

passed I would feel something warm dripping from my nose and ears. It was blood. When I had bled a lot and lost consciousness they would take me down. They let me fall to the floor and waited for the bleeding to stop before hanging me upside down again".

The prisoner states that on other occasions they put live rats in his mouth and all over his body. "They put an incredible amount of rats in my shirt and trousers. They tightened my collar and closed the bottom of my trousers with socks, so that the rats could not get out. It was a horrible sensation, as the rats bit me and I still have many scars from their bites."

**Trials by Law**

Hugo Pavez Lazo, a defense lawyer for 25 political prisoners states that the prisoners' families have also been the target of ill-treatment. "I have counted the people who have had to leave the country because of persecution and they number 15 complete family groups".

This 47 year old, grey-haired lawyer, who was jailed one day after the military coup in 1973, tortured, and then spent two years of exile in Sweden, states: "We are lodging a complaint stating the application of tortures, in-

juries, illegal detentions, deprivation of communication by what are no more than a band of criminals acting against the interests of the political prisoners".

Faced with these facts and evidence against the CNI the question in Chile now is whether the Courts will take up the subject and apply the necessary justice. Political leaders, from left to right, share the misgivings about the Courts, whom they accuse of having become an entity that shares responsibility for the crimes and misdemeanors of the armed forces' intelligence service.

But their complicity goes deeper than merely evading a trial of the CNI subordinates.

If the trial comes to court a large part of the military intelligence machine would be revealed, the curtain covering their illegal methods would be lifted, and the existence of systematic violation of human rights in Chile would come out into the open. In other similar cases, the so-called military justice has lodged an appeal of incompetence on the part of the civil authorities and the trials have passed into their jurisdiction.

Of the crimes and the criminals of the CNI, no more mention has been made.

Haroldo Shetemul in Santiago

ly recent, and has been a brutal process involving the creation of immense zones of spontaneous and precarious settlements inhabited by millions of people. The United Nations says that during 1987, the year of Shelter for the Homeless, 20 million children and youths in Latin America be living and sleeping in the streets. Almost one

that continues today. Since the 1950's, millions have abandoned the countryside seeking work, food, money and other social satisfactions in the cities. It is estimated that one million new residents arrive in Mexico City each year, part of a pattern that is repeated all over Latin America. Between 1950 and 1980 Mexico City, Lima, La Paz and

**Experts estimate that by the year 2,000 Mexico City and Sao Paulo will each have over 20 million inhabitants.**

fourth of the world's population —1,250 million people— lacks adequate housing. In addition, there are 100 million people who have no dwelling whatsoever.

Latin America's attempts in the 1950's to increase industrial production were accompanied by a lack of attention to rural development, a trend

Guayaquil tripled their population, and experts estimate that by the year 2,000 Mexico City and Sao Paulo will have over 20 million inhabitants each.

**Newsprint and Cardboard Housing**

As a result of this rapid and

**Latin American Cities Are Problem-Ridden**

Rapidly expanding populations and large-scale immigration were not foreseen by early city planners



View of Mexico City.

Photo from Unomasuno Archive

Urbanization in the de- veloping countries is relative-

## latin american issues

desperate urban development, huge sprawling slums have sprung up around the main cities in Latin America. They are called *favelas* in Brazil, *lost cities* in Mexico and Peru, *villas miseria* or *barriadas* in Argentina, *callampas* in Colombia. In these poverty areas population growth is twice as fast as in the cities in which they emerge, and four times faster than the world's population growth. In 1950 this marginalized population accounted for only 10% of urban dwellers, but today makes up nearly 45%. Experts estimate that if present trends continue, by the turn of the century half of the people who lack an adequate dwelling will be urban residents, living on the fringes and in the ghettos of modern cities.

One of the main characteristics of these lost cities is the squatting or "invasion" of land by homeless people who come either directly from the countryside or from another semi-urban settlement. The squatters begin construction of their homes with whatever materials available while they negotiate or fight to defend their right to stay on the land. Possession of the land is thus termed "irregular", and increasing proportions of urban residents now live on land they do not legally own or rent. In Ixtapalapa in Mexico City, for example, 50% of the land is in this kind of irregular form of possession.

Experts who study the phenomenon of the self-constructed housing put up by these settlers, point out that

this way of building is quicker and cheaper than what is done by the construction industry. The state's contribution to this process is almost nil, although government is called upon by residents to provide services —water, electricity, gas, transport, health and education facilities.

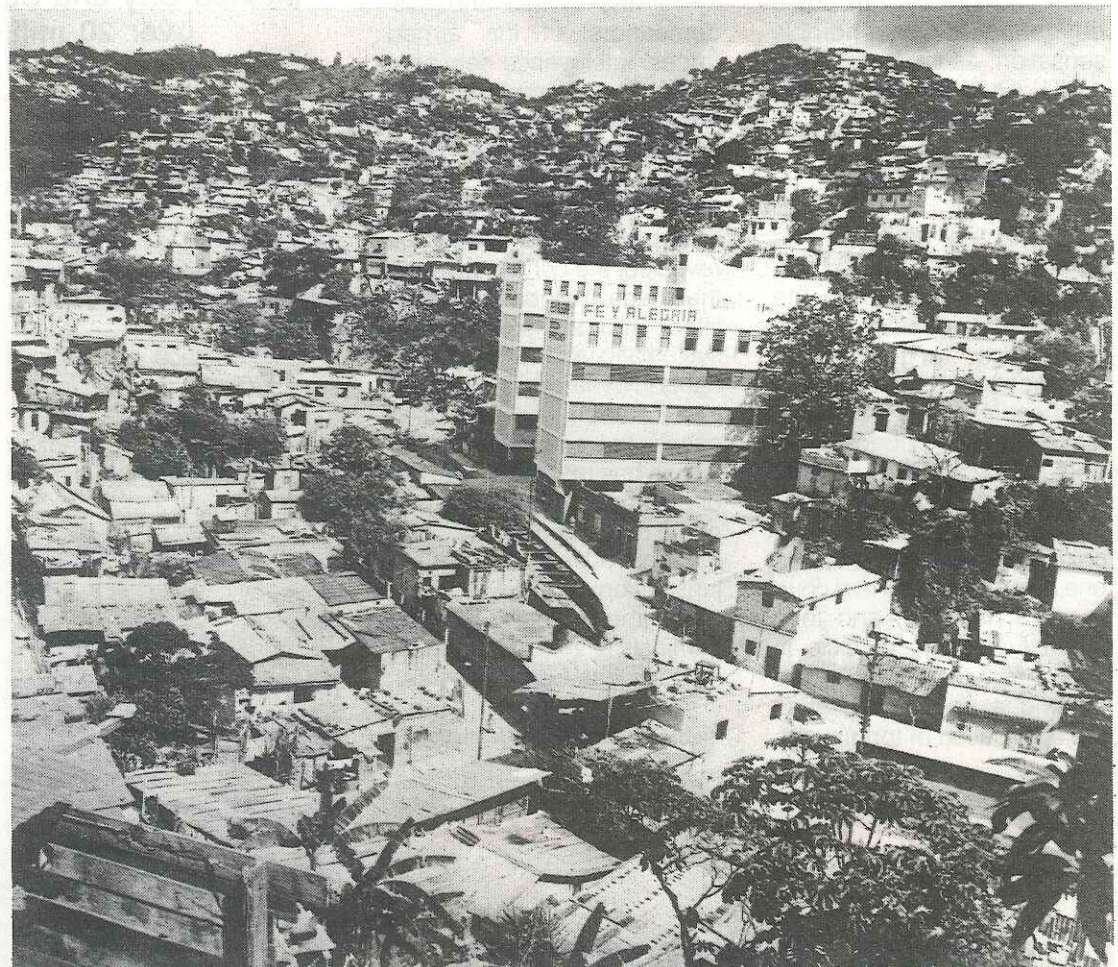
While this wide-spread self-construction of housing is an admirable example of human enterprise where need arises, the fact remains that the so-called "precarious" settle-

ments are miserable and unhealthy breeding grounds for disease, delinquency and crime, where increasing numbers of people live in overcrowded and promiscuous conditions.

Many of these spontaneous settlements are built on land that is totally inadequate for dignified housing, such as the edge of cliffs, beside factories and railroad lines, on terrain which is often flooded or subject to land falls. The houses, too, are precarious,

effects on the lungs, asbestos is a common building material in Latin America. Even water-tanks are made of it, as are rooftops and in some cases, household walls.

Irregularities in land tenure lead to speculation and to further migration. When an area has managed to obtain services, land values go up, taxes are levied and the poorer residents then have to move on. A study of urban living conditions in the Mexican city of Guadalajara showed that



A Caracas, Venezuela suburb.

Photo from Novedades Archive

### Population of Latin American Cities

(In millions of people)

	1950	1985	2000
Sao Paolo	2.8	15.9	24.0
Mexico City	3.0	17.3	25.9
Buenos Aires	5.5	10.9	13.2
Rio de Janeiro	3.5	10.4	13.3

Source: United Nations

especially in the early months of a settlement. Instead of using locally available traditional building materials such as stone, adobe or wood, the people are forced to use whatever short-term, cheap material is at hand, such as assorted sheets of tin, cardboard, plastic, hessian, newsprint and so on. Manufactured materials such as asbestos are often used by the residents who at a later stage wish to improve their homes. In spite of its negative

some families have moved and resettled up to nine times.

#### Survival in Shanty Towns

During the international Metropolis Congress held in Mexico City last May, Gabino Fraga, Mexican Under-Secretary for Ecology and Urban Development (SEDUE), stated that spontaneous settlements must be protected in terms of securing land ownership and by providing them with basic infrastructure and

services. He said that services such as drinking water, drainage, electricity, health facilities, education and transport are part of basic social justice and deserve high priority. He also proposed the availability of financing for low-income residents, with the active participation of the housing construction industry.

Mexico City (pop. 18 million) and Sao Paulo (pop. 16 million) are the largest cities in Latin America today. Other great urban centers include Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Recife and Porto Alegre in Brazil; the Buenos Aires metropolitan area; Santiago de Chile; Bogota and Medellin in Colombia as well as Lima, Montevideo, La Paz and Caracas. All of these cities, and smaller ones such as the capitals of the Central American countries, face problems resulting from rapid urban growth in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment. Terrible air, land and water pollution is caused by industry and cars (in Mexico City, 70% of the pollution is said to be caused by motor vehicles). There are masses of under-employed and unemployed workers seeking survival on the streets and in the shanty towns. Transportation from home to work and back again is often an activity (or a waste of time) that can add as much as four hours to some people's working day. Trash collection, open-air garbage pits, or worse yet, garbage thrown into the city streets and rivers, as well as diseases caused by all of these, along with a large population of rats, further erode living conditions. There are also problems of social violence and alienation. Additionally, hunger and despair lead to many different individual solutions, but only in Brazil have crowds formed to assault supermarkets and take by force the food they cannot afford to buy.

In an attempt to decentralize the metropolitan area, Argentine authorities announced plans to move the capital's political works to Viedma, some 630 miles south of Buenos Aires, in the Patagonia. According to

President Raúl Alfonsín, the move aims to separate financial and political powers, develop the Patagonia and institute political reforms to benefit Argentine society.

The decision was made in spite of the negative experiences of other centrally planned or re-located Latin American cities such as Brazilia—capital of Brazil since 1960—and Ciudad Guayana in Venezuela. During Metropolis, Governor of Brazilia José Aparecido de Oliveira, said that transferring the seat of government in order to decentralize a capital city does not really solve the problems of a great urban area. He said Brazilia was planned for half a million people but today has nearly two million.

Early city planners did not foresee the rapidly expanding populations and extensive waves of immigrants that were to come. During the 1940's, for example, Mexico City planners forecast that the city's population in 1980 would be a mere three million people...

Cities are obviously growing out of control. In the words of a Spanish delegate who attended Metropolis, Architect Alfonso Vegara Gómez, "It would seem that in spite of our extraordinary economic, organizational, and technical means, our society is incapable of solving the urban and land-tenure problems generated during the years of economic take-off and unbounded urban growth. To mention but a few of the consequences, I'd say large cities have become massified and congested, there is an ongoing erosion of hereditary values, a loss of ecological and territorial balances as well as deep-rooted social segregation, while broad sectors of the urban population are not equipped with basic services... In general, I believe this negative urban situation was brought about not only by the poor quality of specific decisions made on the matter, but rather because of the lack of a clear understanding of what we want our cities to be."

J.B.

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