documents of Jorge Lavanderos, who was nearly killed when his briefcase was stolen.' The authorities returned our package untouched. All of Chile would know that Augusto Pinochet was guilty of fraud."

The 114,000 copies we ran of *Fortín Mapocho* sold out in two hours. Conservative politicians declared: "We

another difficult stage of her life. Her children were threatened, her home was shot at and there were numerous wordless attempts against her, warnings that her stay in Chile meant death. So Ximena and her four children returned to Mexico in November, 1985.

Other men and women will walk down the streets of Santiago, will work zealously and read Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare. The copper plundered by foreign companies will once again belong to Chileans, some day. General Pinochet's regime will be just another somber page in the history books. Some day this woman's children will once more breathe the aroma of the araucarias along Santiago's beautiful avenues.★

Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán

The Fight Against Drug Traffic

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As a part of its national budget, Mexico spends more money fighting drug traffic than any other country in the hemisphere

Our country is thoroughly convinced that in order to win the war against drugs, the fight must be taken up in those places where drug use is rampant. The law of supply and demand teaches us that where there is a market, there will always be someone to supply it. Besides, the pressures on the nation to meet its debt payments prevent the government from devoting even more funds to the campaign against drug traffickers using Mexico as a platform to smuggle marijuana and cocaine into the U.S. Yet despite the economic crisis, enormous efforts have been made to check the flow. VOICES OF MEXICO's Jesús Yáñez presents a special report on Mexico's efforts to put an end to the drug flow.

From the time the current administration took office in December 1982, one of its main commitments has been to eradicate drug traffic. The government has applied serious broad-reaching preventive, educational, health and police measures aimed at eliminating drug consumption and trafficking in the country.

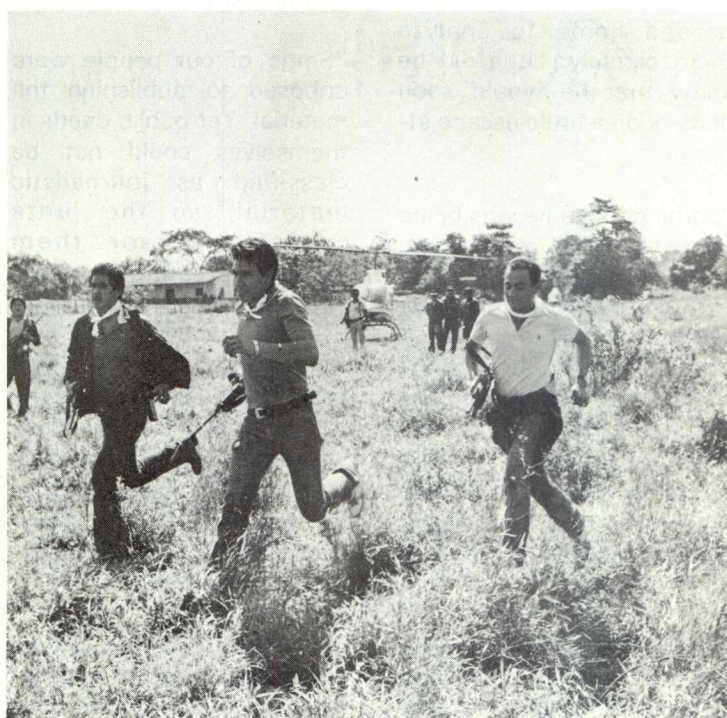
President Miguel de la Madrid often refers to the issue. It came up in a recent interview on both state and privately owned television. Referring specifically to allegations made by U.S. officials that corruption in Mexico is linked to drug traffic, De la Madrid stated:

"Not recognizing one's own problems and trying to find their roots in the problems of others is a human tendency. I have stated, and this is Mexican government policy, that drug trafficking is an international crime." He added that "each country must assume responsibility within its own territory, and among us we must develop mechanisms that facilitate cooperation to wage an efficient struggle against this outrageous delinquency. It is one of the main cancers of contemporary

society."

According to the *New York Times* on June 2, during 1985 U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency officials destroyed marijuana fields in the United States representing twice the amount supposedly planted in Mexico. Nonetheless, adds the *Times*, there are still over two thousand tons of U.S. grown marijuana ready for sale to the public.

In addition, in a front page article, reporter Joel Brinkley asserts that while the Reagan administration punishes Mexico for failing to control drug traffic, cocaine and marijuana production in the United States have reached their highest levels ever. According to statistics published in the U.S., some 20 to 25 million North Americans use drugs, out of a total population of close to 250 million.



Agents of the Attorney General's Office go after drug smugglers.

Photo by Herón Alemán; Imagen Latina.

FACTS, NOT WORDS

Over the last three years the Mexican government has permanently intensified its campaign against drug traffic. All together, the Mexican Army and Navy, and the Attorney General's Office, have assigned 45,000 men to the effort.

During this three year period, 90 per cent of the marijuana and poppy producing capacity has been destroyed, and 18,792 people, both nationals and foreigners, have been arrested. Authorities have confiscated 22,245 weapons of all sorts, and 230 landing strips have been located. Additionally, some 30 laboratories for processing opium paste to obtain cocaine, heroin and morphine, have been destroyed.

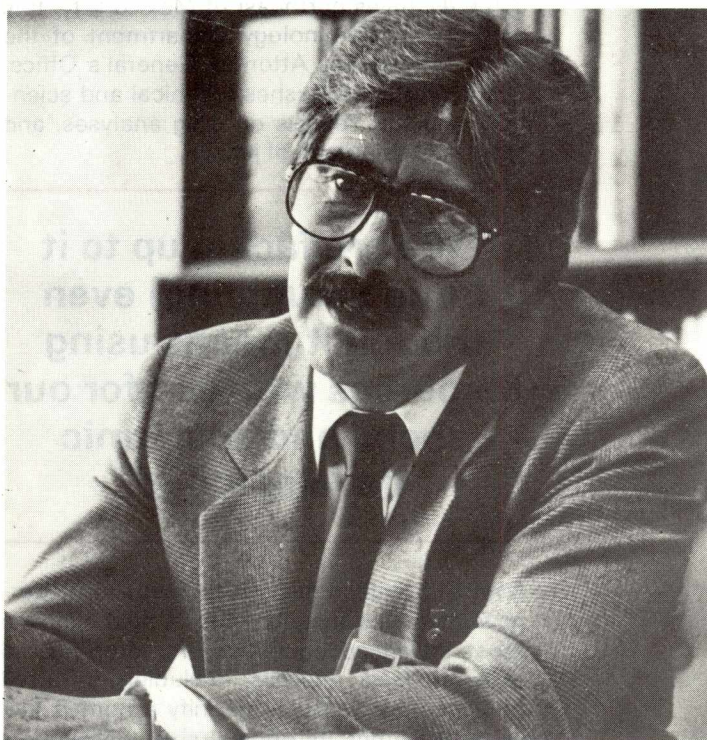
The struggle has had a high cost in human lives. The army has lost 318 men, the navy 25 and the Attorney General's Office, 43.

Secretary of the Navy, Miguel Angel Gómez Ortega, recently reported on the armada's activities against drug traffic on both the Pacific and the Gulf coasts. He stated that the daily cost to the Mexican government of the fight against drugs is close to 66 million pesos (approximately \$100,000). Secretary Gómez also reported that this year alone, nearly five tons of marijuana were detected on boats and destroyed. In 1985 the Mexican Navy burned 181,118 kilograms of marijuana and destroyed nine plantations with a total of 20,000 marijuana plants. The Navy also destroyed 180 kilograms of cocaine and confiscated 3,880 tablets of Qual, 2,440 tablets of Espacil Umm and 27 vials of the same product.

For its part, during the first half of 1986, the

Attorney General's Office destroyed 14,875 poppy plants on 1,306 hectares, and 242 plots of marijuana, on 441 hectares. This office also confiscated 22.9 kilograms of opium paste, 42 of poppy seed and 4.8 of heroin. As for marijuana by-products, officers confiscated 16,707 kilograms of dry grass, 407 of seed and 4.6 of hash.

The Attorney General's men also confiscated 28,895 psychotropic pills, as well as 2,650 kilograms of cocaine. In addition, they seized 207 long arms, 197 short arms and 10,708 bullets of different caliber. They also shut down four heroin processing laboratories.



Dr. Manuel Garduño, Director of Investigations in the State of Mexico.

Photo by Herón Alemán; Imagen Latina.

Without Marijuana

It used to be just about as easy as taking candy from a baby. But now, with the extremely strict drug control measures in force, the distribution of marijuana is definitely in crisis in the Federal District, Mexico's capital city.

According to Juan Gutiérrez Esparza, nicknamed "The Bird" because he "spends his whole life flying," and veteran of 20 years of marijuana trafficking, "when I started to smoke marijuana more than 20 years ago, I never had any problems getting it. But lately something strange is happening. The stuff is hard to

find and good marijuana is very expensive". Almost in jest, he explains, "now you've got to smoke four or five joints (marijuana cigarettes) to be able to feel any effect'. Before, with just a few "toques" (puffs) you could get really high.

In the past, every city neighborhood had its two or three "conectes" (sellers). Now to buy any marijuana at all, you have to go outside the Federal District. Juan explains that he knows wholesalers that he can buy from in Cuernavaca, a city 70 kms. to the south of the capital. "A quarter of a pound costs me 30,000 pesos (about \$50.00 U.S.);" he says. With that investment he makes about a 50 to 60 percent profit selling in the Federal District,

"depending on the customer."

"The Bird" believes that one of the reasons the "stuff" is even scarcer than ever in the city is that it was consumed in large quantities by foreign visitors here for the World Soccer Cup. "Look man, when all those people were at the Independence Monument, celebrating when Mexico won a game...I saw Brazilians, Danes, Britons, French, Italians, everyone. They all had their nice-sized bags of dope. There was no problem. I saw them."

Nonetheless, "The Bird" acknowledges that while the fight against drug trafficking won't stop consumption or addiction, it has reduced the flow of marijuana to a trickle.

The Mexican Army has the best results in the struggle against drug traffic because it has more equipment and personnel. According to Secretary of Defense Juan Arévalo Gardoqui, during the present administration 264,654 poppy plants have been destroyed, as well as 130,700 marijuana plants, covering an area of 46,300 hectares. During the same period, 135 clandestine landing strips were located.

MODERNIZATION

The Mexican government has other important resources for its struggle against drug traffic. One of the best toxics laboratories in Latin America is located in Toluca, a city some 42 miles northeast of Mexico City. It is part of the Criminology Department of the State of Mexico's Attorney General's Office. The laboratory furnishes technical and scientific opinions, reports on drug analyses, and serves in the pursuit of justice.

“We are facing up to it (drug smuggling) even though it means using resources we need for our social and economic development”

Over \$1.5 million have been spent to modernize the lab's installations. It now has the most advanced equipment for drug-related research and analysis, including infra-red microscopes that can magnify a human hair up to 90 times its original size. Instruments have been added that can analyze marijuana, cocaine or heroin in 20 or 30 minutes, saving

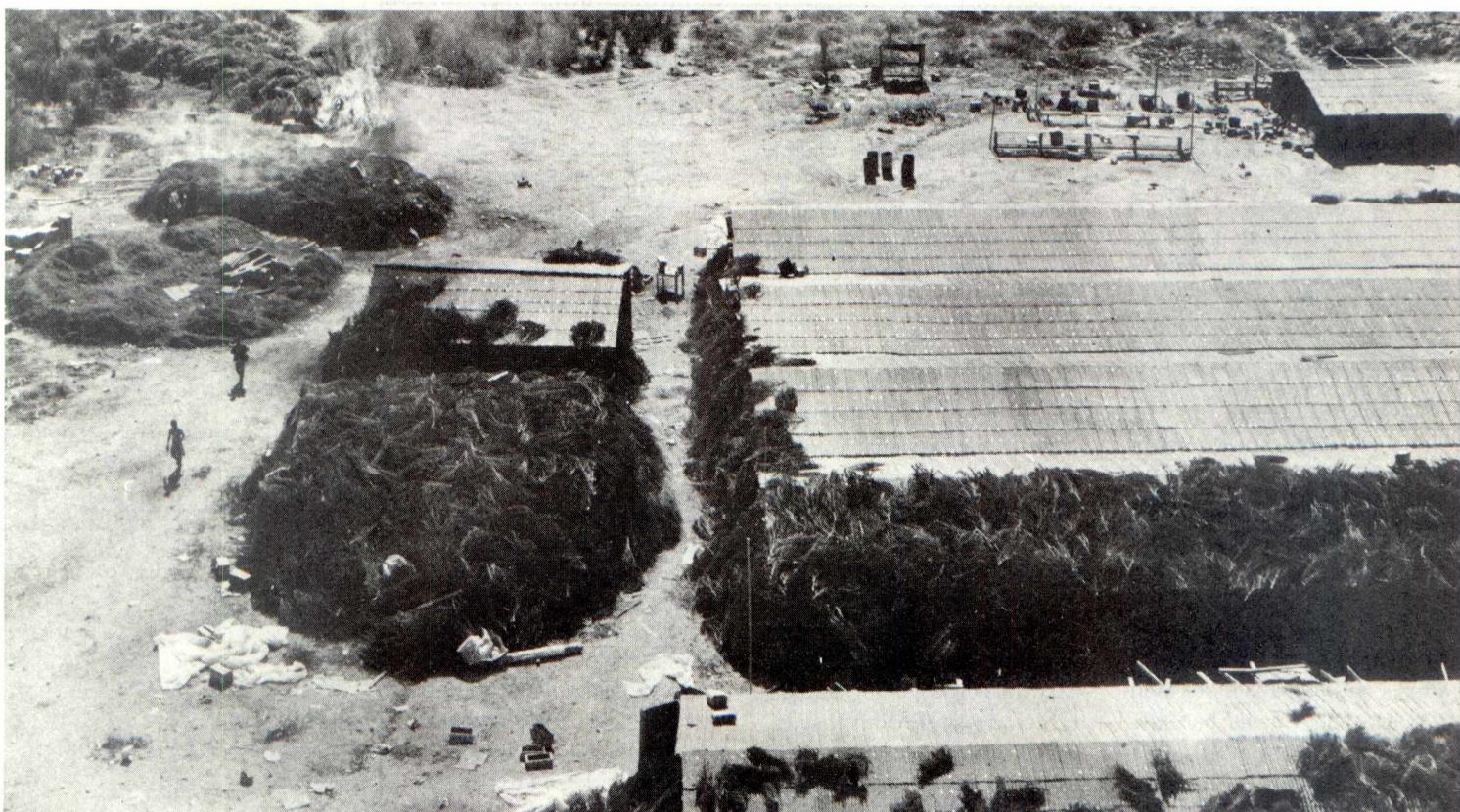
valuable time. The laboratory is also equipped to identify over 900 different toxic substances.

Manuel Garduño Valdez, Director of Investigations for the Attorney General's Office of the State of Mexico, says Mexico has “some of the best equipment in the world” for use in the fight against drugs. He believes it is comparable to the FBI's in Los Angeles or New York, to Interpol's in France, and even to Scotland Yard's. Mr. Garduño adds that a group of 20 Mexican crime-fighters visited the North Carolina Criminal Research Institute last May to improve their technical skills in the struggle against crime and in drug-related research.

THE FORGOTTEN ONES

“The most common tests are for marijuana,” says Fernando Lara Pastrana, who heads the lab. In his seven years at the post, he has done only one test for morphine. “A couple of years ago, two peasants from Michoacán crossed through the State of Mexico”. The federal police arrested them because they found a plastic bag containing a white powder in the trunk of their car. The agents thought it could be some kind of drug.

“A closer search revealed they were also carrying sawed-off shotguns, machine-guns and pistols. They were interrogated. The vehicle was further searched, and two small bags were found containing a cocoa-like substance. I took samples from each of the bags to the lab in Toluca and processed them. As it turned out, the first bag contained ammonium nitrate, used to fertilize poppy plants. The content of the smaller bags was positively identified as morphine.”



Tons of marijuana in a drug trafficker's camp in Chihuahua.

Creative Smugglers

Increasingly sophisticated methods to transport drugs, especially cocaine, are more and more sophisticated all the time. Evidence of the impressive resourcefulness of drug smugglers is a constant at the Mexico City airport.

"It's a display of tremendous ingenuity," claims Felipe Flores, spokesman for the Mexican Attorney General's office, one of the principal institutions involved in the fight against drug smuggling. He tells of how packets of cocaine have been transported in shaving cream cans, tooth paste tubes, lotion jars, perfume bottles and even shoe heels. In one case, for example, it was easy to detect the smuggling attempt because the persons's shoes had been specially made with exaggeratedly high heels to allow larger amounts to be transported. Upon investigation, it became clear that it wasn't just the heels that contained drugs, but also the soles!

Among the most sophisticated methods of transporting cocaine, and also one of the most dangerous,

since people play with their lives when they do it, is to swallow capsules packed with the drug. The capsules are made from surgical gloves. The thin rubber fingers are cut into small sections, stuffed with cocaine and sealed. Some "donkeys" (the term used to refer to people who transport drugs in this manner) have been found to have swallowed up to one hundred of these capsules.

Before transporting the "merchandise," these people prepare their stomachs using a base of bananas and oil. For the twenty-four hours before they travel, they ingest only water so as to avoid having to defecate and thus lose the capsules.

About two years ago, a woman of U.S. origin did not evacuate all of the capsules she had swallowed. She collapsed while visiting Mexico City's Museum of Fine Arts. People who saw her thought that she had fainted. But not so; she was dead. The autopsy revealed that one of the capsules had split, and even though the opening was only a few millimeters wide, it was sufficient for the cocaine to leak out. And that was enough to kill the woman. Usually when cocaine is transported in this manner, it is so pure that simple contact with

the digestive system provokes almost instant death.

Mexican drug enforcement agents who work at the capital city airport now have a system to detect this technique. As a flight arrives, and especially those from South America, passengers are observed via closed-circuit television. When someone behaves suspiciously, an agent will invite them to eat a cracker. They know that if the person has ingested cocaine capsules, they cannot accept because eating would cause them to defecate immediately. If someone refuses to eat a cracker, they are detained and sent to a hospital where the appropriate exams are carried out.

Even totally inhumane techniques are used to smuggle drugs. Recently a couple was traveling with a child eight to ten months of age. On simple observation, the child appeared to be asleep. But the woman acted strangely, in ways that caught the attention of the agents on duty. The couple was detained. In the course of the investigation, it became clear that the baby was dead. The couple had kidnapped the baby and murdered him, split him open along the back and stuffed him with several kilograms of

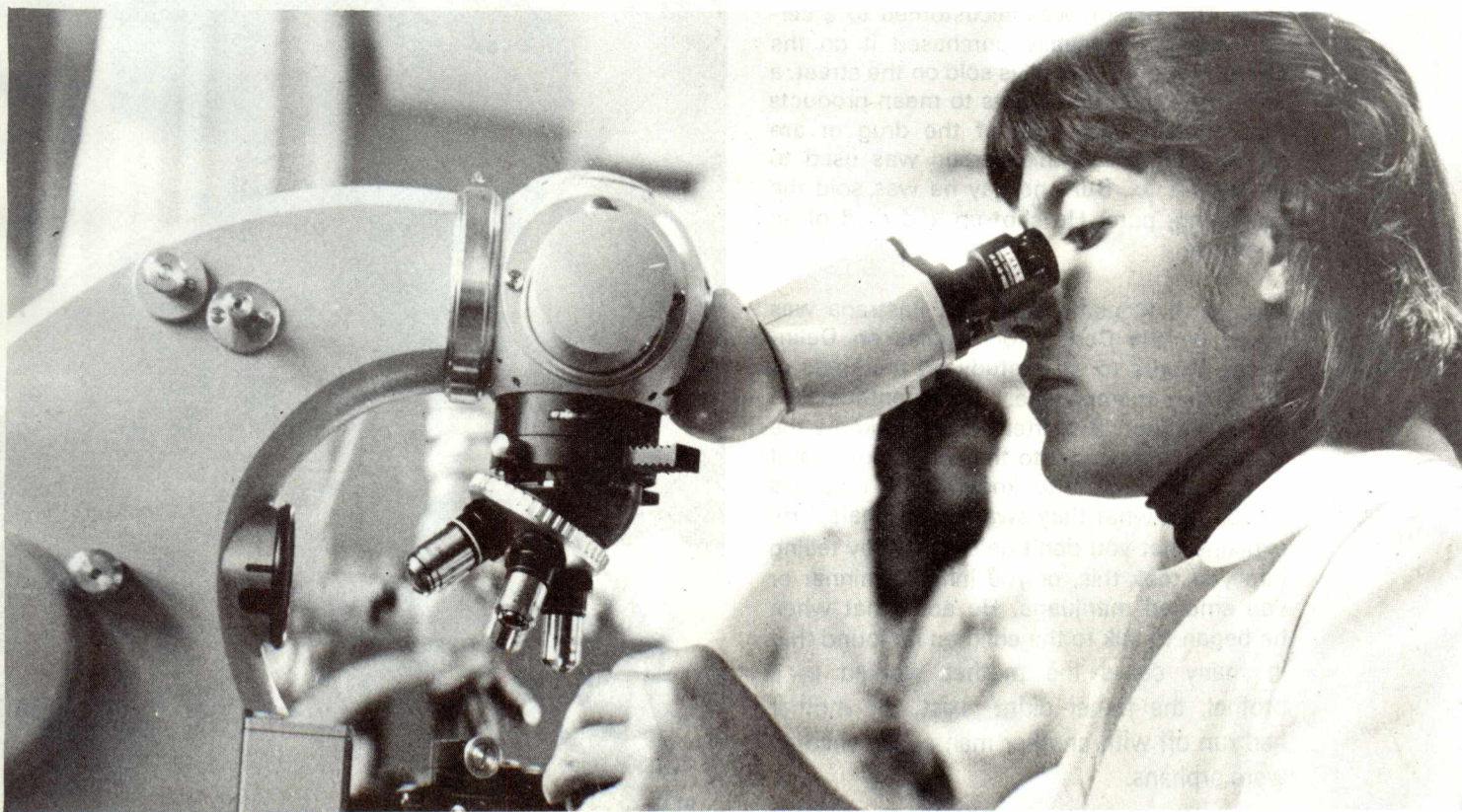
cocaine.

There are also other, more common methods of smuggling cocaine. These include filling radio batteries, or photographic or movie cameras with the drug. But perhaps the most difficult method for agents to detect is when a woman conceals the drug in her vagina.

One recent case was particularly unusual. Agents noted that all of the clothing - including socks, underwear, sweaters, shirts, pants, everything - in a passenger's suitcase was stiffly starched. The passenger was detained. When chemical analyses were performed on the clothing, tests showed that the "starch" was mostly cocaine. "It required a complicated chemical process," acknowledged the Attorney General office's spokesman. First, cocaine was mixed with water and certain chemicals to make the starch; if the delivery had been made, the process would then have been reversed to recover the drug. "If it hadn't been for the fact that all of the clothing was starched," commented Flores, "surely the cocaine would never have been detected."

Jesús Yáñez Orozco

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The new drug laboratory in Toluca, State of Mexico.

"Fortunately, we are too poor a country to actually consume drugs like cocaine and heroin," says Mr. Pastrana. Studies in Mexico have revealed that alcohol is the country's most harmful addiction. Marijuana comes second. He also explains why drug traffic is such a lucrative business, despite the government's efforts to bring it under control. The answer lies in the country's economic crisis.

Taking drugs such as cocaine and heroin across the border is highly lucrative due to the devaluation of the peso. Marijuana is the most common drug smuggled across because more of it is produced in the country.

According to Lara Pastrana, young people in the United States can afford to buy all kinds of drugs. "I believe," he says, "that seeking new things and sensations is a problem common to all of humanity, it is not just North Americans. They resort to drugs. They find pleasure and satisfaction in drugs. The same thing happens in other industrialized countries."

Thus, he believes that drug addiction exists in relation to the individual's social environment. "If you offer me alcohol and I don't buy it, that means there's no market for it. The problem is that so long as there is a demand for whatever, be it alcohol, heroin or LSD, there will always be corruption, addiction, trafficking from one country to another, etc."

Mr. Lara Pastrana also speaks of the sorrow he feels for the "hundreds of thousands who die because of drugs, from one moment to the next, perhaps without even realizing what is happening. Maybe they never realize it. Not even when death calls..." He told me of a case. This person was accustomed to a certain dose and usually purchased it on the street. But only "trash" is sold on the street, a term used by drug addicts to mean products that contain very little of the drug or are highly diluted. So this person was used to having his fix. But one day he was sold the real thing, pure. He shot-up and died of an overdose.

Two or three years ago, Lara Pastrana was asked by the Center for Studies on Delinquent Minors to do a study on the kinds of drugs that minors take. "I was enthusiastic about the job." But after getting to know the youngsters, he came to the conclusion that it is more important to know "why they use drugs than what they swallow or inhale." He explains that you don't help a child by telling him you took this, or you inhaled thinner or you smoked marijuana. He adds that when he began to talk to the children he found that in many cases the mother worked in a brothel, the father didn't exist, the mother had run off with another man or the children were orphans.

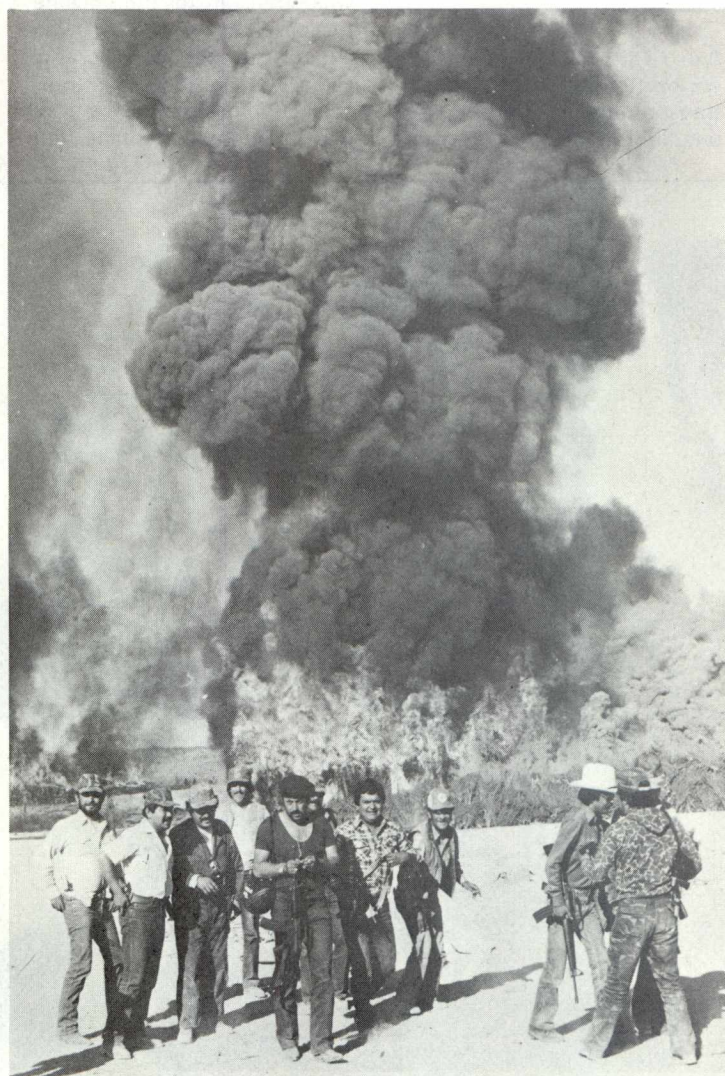
"Thus," he says, "we can't expect these

children to be nice and kind, to integrate themselves into society, when the social system is what made them marginal in the first place."

He also spoke of a special situation that can arise from the use of hard drugs such as morphine. When a pregnant woman shoots up, the morphine affects the child because the placenta doesn't block this drug. The child then has "withdrawal symptoms" when it is born.

After taking a drug the body "feels well," and since it feels so good, it asks for more. When it doesn't get what it wants, colics, headaches, muscle aches, etc. result. He compares this situation to a hangover. When one tries to get rid of the ravages of the night before, the custom is to take some kind of mixed drink, rum and coke, for example, or to have two or three beers. "So, what is it I'm doing? Getting drunk all over again. The same happens with drugs: I shoot up again. Morphine soothes me, I feel well. Once the effect of the drug has passed, my body says: what's up?, I want more. So I have to give it more, more each time."

So, in a nutshell, this is what we call a withdrawal symptom. "I feel like part of my body is missing," if I don't get the drug, says Mr. Pastrana.



Burning marijuana in Chihuahua.

Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz. Imagen Latina

A MULTINATIONAL STRUGGLE

"Drug traffic in Mexico," states President De la Madrid, "derives from increasing consumption in the industrialized countries." During a visit to the northern Mexican city of Culiacán, Sinaloa, the President added that the governments of the industrialized countries "have been unable to control their own drug problem; general drug consumption and drug addiction are on the increase." These countries "don't know how to control the flow of drugs coming in from other countries, either."

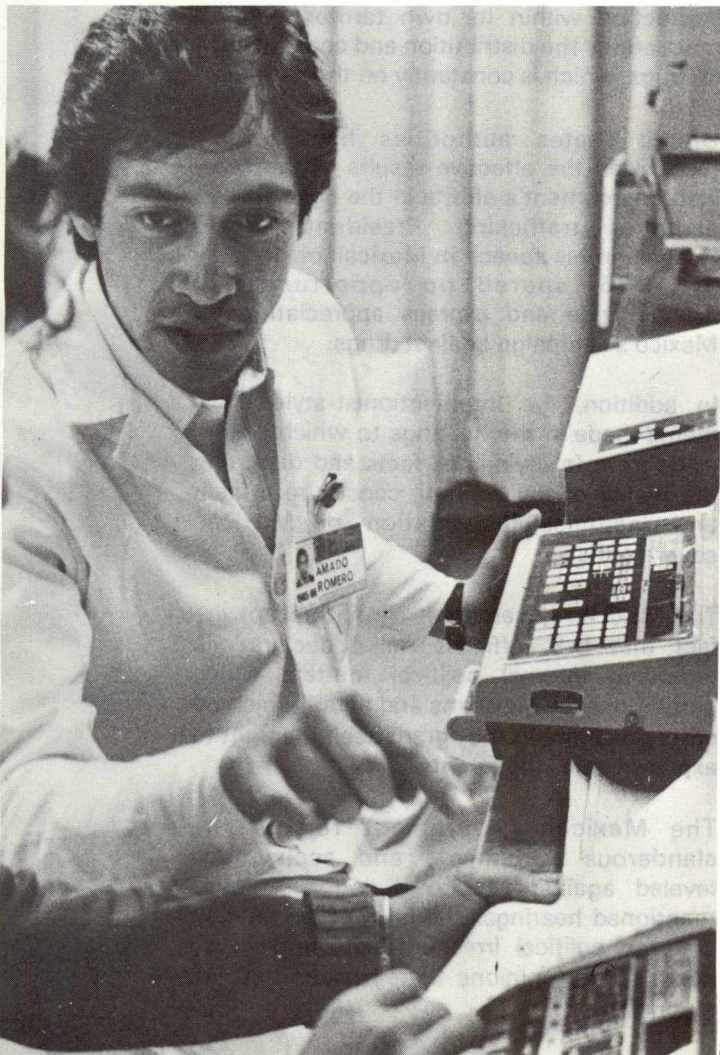
President De la Madrid said clearly: "We are not trying to avoid our own responsibility; we are facing up to it even though it means using resources we need for our social and economic development." "We would hope that other countries would allocate proportional resources to fighting drug traffic. Mexico could go much further in the struggle against this modern-day social cancer if this were so." Currently, Mexico's foreign debt is around \$95 billion, the second largest in Latin America, out of a total \$370 billion owed by the region.

Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez, for his part, delivered a severe criticism of those who say that drug traffic and corruption are unique to Mexico. Speaking at a press conference with foreign correspondents last May

23, García Ramírez said: "With all due respect to other countries, we believe that the production, transport, supply or consumption (of drugs), implies inefficiency on the part of those in charge of prosecuting these crimes. There may even be corruption."

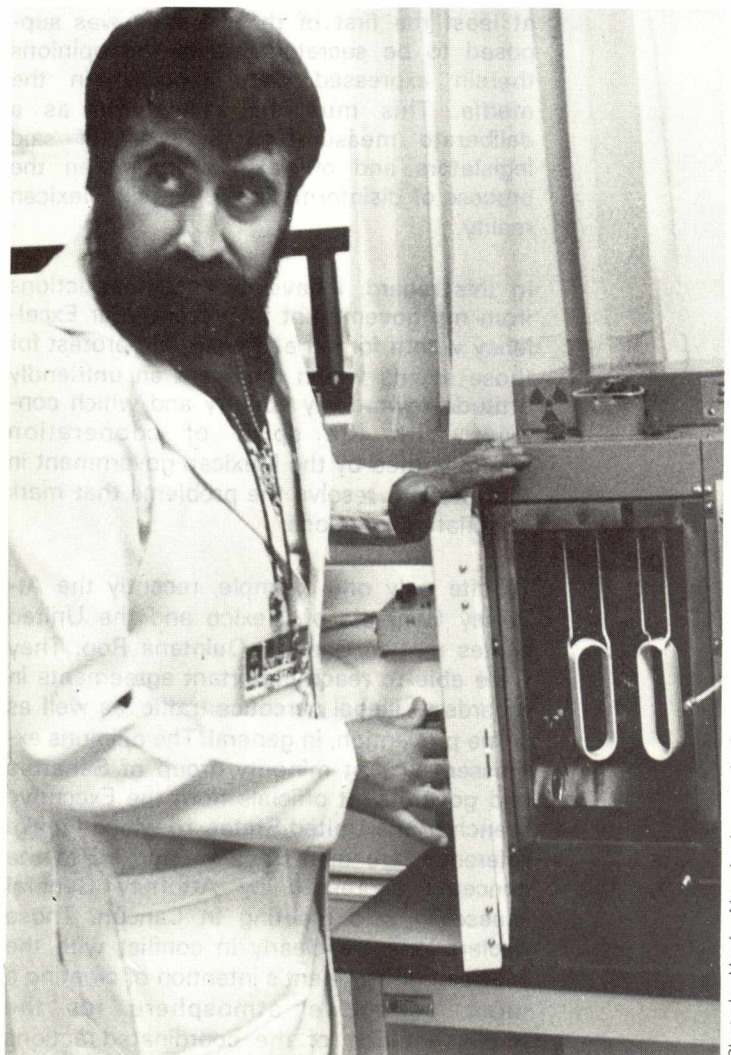
He added, "I wouldn't dare make general, abstract accusations of corruption. In order to say that corruption exists I would have to say where, who and how I can prove such a thing. I cannot just claim it because I don't have honest, serious facts to sustain such a statement."

Mr. García Ramírez also referred to the joint struggle being waged by the United States and Mexico against drug traffic. "I believe that rather than something that divides us, this struggle should bring us together. Unlike other issues in our bilateral relations, in which opinions are expressed freely, autonomously and rationally, in the case of the campaign against drugs, there shouldn't be, there cannot be a difference of opinion." And he added: "To the best of my knowledge, and I believe I am well informed on the subject, neither the government nor the people of the United States, nor the government and people of Mexico, intend to see drug traffic go unpunished." ★



Modern equipment for drug detection.

Photo by Herón Alemán; Imagen Latina.



The most modern lab in Latin America.

Photo by Herón Alemán; Imagen Latina.

The Foreign Ministry's Position on the U.S. Senate Hearings on Mexico Internal Affairs

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Shortly after Jesse Helms, ultra-right Senator from North Carolina, began his hearings on Mexico's internal affairs, this country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a strongly-worded protest to Washington. Because of its importance, VOICES OF MEXICO reproduces the full text:

The Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate, under the auspices of Senator Jesse Helms, held two hearings on the 12th and 13th of this month, in which a minority of the members of the sub-committee and a number of Executive branch officials made denigrating statements regarding Mexico and its government. But it is not only that; rather, in spite of the fact that at least the first of the hearings was supposed to be secret, some of the opinions therein expressed were reported in the media. This must be considered as a deliberate measure on the part of said legislators and officials to strengthen the process of disinformation regarding Mexican reality.

In this regard, I have received instructions from my government to present your Excellency with a formal and energetic protest for those events which represent an unfriendly attitude toward my country and which contrast with the spirit of cooperation demonstrated by the Mexican government in the effort to resolve the problems that mark our bilateral relations.

To cite only one example, recently the Attorney Generals of Mexico and the United States met in Cancún, Quintana Roo. They were able to reach important agreements in regards to illegal narcotics traffic, as well as crime prevention, in general. The opinions expressed by that minority group of Senators and government officials from the Executive branch of the United States, to which I make reference, are diametrically opposed to the concepts expressed by Attorney General Meese in said meeting in Cancún. Those declarations are clearly in conflict with the Mexican government's intention of creating a more conducive atmosphere for the implementation of the coordinated actions agreed upon by our two governments.

For the Mexican government, the struggle against the production of and traffic in drugs, and against the delinquents who promote those activities, is a permanent one. This struggle has been intensified significantly in recent years in the hopes of preventing and eliminating actions which harm people's health, even though drug consumption in Mexico is not a society-wide problem, of major proportion, as it is in other countries. Nonetheless, it is quite clear to Mexico that so long as measures are not implemented to prevent and combat the consumption of drugs in those centers that constitute the principal market, the problem will not be resolved in third countries, such as Mexico. The United States must resolve with determination the rapidly growing problem of drug production within its own territory, and it must attack the distribution and consumption of drugs, which is constantly on the rise.

United States authorities have widely recognized the effective results of the Mexican government's efforts in the fight against narcotics trafficking. President Ronald Reagan, in his speech in Mexicali on January 3, 1986, spared no opportunity to acknowledge and express appreciation for Mexico's campaign against drugs.

In addition, the interventionist-style comments made in the hearings to which I refer, aside from falsifying the facts and distorting the reality of my country, constitute a clear and inadmissible violation of Mexican sovereignty.

The Mexican government cannot accept the fact that U.S. officials make declarations regarding internal political matters which pertain only to Mexicans and about which no other government may grant itself the right to express value judgements.

The Mexican government rejects the slanderous statements and accusations leveled against Mexico during the above mentioned hearings. The level of defamation and the political irresponsibility implied by some of the opinions therein expressed are surprising.

Throughout its independent history, Mexico

has maintained its firm and invariable commitment to the principles and norms of international relations. Its respect for the right of other peoples to freely determine their destinies has been unbending. For this reason, Mexico, justly and with moral authority, demands respect from others for its sovereignty.

The Mexican government has actively encouraged frank, respectful and constructive communication with the North American government, as a means for resolving the problems that affect both countries in their relations as neighbors and friends. In order for efforts at bilateral cooperation in a variety of areas to be effective, they must be carried out in a climate of trust and mutual respect.

Hearings like the ones held by the U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on Western Hemisphere Affairs tend to damage that climate of harmony and understanding which we seek. Such events encourage tendencies to implement unilateral measures in response

to problems and promote suspicion, distrust and enmity in sectors of our population. Likewise, my government expresses its displeasure over the lack of correspondence between statements by President Ronald Reagan and his principal advisors acknowledging Mexico's efforts to advance in our bilateral relations, and the unfortunate statements denigrating Mexico made by a minority group of Senators and low-level officials in those hearings.

The Mexican government reiterates its firm willingness to continue forward with efforts that might facilitate constructive political communication between both governments and equitable cooperation, within a framework of genuine respect, in order to resolve problems of mutual interest and to broaden the interchanges between the two peoples.★

Tlatelolco, D.F.
May 14, 1986

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An Award to Culture and Principles

The presidential award to one of the deans of Mexican culture invites a thoughtful reflection on his achievements

On June 6 Fernando Benítez received the National Culture Award from President Miguel de la Madrid. Benítez is a journalist, writer and historian, as well as the founder of several of the most important cultural supplements published in Mexican newspapers. He founded *Mexico in Culture*, the supplement appearing in *Novedades*, and later a sister publication which appeared in the magazine *Siempre*, called *Culture in Mexico*. He is also the founder of *Sábado* (Saturday), which appears in *Uno más Uno*.

Speaking for the jury that awarded the prize, the well-known Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska stressed the courage of those who struggle through the media against absolute power and who "rabidly" stand by what they write. There is no doubt that Fernando Benítez fully meets Poniatowska's description.

Through Benítez, the award is a tribute to the work carried out by several Mexican intellectuals in developing, questioning and criticizing important aspects of national culture. The cultural supplements that Benítez founded and has directed since 1949, have been an important vehicle for their work, along the lines expressed by Benítez in the 500th issue of *Culture in Mexico*:

"This is not the time and place to attempt an inventory of all that has been done over these years. But we must emphasize the fact that we have sustained our efforts to develop a critical spirit without which all cultural, social and political activity turns stupid and unjust..."

The distinguishing trait of *Mexico in Culture* when it first appeared in 1949, was precisely its critical spirit. It was often said in those days that in Mexico there was a lack of honest criticism based on a solid knowledge of the facts. Thus, the new supplement set out to recover, by means of interviews, the positions that different cultural groups had debated throughout the twenties and thirties, concerning culture and its sphere of work and activity.

All of this is expressed in *Mexico in Culture* as the desire to develop a national culture rooted in the different points of view on the subject debated during the post-revolutionary period. In the same vein, the new generation of writers developed during the post-war period also shed light on the issues. Among them were Octavio Paz, Juan José Arreola, and Rosario Castellanos.

Additionally, *Mexico in Culture* did not limit its coverage to information, criticism and essays on art. To the contrary. It was understood that since culture develops within a given social framework, it is

necessary to cover political issues as well. Benítez once expressed this idea in the following way: "We understand the possibility of a critical existence not only as the opportunity to criticize and still be published, but also as a social framework of the kind that has not existed in Mexico since the time of the liberals."

in intellectual circles, and to reach more readers than any other cultural supplement ever had before. This magazine launched young writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowska, and the poet from the southernmost state of Chiapas, Jaime Sabines. Storm-clouds appeared on the horizon just as

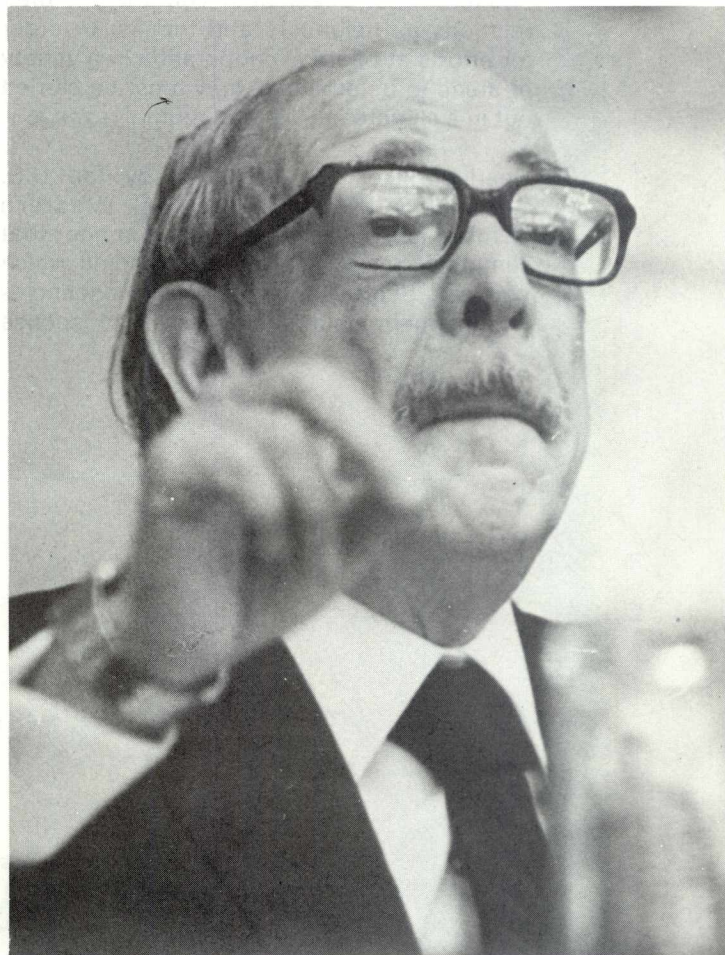


Photo by Uno más Uno

Fernando Benítez; 40 years of first rate journalism.

Faithful to these principles, the supplement opened its pages to social and political developments in Mexico and the world, from a rational, democratic perspective. Creative works of literature by writers old and new appeared in *Mexico in Culture* along with essays, reporting, literary criticism and theater reviews.

By the end of the fifties many believed that *Mexico in Culture* was the best supplement of its kind in all of Latin America. No doubt it was the best in Mexico. Its light, readable style helped it become a point of reference

everything seemed to be going full steam. In late 1961, it was announced that Fernando Benítez was resigning his position as director of the supplement because of political differences with the publishers of *Novedades*. In an unprecedented act of solidarity, all of the remaining founders, section heads and main contributors resigned with him. The supplement soon lost its intellectual and political importance, and disappeared.

From the moment of their resignation, the same group of intellectuals set their minds to creating a new

cultural publication and began to consider a series of alternatives. One idea was to finance their publication through subscriptions, so that it would have more freedom of expression. It was even said that many readers subscribed to *Novedades* because of the supplement.

The discussion was finally settled when Benítez decided to accept the offer made by José Pagés Llergo, director of the magazine *Siempre*, to create a cultural supplement for his weekly. The new supplement, *Culture in Mexico*, was produced by most of the former staff and contributors of *Mexico in Culture*, and appeared in *Siempre* as of 1962. The publication follows the same editorial line, and gains additional enrichment from the presence of the newest young writers, among them 48 year-old Carlos Monsiváis, an essayist, historian and journalist, 47 year-old José

Emilio Pacheco, and the so-called "child prodigy" of Mexican literature, today an outstanding poet, newspaperman and historian, Héctor Aguilar Camín, who was born in Quintana Roo in 1946.

Additionally, a new and interesting phenomenon arose with the new publication. *Culture in Mexico* allowed for a harmonious working relationship among writers from the most diverse ideological tendencies, from Marxist José Revueltas to semiotic Salvador Elizondo.

Culture in Mexico introduced its readers to the diversity of intellectual currents that arose during the sixties, including those represented by Jorge Luis Borges, Michel Foucault, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Yukio Mishima, Julia Kristeva and Leonardo Sciacia. The new currents in Mexican and world literature were also analyzed and criticized. And coverage of social and

political events continued as well. *Culture in Mexico* opened its pages to commentary on the homosexual movement and on dissident intellectual currents. It also condemned U.S. intervention in Viet Nam as well as the murder of Mexican peasant leader Rubén Jaramillo. The publication came out in support of democratic labor struggles, and denounced attacks on state universities, as well as against the newspaper *Excelsior* in 1976, when its editor Julio Scherer, was dismissed for having defended a democratic, independent tendency in the labor movement. The supplement stands for a cultural outlook that is open to the world, devoid of false and narrow nationalism, yet at the same time is quick to denounce all attempts at intervention or aggression.

It is important to note that the supplement has continued its line despite changes of editors over time.

Fernando Benítez left the magazine in 1970, and his position was taken over by José Emilio Pacheco. A collective editorial council, composed of Héctor Aguilar Camín, José María Pérez Gay, Rolando Cordera and Adolfo Castañón, followed Pacheco. Today, Carlos Monsiváis edits the publication.

Fernando Benítez pioneered the journalistic school of imparting culture based on social, historical and political commitment. This whole current of thought and action is recognized through the award bestowed on Benítez, who continues his enriching work as the head of *Sábado*, the cultural supplement of *Uno más Uno*. There is no doubt that Fernando Benítez could stand his ground and say to president De la Madrid, "this is an award that I deserve."★

Emma Rizo

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Mr. Benítez receives his award from President de la Madrid.

Mexican Magazines: Wealth and Woes

"An initial approach to Latin America can be made through its books," says Fernando Benítez.

To paraphrase him, we'll say Mexico can be approached through the magazines it publishes. A great variety of them, with different formats and content, can be found in any bookstore nationwide.

The range includes publications on film, literature, politics, culture, photography and architecture; there are also publications put out by institutions, political parties, research centers, non-profit organizations and by foreigners exiled in our country. Mexican universities and institutions of higher education also publish their

own magazines, or more than one, as is the case of the National Autonomous University, UNAM.

Decades of social and political stability, a long period of sustained economic growth, and a protective, stimulating attitude toward cultural freedom, are some of the contributing factors to this broad multiplicity of journalistic publications. Such variety is unusual any place else. This unique phenomenon also stems from the new qualities of a country whose population has moved to the cities in the

last decades, leaving behind the rural Mexico of the early part of the century. The nation has also undergone a population explosion and, as a result, a majority of Mexicans are young.

These factors help explain the extraordinary development of the publishing industry in Mexico over the last 20 years. It is also the context to keep in mind when we view our magazines, some of which have become undisputed points of social reference, such as the weekly *Proceso*, containing information and analysis on Mexican and world events, the monthly *Vuelta*, a literary magazine, and the weekly *Punto*, which covers general information.

Veteran newspaperman Julio Scherer García and a group of co-workers from the newspaper *Excelsior* founded *Proceso* in 1976. Scherer is general director of the magazine, and the well-known writer and playwright Vicente Leñero is assistant-director. Some of Mexico's foremost intellectuals, such as Carlos Monsiváis, Heberto Castillo and Fernando del Paso, write for the magazine, as do international figures like Gabriel García Márquez. During its ten-year life-span, *Proceso* has followed an unwavering critical, independent policy, and has earned a first-rate reputation for its analysis of Mexican issues.

Vuelta was founded by poet Octavio Paz, also in 1976, and brings together writers and poets like Salvador Elizondo, Juan García Ponce and Enrique Krauze. The magazine plays a unique role in Mexican literature, and its influence has carried over into an international edition of *Vuelta* which appeared in Buenos Aires in July, co-sponsored by a group of young Argentine intellectuals. *Vuelta* also covers local and international affairs, and publishes pieces by the likes of Bioy Casares, Mario Vargas Llosa and Susan Sontag.

In the May 1986 issue of *Vuelta*, Octavio Paz gave some of his views on the current historical situation, illustrating his magazine's project. In an interview granted to French intellectual Jean Francois Revel, Paz said: "On the one hand we are Euro-



Newspaper stand in Mexico City a large selection, little quality.

pean, like the United States. At the same time, we are doubly marginal. To begin with, we are heirs to a culture, that of Spain and Portugal, which was itself marginated during the XVIII century. Spain didn't really have a Century of Enlightenment. Additionally, we Latin Americans had an unfortunate XIX century: the wars of independence didn't really help modernize our countries. Yet all of these disadvantages changed to advantages when Latin America's intellectuals turned to Europe in order to assimilate her culture. We saw Europe as a whole. Since

the early part of the century we moved closer, not to Spain, but above all to France. And through France we became interested in German philosophy and in England, and then we naturally returned to Spain. Thus, we are the excentric offspring of the West. It is this excentricity which often makes our point of view polemical and distant."

If we consider *Vuelta* as the most prestigious Mexican publication abroad, because it publishes some of our internationally re-known writers, then we would say that *Punto*

and *Nexos* represent a younger generation of writers, journalists and political analysts with a more critical attitude, sometimes openly contrary to official policy. These publications are both sympathetic to new on-going experiences in Latin America, yet tend to be read in relatively narrow circles, readers and analysts whose social and cultural level is above the norm. On the other side of the ideological spectrum publications like *Impacto* and *Siempre!* represent an older, more traditional press that seems to be undergoing a period of relative decline and

loosing influence.

An overview of Mexican magazines would be incomplete if we failed to mention the political and cultural publications put out in our country by exiles fleeing repression throughout Latin America over the last ten or fifteen years. Among the most outstanding of these are *Cuadernos del Tercer Mundo*, (Third World Notebooks), with a shared Mexican-Brazilian editorial board, and *Cuadernos de Marcha*, an editorial experience that originated in Uruguay.

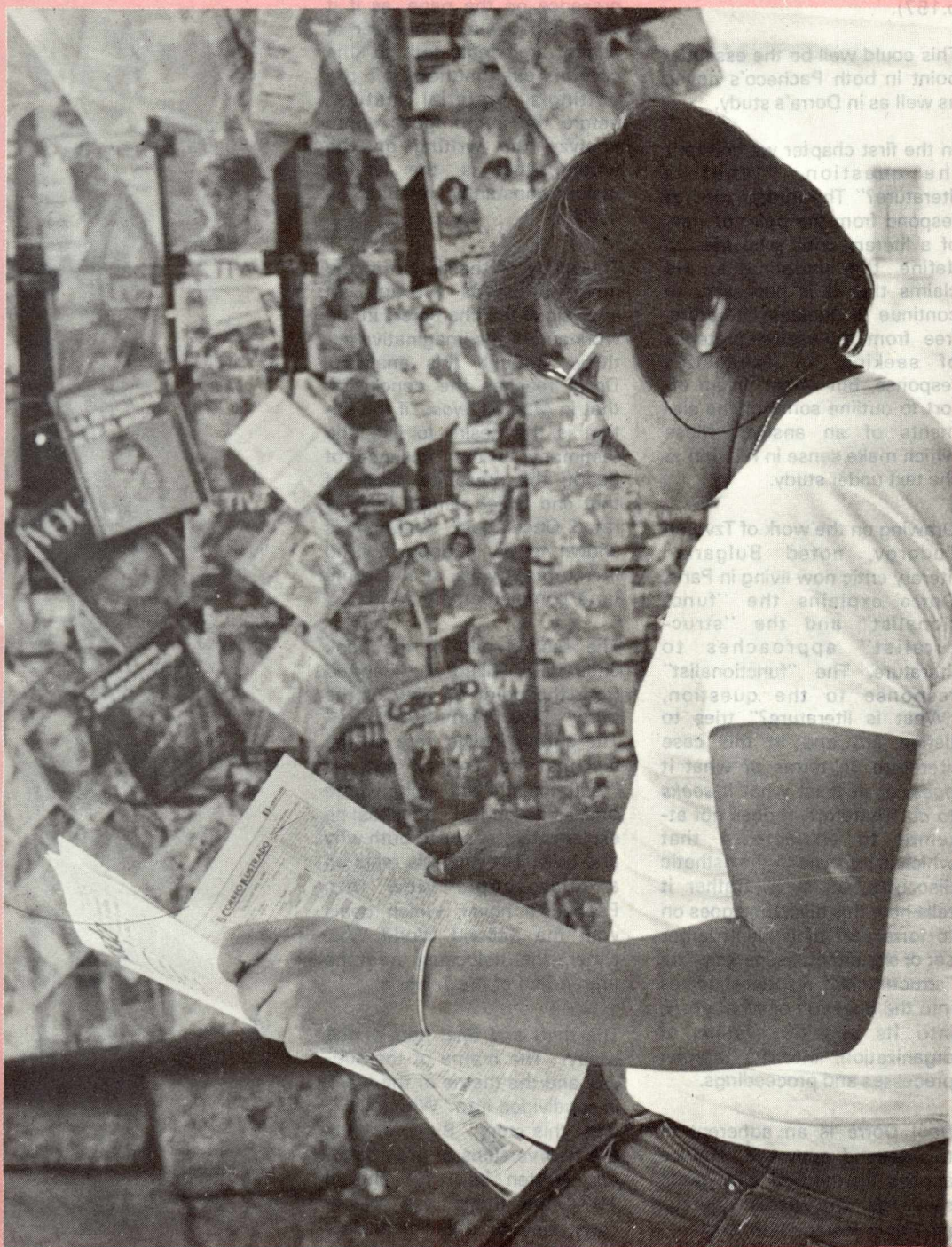
Finally, among university magazines, it's important to mention the *Magazine of the National Autonomous University of Mexico*, and *Casa del Tiempo*, (The House of Time), published by the Autonomous Metropolitan University (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, UAM). Both appear regularly and feature articles by high-quality writers.

We should add that with falling oil prices and the acute economic crisis, Mexican publishing has fallen on hard times. Most of the paper, type-setting and printing equipment, and other materials used in printing, are imported from the U.S. Thus, prices have skyrocketed, and some publications have become unprofitable.

This situation has given rise to new editorial experiments, such as magazines conceived as newsprint tabloids. Such is the case of *Dicine*, which specializes in film topics and is headed by film-critic Emilio García Riera. *Traza* was another similar experience, done along the lines of New York's *Skyline* magazine. Among the members of its editorial board were National Award to the Art's winner Teodoro González de León, an architect, and the North American Paul Heyer.

There is no denying that economic woes have complicated publishing considerably. At this point, the only magazines whose future seems secure are those firmly rooted in their readers, and those whose institutional financing frees them from economic pressure.

Pedro Sondereguer

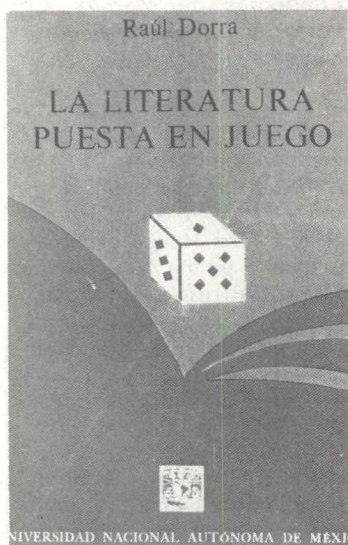


Reading a newspaper while waiting for customers.

Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

Books

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Unraveling the Novel's Mystery

La literatura puesta en juego (Literature Called into Question) Raúl Dorra, Ediciones de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1986.

In his new book, Raúl Dorra applies a structuralist analysis to *Morirás lejos* (*You Will Die Far Away*), the great novel by distinguished Mexican author, José Emilio Pacheco, recently elected to the National Academy, an honor reserved for the country's most outstanding intellectuals.

The 320-page essay is divided into three major parts. In the chapter entitled "Literature Called into Question," the author attempts to untangle the question of how literature is created, from a theoretical perspective, without entering yet into a textual analysis of Pacheco's novel. According to Dorra, his work will "attempt to situate itself in the dialectics of search and negation; the objective is to analyze this book (*Morirás lejos*)... and through this analysis

be able, then, to reflect on literary discourse... Nonetheless, I want to make it clear from the very beginning that our work will really be nothing more than *one reading*."

The book provides a rich reflection on the fictional and the testimonial in *Morirás lejos*, but also in literature in general. And it also examines the question of the limits of language, an imprecise and conflictive issue.

"Because everything is unreal in this story. Nothing happened as it was told. Events and places have been deformed in the effort to find truth through fiction, a lie." (*Morirás lejos*, p.157).

This could well be the essential point in both Pacheco's novel, as well as in Dorra's study.

In the first chapter we confront the question, "What is literature?" The author tries to respond from the point of view of a literary critic who tries to define the undefinable. He claims that it is necessary to continue to question literature, free from the useless pretense of seeking an exhaustive response, but rather, in an effort to outline some of the elements of an answer, those which make sense in relation to the text under study.

Drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov, noted Bulgarian literary critic now living in Paris, Dorra explains the "functionalist" and the "structuralist" approaches to literature. The "functionalist" response to the question, "What is literature?" tries to define art, and in this case literature, in terms of what it *does*, or at least what it *seeks to do*. Therefore, it does not attempt to characterize that which is intrinsic to the esthetic discourse, as such. Rather it tells how this discourse goes on to form part of a much larger set or system of discourses. The "structuralist" response delves into the question of what art *is*, into its specific system of organization, into its internal processes and proceedings.

Raúl Dorra is an adherent of this second approach, and he applies its method with great skill. His analysis is rigorous and well-documented, convincing even to those who are not experts in matters of literary theory and demonstrating his

deep understanding of the theoretical elements that he has chosen to use.

The second part of the essay, entitled "The Dialectic of Literature-Testimony," is subdivided into three sections: "The Testimony of Writing," "Fiction" and "History." Here the author undertakes a closer analysis of *Morirás lejos*, touching on themes such as the fable and discourse, with their respective characteristics and differences, and explaining how the novel brings that distinction into crisis. The writing in *Morirás lejos* is, in the first instance, a testimony unto itself, asserting its own material nature, its significant graphic presence on the page, as if it were a pageant. A number of pages are dedicated to the careful examination of the writing's material nature, before the author goes on to analyze the writing on the writing, that is, the writing which constantly reflects on itself.

The study of the fiction in the novel proceeds through an analysis of the characters in the work and of the imaginative activity. Through this analysis, Dorra reaches the conclusion that in *Morirás lejos*, "if the fiction is the desire to live, the testimony is the presence of death; the presence, then, of that end which cannot be narrated. Once again, 'testimony is shown to be in opposition to literature, "while at the same time, complementing it."

The second part of the book ends with "history," analyzed from the point of view of the unity "testimony-literature." The author insists here on the fact that the "literary" and the "testimonial" are united into one, as dialectical opposites; he explains this, showing both why and how. The analysis rests on a microscopic view into Pacheco's novel, which deals with the Second World War, Hitler, the holocaust and the martyrdom of the Jews.

The third and final part of the essay, "The theme of the subject and the theme of the tale," is subdivided into "Who tells..." and "this story." By comparing the two versions of *Morirás lejos*, written in 1967 and in 1977, the author was able to carry out a truly exemplary study of the text in question. Through theoretical considerations applied to the issues of

the "narrator-all-seeing," of the narrator and his parody, of the protagonism of the discourse, of the coexistence of discourse and fable, etc....the critic leads us down winding paths of literary analysis without tiring us, boring us, or leaving us behind.

And this is precisely one of the most positive things about the book. Despite the fact that a theoretic analysis of a literary work could easily make arid reading, Raúl Dorra manages to catch our interest and to hold it throughout the entire book. Three factors seem to explain this fact. First, despite his use of specialized vocabulary, the book is accessible, even to readers with limited experience in literary theory because it is written with pedagogical criteria that emphasize the desire to explain and to convince. At the same time, Dorra demonstrates tremendous command of his field; his work is erudite, totally professional and solidly based in theory. Finally, through the analysis *Moriras lejos* is shown to be what the Mexican public already knew; it is a magnum work in contemporary Latin American literature.

We regret the exclusively structuralist focus of Raúl Dorra's analysis. While structuralist categories are necessary for literary theory, in and of themselves, they are not sufficient. Without a doubt the analysis would have been enriched had it incorporated methodological contributions from other currents. For example, the writing of Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtine, increasingly influential even on Todorov's thinking, could help greatly to define the work's context and the relationship of that context to its structure.

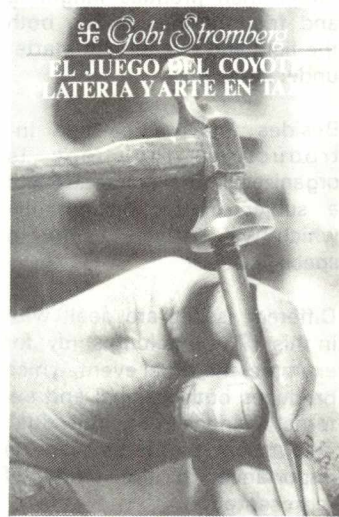
Nonetheless, and despite these details, we would like to congratulate the author of *La literatura puesta en juego*, and we recommend that it be read by anyone interested in literature and its theoretical study. ★

Pantxika Cazaux

For Whom Does Silver Shine?

The Coyote's Game: Silverworks and Art in Mexico Gobi Stromberg Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986.

Gobi Stromberg's rigor and insight shine through in her new book, *The Coyote's Game: Silverworks and Art in Mexico* (*El Juego del Coyote. Platería y Arte en México*), making it of



interest for both the amateur and the initiated on the subject. Her contribution is to examine a commercial phenomenon—artisan production in Taxco—within an anthropological framework. She delves into the evolution of an industry that was quite marginal 50 years ago, but now employs some ten thousand silversmiths, who transform close to four tons of silver every month into jewelry and other objects.

As the 1930s drew to a close, the town of Taxco had fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Mining was virtually a lost tradition, and silverworks were an insignificant factor in the local economy. The Mexican Revolution, the decay of the old economic and social order and the development of new structures, more appropriate to the industrialized society that was emerging from those changes all contributed to the destruction of the town's traditional crafts production. Even in the best of times, however, silversmithing had been limited to

*In Mexico the term "coyote" refers to middle-men or scalpers, who monopolize the marketing of a given item, buying cheap and selling high.

the production of religious pieces for churches and the adornments used on the leather goods and clothing associated with cattle ranching.

Within this context, the efforts of a few "pioneer's" in the field and the fortunate discovery of new veins of silver, served as the basis for the development of an industry which is now the driving-force for a city of 60,000. Thus, a "tradition", aimed at reaching a broad and diverse market, was born and grew at a dizzying pace, within a society with deeply rooted cultural characteristics. "It was soon necessary to undertake the search for esthetic elements and to develop a style that would be unequivocally *taxqueño*. In order to do that, prehispanic popular art motifs were incorporated, as well as esthetic concepts from both Mexican and international contemporary art," explains Ms. Stromberg in her book.

Thus, the case of Taxco's silver industry poses a series of problems from an anthropological point of view, which range from the transformation of social structures, relationships, kinship, etc. in a community that grew from 2,000 inhabitants to several tens of thousands in a very short period of time, to a variety of issues related to the question of what is "popular" in Mexican society, to the changes in an artisan-type activity that has seen its market, horizons and objectives expand so dramatically.

According to the author's prologue, research for the book was actually begun in 1972 and originally presented as a doctoral dissertation for the anthropology department at the University of California at Berkeley in 1976. The material was brought up-to-date during a second period of field research in 1979. The study had two objectives: to analyze the factors that influence artisan production processes and to develop a protocol for research on artisanry.

In order to determine the effects of the market on the popular art studied, the author used the following questions as the starting point for her investigation:

1. What are the dynamics of the relationship between the organization of production and commerce? What are the role

and function of design and innovation in this context?

2. What conditions encourage the rise of specific forms of marketing, and what factors determine the ways in which intermediaries and marketers operate?

3. In what way are consumer tastes communicated to the artisan and how are they manifested in production?

4. What is the role of intermediaries and wholesalers in this process? To what degree do they really transmit consumer tastes, or to what degree are their requests for certain kinds of production modified by priorities based on price and volume?

5. What role does the silversmith play in the process; is he an innovator or a mass producer?

6. What are the conditions that encourage or inhibit the growth and expansion of artisan industries?

The book has an Introduction and five chapters that deal with the following: I. The Origins of Silversmithing in Taxco; II. The Transformation of Production and the Family Workshop; III. The Commercial Market and Scalpers; IV. Market vs. Art: Creativity and Market Demands; V. Artisan Policy: Development Economy or Hangman's Trap? Thus, Stromberg successively analyzes the rise of large workshops, changes in the relations of production, repercussions on the family and women's situation, the growing importance of marketing and financial factors on artisan-type production, the influence of a market that reaches beyond local limits and the importance of tourism, technical and aesthetic aspects, new forms of collective organization related to the experienced changes and the fluctuating relationship of artisans to official institutions.

A section of Conclusions, a Methodological Appendix with the main questionnaire used in the study and the responses obtained, a Bibliography, a set of sixteen photos illustrating different aspects of silverwork production and two maps showing the location of Taxco and nearby villages in the state of Guerrero complete the book.

Written with reason and passion for Taxco's silver work, the book provides a detailed examination of the diverse conditions that influence the quality

of silver products, and of the changes in those conditions through time, in relation to distinct economic, political and cultural moments in Mexican history.

The author, Gobi Stromberg-Pellizi, resides in Mexico.★

Pedro Sondereguer

Fun and Games as Ritual



El juego viviente (Living Games) Gabriel Weisz, Siglo XXI, 1986.

This book resulted from a project developed by the Center for Social and Ethnodramatic Research. The first part of the project dealt with pre-hispanic games, and the second with their biological and representational aspects.

One of the research project's most important aspects was its multi-disciplinary character, involving specialists in psychiatry and biomedical science, in anthropology (basically the Náhuatl culture), in philology and in cell physiology. This approach was in response to the study material's nature, and was necessary in order to work with broader criteria and to fully cover their hypotheses.

Nonetheless, as the author point out in his introduction, "The multi-disciplinary approach is extraordinarily complex because each discipline operates with its own methods and models, and each has demands and regulations that define specific ways in which to

deal with the subject matter. In organizing our material we did not presume to unify methodology and systems, as it is virtually impossible to be a specialist in every field."

Despite the author's warning, we believe the multi-disciplinary approach in this rare and valuable study is one of its richest and most meaningful aspects. The end result is proof that when different fields of knowledge are applied to a common objective, rather than produce infighting and friction, they enrich both the field and the subject matter under study.

Besides the preface and introduction, the book is organized into six chapters and a subject-matter bibliography which will be very useful to specialists.

Different issues are dealt with in this 173 page long study; for example, the ritual event, which produces both internal and external changes in the individual. This aspect is of interest for its importance in the study of representation.

The chapter covering pre-hispanic games deals with the sacred game, which in Mesoamerica was closely bound to a cosmic view. The Ball Game constitutes a dramatic representation of the struggle between day and night in which the Sun is the central motif.

There is also an interesting reflection on the subject of playthings or, to be precise, on the toy-ritual object dichotomy. This in turn leads to a new set of problems concerning sports and games in relation to ritual, but now examined as contrasting or supplementary activities.

The points of contact established in the book between body, instrument and game-related activity, the vital link between playful and sacred events, bring to mind certain questions. Do these relationships exist in modern-day electronic games? What types of representational structures can be drawn from computer games? *Games* deals with these questions, and offers some tantalizing answers.

Finally, the book deals with the unchanging relations between game-related and sacred

events, those which involve the individual in physical activities, and modern playthings that produce an overall change in the person's world-view.

The point the author tries to make is that the cognitive structures, innate to all representational activity, originate in and are ruled by biological processes, and that there is a vital connection between the body and its habitat. Thus, changes in the habitat imply changes in the body. This allows an insight into why and how sudden transitions in our environment affect the somatic constitution of human beings, and consequently, our emotional balance. This is why the author's conceptual framework is influenced by his readings in neurophysiology.

The concept of games isn't enclosed in a rigid, absolute category. Rather, Weisz' definition in *Living Games* is one of a system in perpetual motion. Its broad, though exacting scientific approach, is another noteworthy aspect of the study.

Today's games seem to respond to the type of material comforts that surround us. New trends include the game that plays itself, and the seemingly quick, efficient and comfortable modern playthings which, according to the author, dull the senses and inhibit the body's inborn movement. A further dilemma between the traditional toy and the electronic one lies in the different emotional relationship between game-material and participants.

Thus, according to Weisz, we are currently in a kind of void of emotional attachment to playthings as well as in our game and play inter-relationships. Although this idea is not considered an absolute truth, the author does point to how this is hardly a coincidence, given modern society's critical situation in terms of the difficulties in interpersonal, emotional relationships. We agree with the author when he insists that it would be self-deluding to think that games and playthings can escape the prevailing environment.

Professor Weisz's *Living Games* is no doubt a deep and serious study on the subject. Games are important for both animals

and human beings for what they symbolize and represent in our development. The book, though, makes for difficult reading, and is by no means within the grasp of common mortals. Above and beyond conceptual sophistication, the language is excessively intellectual, and detracts rather than adds to the content. This may be an important contribution to specialists, but its hyper-intellectualism makes it accessible only to an elite.

It could be said it was impossible to do differently, which would mean agreeing with the idea that the harder the better. Yet from Socrates and Plato, on through Descartes and others, the history of ideas shows how the most complex concepts can—and should, in pedagogical terms—be clearly stated. The difficulty seems to reside in the concept itself, rather than in the way it's stated. Unfortunately, this same trait is common to many contemporary scientific and intellectual works. It also calls to mind the urgent and complex task of broadening people's access to knowledge, one with which many of those who yield power through knowledge, disagree.

Living Games is full of wealth and insight on the subject of games, if we can overcome the difficult reading and manage to get into the book. ★

Pantxika Cazaux

Hot Off the Press: the New and the Noteworthy in Mexican Publishing

Fuentes para la historia de la crisis agrícola, 1809-1811, (Sources on the Agrarian Crisis, 1809-1811) by Enrique Florescano and Victoria San Vicente; UNAM.

A collection of documents concerning the Mexican agrarian crisis of 1809-1811; includes an introduction by the authors. Recent research has demonstrated the great economic and social importance during the viceroyship of agrarian crises, which caused

constant price increases for basic food products. They also contributed to the conditions that eventually led to the rebellion headed by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (September 16, 1810, still celebrated as a national holiday) and the Independence War. The introduction defines the geographical area affected by the crisis, the implications of the measures adopted by the authorities to confront it and its principal social and economic effects. The authors focus their analysis from the perspective of similar phenomena affecting Mexico today, in such a way that the past is not recounted as arid history, but rather as a means to enlighten our understanding of the present and of the possible future.



Apuntes de sociología médica (Notas on Medical Sociology) by Imelda Ana Rodríguez Ortiz, UNAM.

According to the author, the idea for this book emerged from the questions raised by medical students about the possible contributions of sociology to the understanding of the relationship, health-illness. The students, themselves, began to systematize a multi-disciplinary method to study the phenomenon, drawing on both the natural and social sciences. Certain aspects of the relationship between medicine and social structure are examined, before the author moves on to analyze private medicine, institutional medicine and in particular, community medicine, which demonstrated a liberating potential in relation to some of the problems that confront marginal populations.



Juan Correa, su vida y su obra (Juan Correa, His Life and His Work) by Elisa Vargas Lugo and José Guadalupe Victoria; UNAM.

The product of nine years of research, this catalog presents the entire work of Juan Correa, the most prolific painter of religious themes during the colonial period. The vast majority of the artist's work is still to be found in churches that date from that period, in both Mexico and Antigua Guatemala. The catalog is divided into fifteen chapters according to the themes developed in Correa's paintings. Each chapter is preceded by

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an introduction, and photographs and notes are provided for all of the works. A bibliography to support the notes rounds out the volume.



Instrucciones de la fábrica y del ajuar aclesiásticos (Church Vestments and their Fabrication) Carlos Borromeo; UNAM.

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A book for specialists on the colonial period. The Institute for Esthetics Research and the Institute for Philological Research prepared the work, unpublished in Spanish until now. The original was written in Latin by the famous Tridentine reformer, Carlos Borromeo (1538-1584), Bishop and later, Cardinal who took a major interest in the development of sacred art, and of culture in general. The work was translated to the Spanish by noted Latinist, Bulmaro Reyes Coria of the Institute for Philological Research. It is accompanied by a study written by Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero, professor at the School of Arts and Letters, and a specialist in Spanish colonial iconology.



El pensamiento histórico: ayer y hoy (Historical Thinking: Yesterday and Today), by Pilar Barroso Acosta, Ricardo Martínez Lacy, Ma. Cristina Montoya Rivero and Rosalía Velásquez Estrada; UNAM.

Finally, the third volume of this very complete collection is being published. The entire anthology presents a critical view of the diverse schools of thought and reflections regarding historical science, which have been developed through the centuries. This new volume is subtitled "From Marxism to Contemporary Currents." It includes writings from such diverse thinkers as Karl Marx, Wilhem Dilthey, Benedetto Croce, Oswald Spengler, José Ortega y Gasset and Jean Paul Sarte. The underlying premise for the entire collection is that history is not a simple reflexion on the past, nor is it a consciousness of the passage of time. Rather, it demands a consciousness of the fact that the present, past and future are interrelated and interacting.



Food

Gastronomy as a Cultural Tradition

Do hot peppers and tortillas, both native staples, constitute the basis of Mexican's food-intake?

"No, definitely not," says Guillermo Tovar y de Teresa, the Official Historian of Mexico City. "These are merely complements." And he adds, "What's more, I believe that in terms of variety and tastiness, Mexican food is comparable to the most important cuisines in the world, such as the Chinese and Japanese, the Italian and the French."

Tovar explains that each of the pre-hispanic peoples had their own culture, among them the Quichés, Tzetzals, Mixes, Zapotecas, Tarahumaras,

Huichos, Aztecs, Mayas, Zapotecs, Toltecs and Totonacas. Consequently, each had their own culture of nourishment.

"It was the same type of situation as when you travel from one country to another, where you find a great variety of foods," says Tovar y de Teresa.

The wealth and variety of the nation's culinary art led another Mexico City Historian, Salvador Novo, to write a 350-page book, *Mexican Cookery, or Gastronomic History of Mexico*. In his introduction, Novo—who was also a member of the Mexican Language Academy, and received the National Award for Journalism in 1976—provides valuable insights on the topic:

"The verb *cua*, used by one of the main pre-hispanic cultural groups, the Nahuas, means to eat. The adjective *cualli* means both the beautiful and the good, which is to say, that which is edible, that which is digestible, that which is pleasing to our sight and to our hearts, to the spirit and to the flesh."

A verb or an adjective-noun, —*cua* or *cualli*—, define or qualify the subject that receives them, and allow for the composition of words and phrases with which this admirable, many-hued tongue expresses its people:

Cla-cua-ni, he who eats things;



Mexican kitchen in the 19th century as painted by A. Serrano (Nat. Museum of History).

Te-cua-ni, he who eats people; *Cual-tlacatl*, the good man; *Cual-tlaxcal-chihua-ni*, she who makes good tortillas, the food-stuff made from corn.

On the subject of hot peppers, —*chile* or *aji* in Spanish— used by most Mexican's as seasoning, Novo says:

"Europeans desperately sought spices with which to season their food. When Columbus —Christopher, who discovered America on October 12; 1492—, tasted a vegetable pepper and found it was hot, he thought —Eureka!—, he had found a pepper spice. Such was the description of his discovery that he conveyed to his sponsors."

"Transplanted to other countries, our peppers lost their aggressiveness and some, but not all, of their taste. After being dried and ground, they became the Spanish *pimientón*, the Austro-Hungarian *paprika*, the *morrón* peppers used to prepare cod-fish or to decorate the *paella*."

"Peppers soon spread throughout the world. They were taken to Asia, where they were well-received by both Indonesians and Hindus, who incorporated them into their own curry."

"But this was the real homeland of the fierce pepper: the one that seasons the broth and has the ability of *Tezcatlipoca* to take on a thousand different forms, colors, aromas, sizes and uses. There are long peppers, broad peppers, raisin and rattler peppers, and *cuaresmeños*, *poblanos*, *comapeños*, *chipotles*, *piquines* and *habaneros*. They can be used fresh and whole, or roasted, peeled and un-veined (which makes them a little less hot.) They can be dried-out or toasted, just a little or to the point of charring, as is the custom in south-eastern Mexico. They can be pickled with onion rings, garlic, aromatic herbs and carrot slices."

Peppers are vital, together with tomatoes, onions and coriander leaves, to arrive at the delightful *guacamole*, a sauce made with *avocados*.

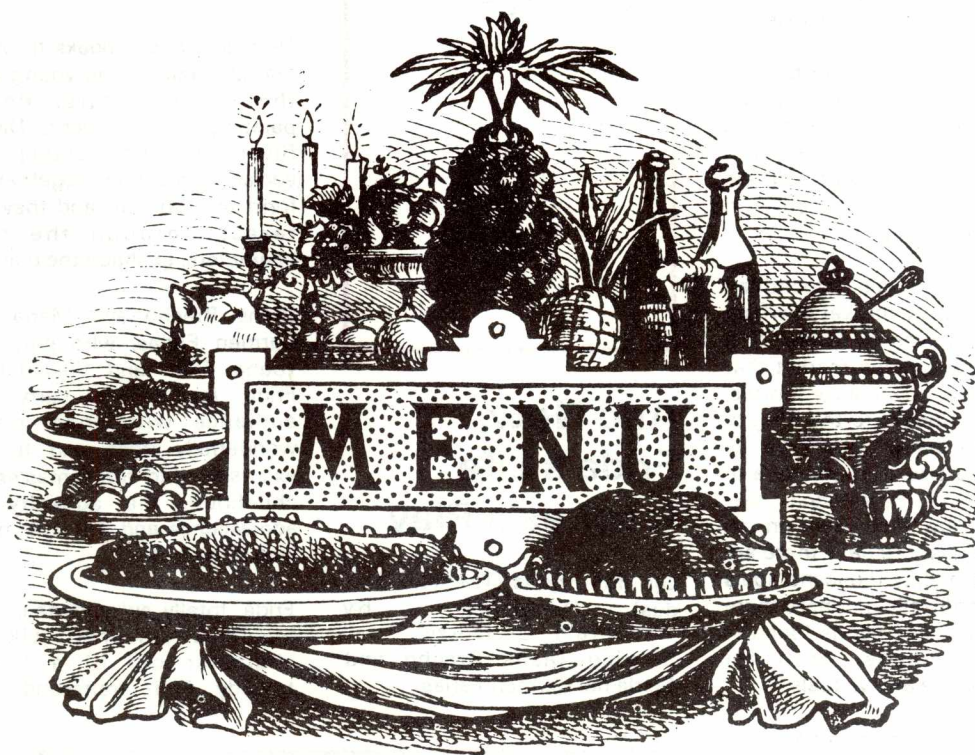
And Novo adds: "Even Spanish dishes improved considerably with the introduction of Mexican peppers. Such is the case of cod-fish a la *Vizcaína*."

On the corn tortilla, Novo explains: "The Nahuas were a frugal people". The Mendocino Code reveals what their children were fed: for children over the age of three, half a tortilla a day; between four and five years of age, one whole tortilla; from six to twelve, a tortilla and a half. From thirteen on, two tortillas.

The fact that this was the custom for reasons of discipline up until the time the Spaniards came, should amaze us less

nutrition of Mexicans with the protein supplements they consider vital: capsule vitamins, which are the nutritional complement that over-fed city dwellers turn to." Yet the healthy, vigorous Nahuas, who have lasted throughout the centuries, have not needed such compromises.

Novo then talks of the Mexicas. "Once they settled in Tenochtitlan, currently Mexico City, the lagoon offered a rich provision of protein: the caviar-



than the sad fact that these many centuries later, and no longer for disciplinary or educational purposes but rather because of sheer misery, many Indian's nutrition is neither more abundant nor more varied.

And Novo asks the question: "Should we feel sorry for this hereditary nutritional austerity of our Indians?"

His response is that "modern dieticians advise enriching the

like *ahuauhtli*, the *acociles*, the minute fish called *charales*. There were also frogs and ducks, *gallaretas* and *apizcas*."

"The floating gardens, called *chinampas*, began to yield vegetables, *quartil*, and the tomato proclaimed its rosy rudeness, the plumpness from whence its name comes: *tomatl*, a certain fruit that gives a sharp edge to cooked dishes and sauces."

odds and ends

The combination of tomatoes, quelites and peppers produced the *mole*, vitamin-rich juices pressed out on the stone-grinder called *molcaxitl*. Today this Mexican dish is characteristic of the states of Oaxaca and Puebla.

According to Novo, both ignorance and an absence of fats and cooking oils, excluded fried foods from Mexican cooking. Their techniques were limited to boiling and roasting food, as well as pickling raw fruits and vegetables. Absent in the frugal diet of these Indians were the fried foods that make digestion a difficult and heroic process; the fats that accumulate into adipose tissue and raise cholesterol levels in the arteries of the gluttons of the Western world, causing heart attacks and trombosis.

"The highland gave forth basic seeds, plants and wild game; the lagoon contribute proteins. Trade, called *Pochtecatoytl*, provided the tropical-climate foods which wouldn't grow in the highland climate."

A city as large as Tenochtitlan needed a daily market in which everything was available. This was the Tlatelolco market that dazzled the conqueror Cortés, who described it to the King of Spain as being "as large as twice the size of the square in the city of Salamanca, surrounded by archways on all sides, and where *daily* there are more than sixty thousand souls buying and selling; where there all the kinds of goods found in different lands, both for maintenance and victuals."

"...There is a street along which all sorts of fowl are sold, such as hens, partridge, quail, wild ducks, flycatchers, turtledoves, pigeons and many other small birds. They sell rabbits, hares, deer and small castrated dogs raised especially for eating... There are all sorts of vegetables, especially onions, scallion, common cress, borrego, thistle and cardillo."

"There are many fruits resembling those found in Spain, such as plums and cherries. They sell bee honey and wax, and a syrup from sugar cane which is as honeyed and sweet as that made from sugar."

"They sell corn..., fish cakes and pies filled with birds' meat... a lot of fish is sold salted and fresh, raw or cooked... there are

eggs from hens and geese..."

Finally, Cortés adds: "that in these markets they sell everything found on earth, which besides what I have already mentioned, are so many and of so many qualities, that because they are so prolific and will not come to my memory, and even because I have no name for them, I cannot express them all."

"Ours is a fun country because of its diversity, especially concerning food," says Guillermo Tovar y de Teresa.★

Jesús Yáñez Orozco

Theater

And Now, Frida's Life Inspires a Play

Las dos Fridas (The Two Fridas) Directed by Abraham Oceransky
Starring Diana Bracho and María del Carmen Farías

Thirty years after her death, Frida Kahlo is in vogue in the contemporary Mexican cultural scene. Her life and her works are being examined in new biographies, art exhibits, a film, and now, in an extraordinary play.

Frida was a strong woman, a painter by trade and vocation, a person of deep roots, strong emotions and much love for Diego Rivera; a woman who cared about color combinations, about the libertarian struggles of her times, a woman shattered: Frida's life presents a wealth of angles. "The Two Frida's" is cut from that wealth, from the depths of the person, from the decisive moments that marked her path and an entire period of Mexican history.

On stage, Frida speaks through two characters, one young and the other mature. Polio, painting, her accident, Diego Rivera and her longing for social justice flow together to form the woman, and they interact, through the two characters, to shape the play.

Diana Bracho and María del Carmen Farías, who play the young Frida and the mature Frida, respectively, carry the audience with them on a wonderfully fresh and tender excursion into the fantasies of childhood, the audacity of adolescence and the cruel passion of solitude.

Frida, totally *sui generis* in life becomes universal. Like a character out of a Greek tragedy, Frida transcends the

voices

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America

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limits of the individual. "I do not think life. I feel it; I live it," says the mature Kahlo. "I am not sick. I am shattered. But as long as I paint, life is lovely."

Born during the Mexican Revolution of a German father and a Oaxacan mother and proud of being Mexican, Frida becomes one with the very roots of the nation. She is the rough and unpolished Mexico, and she is the cultured Mexico, the Mexico whose development is marked by the daily consciousness of death, and thus, of life. "I am not afraid of death," says Frida, "but I want to live. It is the pain that I cannot tolerate."

Nonetheless, pain followed Frida throughout her life, playing with her as a cat with a mouse. From the time she contracted polio at the age of six, she knew the hospital's silence and its screams. Her childhood and her life were marked by the effects of her illness; her deformed leg accompanied her throughout her life. Her parents were overprotective, but she developed a tremendous desire to live fully.

In the play, the solitary and lame Frida returns to her childhood and recreates her enchanted games with an imaginary friend, her other self. The two girls delight in their play, savoring the moments of bubbling laughter, nurturing each other; the fantasized Frida feeds on the force of reality, and the real Frida on the freedom of fantasy. Reality and fantasy are interwoven in the construction of the painter's personality, and her fantasy becomes, as she says, "the best of what I know."

One September 19 (a very painful date for Mexico now after last year's earthquake on that day), when Frida was eighteen, she was riding a bus that was struck by a streetcar. The handrail pierced her body and damaged her spinal cord, leaving her a broken woman, split in two.

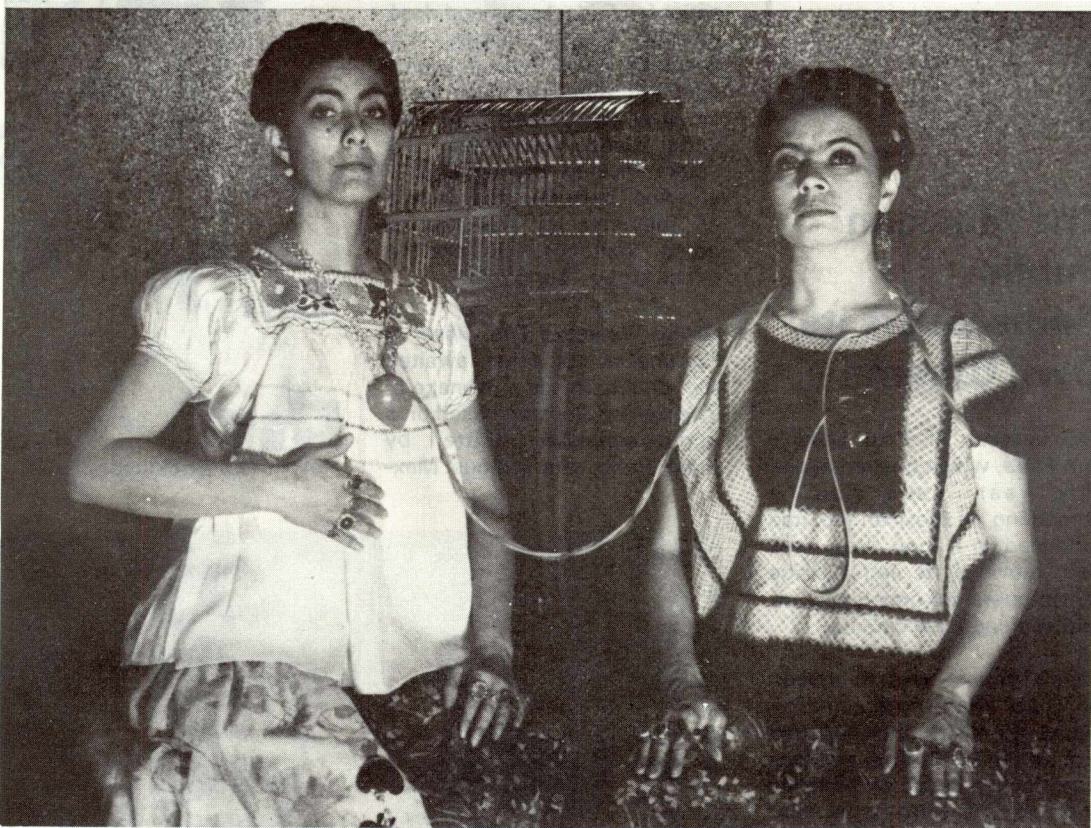
In the scene, the young Frida, covered with a sheet, becomes physical pain, the incarnation of the memories that the mature Frida recalls. She tells of her second meeting with death, while a thick, long chain is strapped to her leg; its metallic, thudding lashes continuously strike home the image of a broken woman, broken, but not

finished. "I have not died," said Frida, "and I have something to live for. That something is painting."

Frida painted Frida, her anxieties, her solitude, her fantasies, her torments, her identification with Diego, who was for her, "Diego, the prince, Diego, builder, Diego, my child, Diego, my lover, Diego, my husband, Diego, my father, Diego, my mother, Diego, I...". She painted from her very entrails and her divided heart, mixing the ethereal of fantasy, with the weight of reality. Her art also reflected a mixing of European surrealism with Mex-

and genial, tough and tender, takes on romantic love in the way that women are taught to live it. "I love you, Diego, more than I love myself." Frida built her adult life with that extraordinary and "horrible elephant," as she called him when she was angry with him. It was a life filled with passion, of love and hate, of artistic creation and of struggles on the side of the oppressed and exploited of the world.

He nurtured her with his energy and warmth, and at the same time, helped remove the weight of her troubled solitude. They accompanied each other



A shot from **Las Dos Fridas**

Photo by tiempo libre

ican content. Frida Kahlo is one of a very few Mexican surrealists.

While Diego Rivera and others founded the Mexican muralist school, inspired by the great events in their people's history ("He paints big pictures so the people will enjoy them."), Frida stayed within the realm of the most intimate, within the rivers that flowed in her own veins. The colors of Indian Mexico and the expressive form of European fantastic realism are the heart of her work. Her woman's essence is expressed in blood.

The contradictory Frida, difficult

throughout twenty-five years, through the ups and downs between love and contempt, but Frida always knew the truth of what she once wrote, "You have never been mine, Diego, you are of yourself."

This is the stuff of which "The Two Fridas" is made. It was created with love and through a deep search into the pathways of Frida Kahlo's personality. Conceived and brought to life by director Abrahám Oceransky and the two original actresses, María del Carmen Farías and Bárbara Córcega, the material for the play was drawn from Frida's diaries. The work is a

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collective creation that expresses the sensitivity and the contradictions of the main character, as well as of the dramatists who bring her to life. And in a special way, the play also expresses the very essence of Mexico. ★

Elizabeth Maier

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Cinema

The Mexican Public Rediscovered its Own Cinema

The success of Paul Leduc's film *Frida*, which opened earlier this year, gave rise to something no Mexican film had produced in a long time: now both movie buffs and average movie-goers are once again attentive to national cinema.

Frida's impact was reinforced by *Luz's Motives*, directed by Felipe Cazals, which opened around the same time and was also highly polemical. Feminists charged the film was misogynist, opportunistic and sensationalist. The movie is based on the real-life story of Elvira Luz Cruz, a poverty-stricken woman sentenced a few months ago to ten years in prison for having killed her four children in a fit of despair because of her economic situation. *Luz's Motives* was awarded the Silver Conch at the Saint Sebastian Festival in 1985.

Thus, Mexican interest in locally-produced films is at a new high. We are currently awaiting two new openings, following others that are in the editing stage and expecting shooting to begin on another film shortly.

We are all awaiting the opening

of *How Does it Look?*, Leduc's latest film. Marginal youth in Mexico City constitute the movie's theme: punk gangs, tenant farmers who have migrated from the countryside, transvestites, prostitutes, and under-employed young people. Additionally, some of the most important figures in Mexican rock are woven into the plot, such as the TRI and its mythological leader Alejandro Lora, singer and song-writer Rockdrigo González (who died in last September's earthquake, shortly after the shooting of the film was completed), composer Jaime López and singer Cecilia Toussaint.

The same team who wrote the script for *Frida*, Leduc and José Joaquín Blanco, wrote the script for *How Does it Look?*, although this time they were aided by the renowned Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis. The actors include Blanca Guerra and Ana Ofelia Murguía, as well as members of the theatre group "Vámonos recio" and the dance group "Barro rojo."

Arturo Ripstein's *The Wheel of Fortune* is the other awaited film debut. This is a re-make of *The Golden Rooster*, based on a script especially written by Juan Rulfo, the famous Mex-

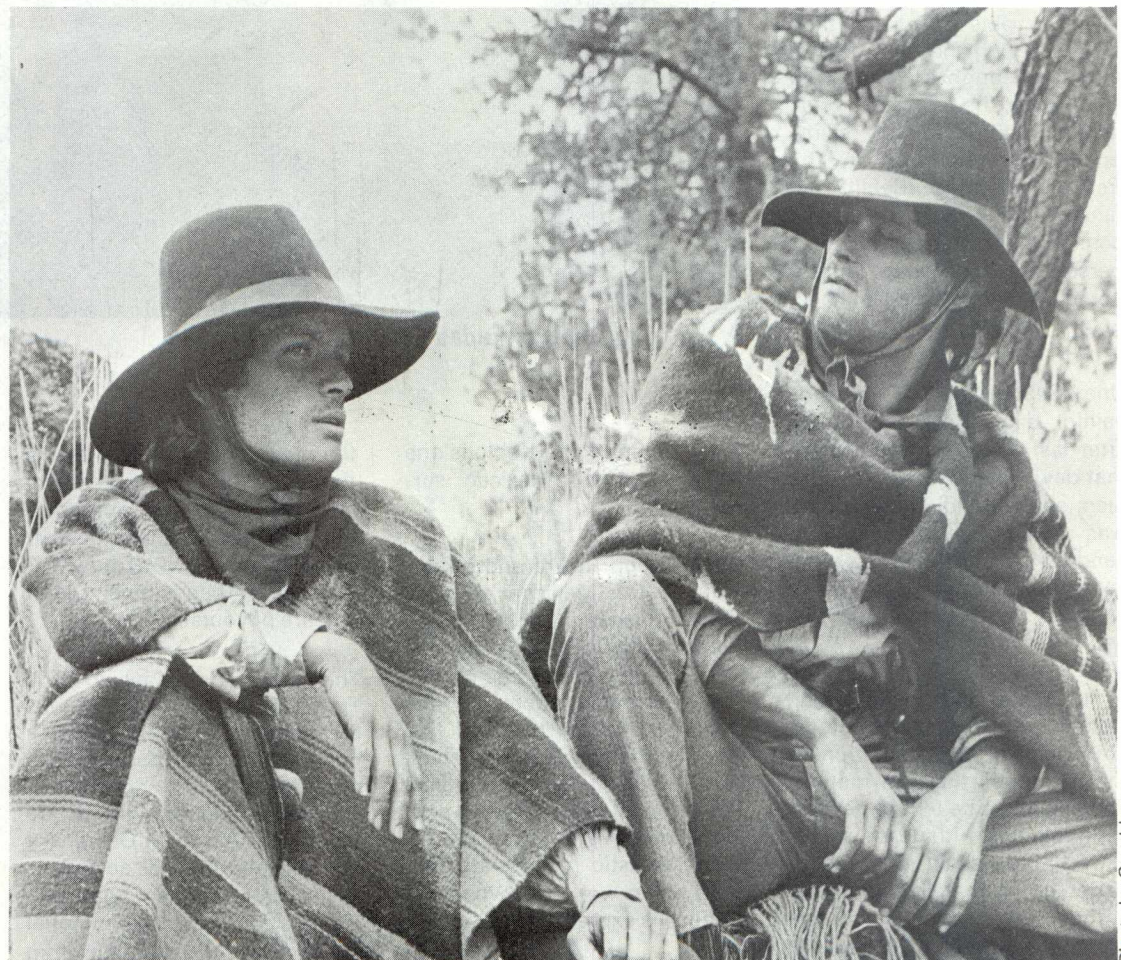
ican writer who died a few months ago. Interest in the film is great despite the fact that previous attempts to translate Rulfo's world and characters into film have failed (*Pedro Páramo*, played by John Gavin, is one example.)

Another film about to be completed is the documentary *Ulama: The Ball Game*, directed by Roberto Rochín. Arturo de la Rosa is director of photography, and the script is by Tomás



Fons in *The Bricklayers*.

Photo by Jose Alonso.



Felipe Cazal's *The Three of Clubs*.

Photo by Casablanca

Pérez Turrent and José Manuel Pintado. This 100 minute-long documentary goes back to the origins of the pre-columbian ball game, a Mesoamerican ritual-cum-sport that is still practiced by a small group in north-western Mexico. Shooting for this film began nearly four years ago, so it is clearly not another by-product of the World Soccer Cup (held recently in Mexico.)

Shooting has also begun on Felipe Cazals's new film, *The Three of Clubs*, set at the end of the 18th century among former guerrillas who fought alongside Benito Juárez, the Mexican president who saved the country from the French intervention. Angel Goded is doing the photography (*Frida* and *Luz*, and the script is by Jorge and Xavier Robles. The film stars Humberto Zurita, Pedro Armendáriz Jr., Alejandro Camacho, Gabriela Roel and José Carlos Ruiz. Interest in this new Cazals film isn't just because of the polemics unleashed over *Luz's Motives*. Felipe Cazals is responsible for many of the more memorable Latin American films, among them *Canoa Remembrance of a Shameful Event*, *The Poquianchis*, and *The Apando*.

An important factor in most of these films is that they have been or are being produced by independent film companies. This is the case of Mejika, producers of *Ulama*, and of Casablanca, producer of *The Three of Clubs*. In the past, Casablanca co-produced two long documentaries by Paul Leduc, one with Canada, *Mezquital*, *Notes on a Case of Ethnocide*, and another with El Salvador: *The Forbidden Stories of Tom Thumb*. A formula proposed for independent film-making years ago, the co-op, was adopted for Leduc's film *How Does it Look?* The cooperative is formed by artists and technicians who participate in the production. The most recent experience of this sort was for José Luis García Agraz's film *Nocaut*, and even *Frida* started out as a cooperative project.

Additionally, there are new possibilities for producing directly for television. In 1985 the Mexican Television Institute, IMEVISION, co-produced a TV series called *Early Morning Stories*, directed by Cazals and yet to be aired. Chimalistac is a company originally founded by independent film-makers, which got its start in the in-

dustry with *Luz's Motives*. And Chimalistac and IMEVISION are preparing a new series based on the great Mexican muralist and controversial political figure, Diego Rivera. José Agustín and Jorge Fons will write the script.

Jorge Fons is one of the most representative Mexican film-makers to have emerged during the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), when the film industry received considerable government backing. He directed *The Bricklayers* in 1976, based on a novel and play by Vicente Leñero, winning the Berlin Film Festival's Silver Bear Award. With the change in the presidency (José López Portillo, 1976-1982), Fons was no longer given the opportunity to work in the industry. Like many of his generation, he was forced to work in advertising in order to survive. But he was not silenced. Since he couldn't film fiction, in 1979 he shot *This is Viet Nam*, and between 1982 and 1986 he worked on a long documentary on India and Indira Gandhi which is currently in the process of being assembled, both with the backing of Cinematográfica Insurgente.

This is a group of film-makers



A shot from the *Bricklayers*, 1977 winner of the Silver Bear Award in Berlin.

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74 who have managed to keep independent film-making alive despite the erroneous policies followed in the industry since the mid-seventies, despite the voracity of the producers of "churros" (a term used to denote bad-quality films), who have cornered film distribution and showings, and despite the economic crisis. These people have accumulated both dignity and strength and have attracted young and not so young—producers, they have supported and guided new directors fresh out of school, and they are slowly pushing open the gates to the industry.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM, is about to start a project to make low-cost movies with few characters, based on the problems of life in Mexico City. Three directors are apparently slated to get the project off the ground: Jorge Fons, Felipe Cazals and Paul Leduc.

Leduc has been the firmest bastion for independent 16mm film in Mexico. He refused to enter the established industry even during President Echeverría's government (he must have had his reasons for this). But the same stubbornness that reduced him to marginality and was misunderstood even by many of his own generation, finally payed off with *Frida*. With this film, Leduc proved a point held by independent filmmakers for years: that fine, international quality films are possible on a low budget, dispensing with the headaches caused by the mediocrity, the ostracism and the condescensions the national film industry has fallen into. This, of course, requires a lot of talent and implies having access to the necessary equipment.

Felipe Cazals also broke into independent 16mm films in Echeverría's time, when he made *Canoa* and other films which brought him international recognition. Afterwards, Cazals had to work in advertising and direct commercial films under the orders of others. Yet he somehow managed to continue directing, both within and outside the industry, finding new producers. Both *Luz* and *The Three of Clubs* are proof of this.

Jorge Fons has been one of those most thoroughly thrashed by prevailing film policies, but he has not given in. He has

resorted to documentaries or silence, even, rather than film a "churro."

The films we have reviewed here will either have been completed or will be showing, within the next few months, and the UNAM project will be underway. However paradoxical it may seem in the midst of the current economic crisis, Mexican films, as an art form and as a form of Mexican expression, seem to be in the process of taking firm steps down a newly found path. ★

Manuel Sorto .

Exhibits

The Museum of Interventions, a Unique Experience

The National Museum of Interventions is located in the old Churubusco convent. "It wasn't accidental that this site was chosen for the museum," explains its director, Mónica

Cuevas y Lara, "given that this is where Mexico City was defended from the U.S. intervention on August 20, 1847."

The museum was created in order to provide an historical understanding of the nature and significance of the various armed interventions against Mexico throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. As in the rest of Latin America, these events have played an extremely important role in shaping the Mexican national consciousness.

Opened in 1980, the museum seeks to fulfill the same general goals that guide all of the museums sponsored by the National Anthropological and Historical Institute; namely, to rescue, investigate, preserve and disseminate the country's history. As Cuevas explains, the museum does not restrict its efforts to any one historical period, but rather deals with the whole of the country's history. The permanent exhibit begins with an introductory hall in which the last days of the colony and the first days of independence are reconstructed. That is intended to set the stage, "to provide an historical framework and a general context."

Next, it continues with displays regarding armed interventions as such. They begin with the last Spanish attempt to reconquer Mexico in 1819, the first French intervention in 1838 (popularly known as the "pastry war") and the U.S. intervention in 1847. Following on their heels were the French interventions in 1862 and 1867, and



The front of the Museum of Interventions

finally, the U.S. intervention in 1914.

According to the director, "the idea is that in the permanent exhibit we develop the concept of armed intervention, while in our other activities we can be more open... that is, we deal with issues such as economic, ideological, and cultural intervention." Nonetheless, the museum is not a heterogeneous cultural center. It takes care so that all of its activities are related to the question of intervention.

"Within the next few years, we hope to strengthen some of the areas in which the museum is still weak. For example, we hope to recover and to project in our exhibits the popular nature of resistance and to integrate elements of the traditionally striking participation of women," explains Mónica Cuevas. She adds that she has always believed that Latin American museums should play an educational role, given the serious shortage of other educational possibilities (the lack of adequate schools, rampant illiteracy, etc.) in the region.

In addition to its permanent exhibit, the museum sponsors a variety of activities. Noteworthy among them is the program known as the "Topic of the Month." A small display is developed regarding some topic related to a significant date of that month. Handouts are also prepared to provide more information and as an additional teaching aid, and experts are often invited in to give special lectures on the topic.

The museum also presents temporary exhibits that develop issues more fully than what can be done in the monthly programs. The temporary exhibits have been so successful that some, like "Womens' Participation in the Popular Resistance," have later been shown at other institutions or have even been developed into smaller, mobile displays that travel around the country.

Another of the museums' programs goes by the name of "artistic-cultural activities." These seek to promote the recovery of nationalist traditions. Recently, for example, the museum sponsored an activity called, "The Songbook of the French Intervention." A variety of numbers were per-

formed, and after each one, the context in which it was written was explained.

The museum also gives summer courses. Last year, some sixty children between the ages of nine and twelve participated in the program. "This year," says Mónica Cuevas, "we'll have the children write and perform skits about the interventions that are dealt with in the permanent exhibit...The course is called 'History Lives,' and the idea is that children will visit the halls, become sensitized to the issue, work with their hands; we'll be giving them historical background and help them to set the stage regarding daily life in the period they'll be studying."

The museum provides a variety of other services to the public as well. There is small photo archive that can be lent to any institution that makes a request. And a documentation center is being set up to serve investigators, students and the general public.

As the Director tells the story, when the museum was first established, the U.S. ambassador at that time complained that the museum had an "anti-U.S. spirit." "But that is simply not true," says Mónica Cuevas, "the museum shows our history...and we have always distinguished between the government of the U.S and the people of the U.S." It is also important to add that the museum places an equally strong emphasis on the French interventions.

One of the museums' major objectives is to have the public understand that Latin America's history and the history of the Mexican people are really one and the same. While it is true that Mexico, because of its specific conditions and development, has maintained a foreign policy based on the principles of non-intervention and the right to a nation's self-determination, the underlying conditions that have made Mexico the victim of interventions throughout its history are conditions that are also shared by the rest of Latin America. ★

José Francisco Ramírez



Interior of the colonial building that houses the Museum

Photo by Renzo Gostoli.

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Letters to the Editor

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In my article on Paul Leduc's film *Frida*, which appeared in the first issue of *Voices of Mexico*, we read in the seventh paragraph (p.38), when I deal with the attempt on Trotsky's life by David Alfaro Siqueiros, that: "...The scene takes place before another great Mexican muralist, Siqueiros, following Stalin's orders, makes an attempt on Trotsky's life."

I would like to make clear that I never wrote that the Siqueiros attempt against Trotsky was carried out following Stalin's orders, as it appears in the translated version of my article.

Manuel Sorto

Voices regrets the slip.

I have today been given my first copy of *Voices of Mexico* and I want to write you to tell you that I read through it from cover-to-cover and in all honesty must say that I was not unimpressed with both its scope and the potential that it has for making a beginning in the great task of breaking down some of the barriers (created in part by ignorance, misunderstanding and wilful manipula-

tion on the part of some) between the nations of North America as well as between the North American lands and those of South America.

In an age when we can communicate to distant parts of the cosmos without difficulty or delay, at any time and from any place, the reality of the wall of non-communication between what, for want of a better term; I will call Anglo-Saxon America and Ibero-America, is a sad indictment indeed of the provincial chauvinism still extant in our world. The amelioration of this situation is essential if we are to progress further down the paths our brightest and most forward thinking minds—in all disciplines—have shown us; to say nothing of the great task awaiting our generation—and that of our children—of remediation of hunger, endemic poverty and lack of social mobility and authentic human rights.

Taken at the floodtide of human events, such initiatives as *Voices* are harbingers of potential improvement in all our lives.

Rev. G.D. Wiebe
Hayward, California

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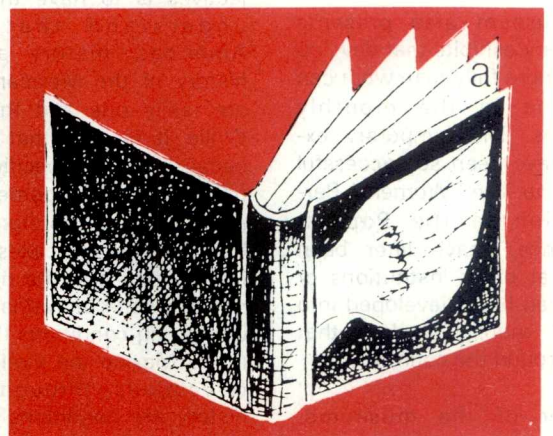
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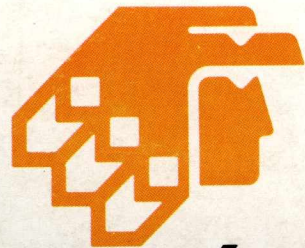


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