

force was assumed to remain constant.(46) However, the trend may be for increasing participation of women in the labor market. Thus, as the population and more specifically the labor force expands, the Mexican government will find itself increasingly strapped to maintain the quality of life of its citizens, especially in the fields of health and education.

Public Health

Another main human factor problem in Mexico involves the public health. Mexico is experiencing a public health crisis characterized by hunger, malnutrition, disease and homelessness.

Mexico's infant mortality rate is 38.5 per 1000 births compared with 11.2 for its northern neighbor.(47) Mexico has 57 physicians per 100,000 persons, while the U.S. has 176.(48) Thus Mexico has serious work to do in health care to overcome its current crisis.

Food is one of Mexico's most basic dilemmas. The population boom has strained the governments's ability to feed its citizens.(49) Food imports have continued to grow adding to the world's largest foreign debt.(50) Finally, the composition of the current Mexican diet has problematic nutritional value.(51)

According to one source, Mexico has made some progress

because of improved sanitation procedures.(52) Yet "among children, diarrheal diseases, often accompanied by dehydration, are still important causes of death. Parasites are also relatively common among the poorest 20% of the population, although not so frequently the cause of death."(53) Further, malnutrition is likely to be present among children in lower income brackets.(54) "Both in rural areas and in the shantytowns of the cities, survival depends upon reciprocity in a network of relatives who will share food, lend money during emergencies, and aid each other in times of trouble."(55) In Mexico City itself, before the earthquake of 1985, one third of all families, which on average consisted of 5 members, huddled together in a single room for shelter at night.(56) The forces of the market leave countless more without any shelter whatsoever. (57) In short, "The poor in Mexico either scrape out an existence or die."(58) We might well speculate whether children growing up under such circumstances will ever be able to take advantage of educational opportunities.(59)

Education and Technology

Still another basic human factor problem in Mexico involves education and technology. With a literacy rate of 74%(60), Mexico's educational system needs change if it is not to fall further behind the industrialized world. Three elements comprise

Mexico's dilemma. First, many of Mexico's top students are fleeing the economic chaos in search of a more stable economic climate resulting in a brain drain to the nation. Second, the lack of fundamental, relevant education for all citizens is further education for all citizens is further complicating the crisis. Third, without centers of excellence, Mexico will be unable to develop new technologies of its own, thus leaving it dependent on the industrialized world.

The first element of Mexico's education problem involves the exodus of educated workers. There are a variety of reasons educated Mexicans are fleeing to the north. Joblessness in their home nation is probably the strongest incentive for many to make the trek. Poverty, inflation, homelessness, corruption and other factors of the crisis all provide an impetus for the migration. Yet those who do go are the able, the strong, the bright and the courageous. Thus Mexico is experiencing an outflow of the exact persons it most needs to set itself back on track educationally, economically and politically.

Further complicating the crisis is the lack of fundamental education. In the early 1980s, about half of all eligible elementary schoolchildren lacked any school at all to attend.(61) Of those children that had a school to attend, only half make it past the second grade(62), and less than 20% of pupils complete the sixth grade.(63) Due to the explosive rise in population, in absolute terms there were more illiterates in 1975 than in 1910, prior to the revolution.(64) Since 1975, progress has been made,

albeit slowly.(65)

However, Mexico needs to develop not only basic education, but also more sophisticated and advanced education if it is to even keep up with the industrial world.(66) The days of free technology transfer are now on the wane. Developed economies, especially Japan, will be increasingly secretive about technologies on the cutting-edge of industries where the most active world demand is expected.(67) To keep pace in the emerging new economic order, Mexico will either have to place a great deal of emphasis on learning about and developing new technologies, or settle to a second-class future economy. Indeed, the technology gap is already wide and becoming wider. Yet, even assuming Mexico can solve its economic and educational problems, there remains a crisis in the political arena.

Political Crisis

The political context is important when analyzing the current crisis in Mexico. Never since the Second World War has Mexico been in a more serious political crisis. The political crisis appears to have six facets. First, as Mexico's economy grows anemic, so does its ability to project a self-authored foreign policy. Second, the government is struggling internally to maintain control over both the right and left. Third, many

suspect widespread corruption in high government offices. Fourth, drugs have become a much-publicized issue. Fifth, the freedom of the press has been eroded. And sixth, the U.S. is vocalizing its frustration over Mexico's porous northern border, which in turn jeopardize the security of the U.S. Each of these facets should be looked at individually.

First, Mexico has lost its ability to create an innovative, propitious, self-made foreign policy. During the oil boom, President Jose Lopez Portillo sought to become the regional power broker, offering to help settle the dispute between Washington and Managua.(68) Yet, with the advent of the current crisis, President de la Madrid has softened his nation's political support for the Sandanistas to reach a better understanding with the northern power. Former Finance Minister Jesus Silva Herzog complained that each time he went to Washington to bargain for increased financial credits, he was forced to account for Mexico's foreign policy.(69) The price for Mexico's nationalistic policy apparently has been too high in terms of the economic relationship with the U.S. to justify a continuance of the Mexican support for Central American revolutionaries.(70)

The second facet of the current political situation is the faltering of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. The Right and Left have joined forces to question the wisdom of a one party system in Mexico--a system established in 1929 subsequent to the 1910-17 revolution. Critics argue that the single party system

required money to keep all groups happy--money given out in subsidies, grants, favors, contracts and corruption.(71) That money is now gone. So the Roman Catholic Church and the Unions have begun to voice discontentment.(72) The patronage system is in crisis.(73) However, because of the inherent centralization of power in the President, a member of the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the voices of opposition are distant and muffled.

A third facet of the political situation involves allegations of fraud and corruption. In an attempt to bring more attention to the possibility of an alternative government, the Partido de Accion Nacional (PAN) has made electoral fraud a national and international issue.(74) The PAN sees this as an opportunity to create civil insurgency to give the PRI enough trouble to moderate its authoritarian grip on politics. Indeed, even communists have joined with PAN to demand "effective suffrage," while PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari is forced to demand clean elections as well.(75) The PRI appear to desire the elimination of opposition and with it the opportunity of bringing in fresh ideas for dealing with the crisis. Yet, whether electoral fraud did or did not take place in fact probably matters little. What is important is that many believe electoral fraud took place and are beginning to question the rationale for a one-party state. The outward manifestation of public dissatisfaction was displayed to the world in the 1986 World Cup match at which the President was met with a chorus of

booing when he opened the tournament and again in September when he met similar vocal abuse during his annual shout from the balcony of the palacio nacional.(76)

Voting fraud is not the only allegation of corruption now facing the government. Recently, the Chicago Tribune asserted that President Lopez Portillo pocketed enough cash to build 5 mansions for himself, a villa for his mistress (the former Minister of Tourism Rosa Luz Alegria) and another villa for the president's wife, all from government coffers.(77) In addition, there remains widespread suspicion that President Lopez Portillo deposited huge sums of dollars obtained from fraud in Texan banks.(78) Other accusations of fraud surround Jorge Diaz Serrano, the former head of Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), Carlos Hank Gonzalea, former Mayor of Mexico City and Arturo Durazo Moreno, the former Mexico City Police Chief.(79) These allegations have served to undermine confidence in the PRI.

President de la Madrid has tried to deflect the criticism of the PRI by claiming that the corruption of the last government was responsible for the current Mexican crisis. This allegation by the current president is indicative of the crisis itself. First, it creates dissention between the current government and the last one. Second, it fails to recognize that corruption remains as rampant under the current administration as under the last.(80) Third, it either displays ignorance concerning the fundamental causes of the crisis or it at least tries to frame public discussion of the crisis in terms largely irrelevant to

the fundamental economic causes of the crisis. Finally, it serves to further strengthen the stereotype in the U.S. that the Mexican government is full of corrupt politicians. In fact, the entire situation is reminiscent of the incident at Tschernobyl in which the Soviet government shifted blame for a serious nuclear mishap onto several party officials. As in the handling of Tschernobyl, President de la Madrid appears to hope that the sacrifice of a few will divert attention from a more revealing dilemma lurking in the shadows.

A fourth facet adding to Mexico's political crisis is the drug problem. Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina has asserted that Mexican officials are involved in the drug trade. (81) The popular press in the U.S. has reported that senior police and military commanders, two governors, a cousin of Mr. de la Madrid, and the current Minister of Defense have all been involved to varying degrees with the drug trade. (82) In 1985, Mexican police and smugglers were involved in the killing of an American Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) official and in 1986, in the torture of another DEA official. (83) These accounts and allegations have served to strain U.S.-Mexican relations, chill the Mexican business climate, and de-legitimize the de la Madrid administration at a time when Mexico has enough problems already.

The fifth facet of the current political situation is characterized by a reduction in the press' freedom. As the PRI loses its grip on the nation, it has tried to exert increased pressure to control the press and the flow of information.

First, the government seized control a year ago of the transmission of information via satellite. Under the decree, the government now controls the operation hours of satellites and the personnel in charge of installations.(84) Thus, "Mexico can now tell publishers whom to hire and when to print--not to mention whether to print."(85) Second, the government began printing its own satellite paper, El Nacional, in the autumn of 1986.(86) That paper is now priced to undercut competing papers.(87) As one of El Nacional's editors put it, the paper is "the most sophisticated political propaganda tool in the Western Hemisphere."(88)

The sixth facet aggravating the Mexican political climate is the mass exodus occurring on its northern border adversely affecting the U.S. With so many seemingly unsolvable problems at home many Mexicans are migrating northward. Indeed there is a correspondence between the falling standard of living in Mexico and the rise in border crossings.(89) This in turn has caused concern in the United States over the economic and social crisis to the south since the U.S. military must rely on a secure 2,000 mile border with Mexico in order to meet its other world obligations.(90) As Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz) has noted, "The stability of Mexico ranks second only to the Soviet strategic balance in significance to Americans in the next decade."(90) This along with the other five facets of the political crisis has added to the already weighty problems facing Mexico in the economic and human factor areas. As if this was

not enough, the United States has caused further problems for Mexico.

The Role of the United States

In addition to economic, human and political factors, the United States has contributed to Mexico's woes. Under U.S. Ambassador John Gavin, Washington's relations with Mexico continued to decline. The conflict between the two can be viewed as a divergence of priorities resulting in animosity.

The United States wants pragmatic action on three main issues.(92) First, the Reagan Administration protests that the Mexican government is not responding to the drug problem. With the death of the U.S. DEA official in Mexico, the U.S. fears a drug mafia has significant control over the de la Madrid government. As evidenced by the numerous articles in the popular press concerning the drug issue(93), it appears the U.S. has taken its diplomacy to the press to force Mexico to acknowledge the problem.

Second, the Mexican government has treated the immigration issue as a U.S. problem. The Mexican government is either not willing or not able to cooperate with the U.S. This has lead to the landmark immigration law signed by Mr. Reagan on November 6, 1986, to curb the tide of illegal aliens.(94) It has also lead

to the virtual closing of the border to imports from Mexico. Produce has been declared polluted, Mexican cargo trucks are forbidden entry to the U.S. and new taxes have been levied against oil.(95)

Third, the U.S. perceives that the Mexican government has done little to prevent terrorism. As a consequence, the U.S. closed its visa office in Mexico City, and issue travel advisories warning tourists not to go to Mexico, crippling the lucrative tourist industry in Mexico's many resorts. Further, Ambassador Gavin invited members of the PAN, not the PRI, to observe the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, Texas, fueling suspicion that the U.S. may be trying to covertly influence Mexico's internal political situation. In a broader sense, Mexican foreign policy regarding Cuba and Nicaragua may be the source of the U.S. animosity.(96) All these factors have had de-stabilizing effects on the Mexican economy and political system.

The consequences of the antagonistic U.S. policy are significant. So long as the U.S. maintains its policy, Mexico will be unable to exploit the areas in which it has a comparative advantage over the U.S., such as tropical fruit production, oil and petroleum products, and tourism.(97) Ironically, it is growth in these export areas which make Mexico more capable of paying off its debt to American banks. Thus, U.S. foreign policy in Mexico seems to be internally inconsistent to some extent. Yet, until the U.S. begins to support Mexican economic export

initiatives, there is little hope that Mexico will be able to climb out of its current economic, political and human factor dilemmas.

Conclusion

Mexico's problems are deep-rooted, inter-related and long-term. There are few easy answers. First and foremost, Mexico should try to understand its problems. Without fully grasping the complexity of its current crisis, Mexico will at best provide itself with band-aid solutions to catastrophic problems. This paper has tried to analyze the crisis and explain the sources of the current situation. Next, Mexican officials need to use this knowledge to choose a course of action. This involves establishing objectives, prioritizing, generating alternative solutions, selecting a solution and then implementing that solution. Then, the government needs to continue learning about the situation so that it can adapt its plan to changing conditions. Using an approach such as this, the Mexican government, with the aid of its northern neighbor who has a vested interest in North American stability, should be able to make some headway against the current crisis. How much progress can be made will remain a matter for history books to decide in the future. In the mean time, the only other alternative--the

one that seems to be in use at the present--is to ignore the problem. Unfortunately, this will lead to increasing loss of control, confidence and morale, not to mention Mexicans' future and their very lives.

Endnotes

1. "Mexico. The Walls Close In," The Economist, August 9, 1986, p. 27. The first installment was received by Mexico on November 20, 1986. See "Mexico Close to Getting Commitments Needed to Trigger Its Rescue Package," The Wall Street Journal, Wednesday, November 19, 1986, p. 32, col. 5-6; Peter Truell, "Banks Agree to Give Mexico More Time To Repay Bridge Loan of \$ 500 Million," The Wall Street Journal, Friday, Jan. 30, 1987, p. 20 col's 1-2; "Mexico Bank Loan Package," The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 1987, p. 33 col. 3.

2. "Mexico. The Walls Close In," op. cit. For details of the subsequent private rescheduling, see Mary Williams Walsh and Peter Truell, "Mexico and Banks Set Rescheduling Of Private Debt," Wall Street Journal, Wednesday, July 20, 1987, p. 17, col. 2. A debt swap scheme was also announced in late December 1987.