

## THE STRUGGLE

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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 Gattel

# 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.

## 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