

I sent this to
Yucatan for verification
of the "armed uprising" by
and the "murders" of
"peasants."

Mexicans have a new slogan these days, and it's hotter than their *guacamole*. What's more, it seems to be popular with all sides—even with the government. In fact, it was President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz himself who proclaimed it a while back at a luncheon for the Mexico City press corps.

—Siempre!

The slogan: "Death before Intervention."

Speaking at the plush Maria Isabel hotel, the tense, taut Mexican president did not mean Vietnam. He wasn't even referring to Venezuela's diplomatic maneuverings for an invasion of Cuba. Incredibly, he meant Mexico—intervention in Mexico by the U.S.

It all started innocently enough on page 94 of the June 5th issue of *U.S. News and World Report*. There, at the end of a three-page article by the magazine's Central American correspondent, Carl Migdail, was this quote:

Many Mexicans, including businessmen, lawyers, professors and economists, seem now to be taking it for granted that some day the U.S. will once again dispatch troops to this country—as it did during the revolution—to restore law and order. And some of these people, worried about the increasing evidence of unrest and Communist agitation, fear that such a day may not be far distant.

Mexico was outraged. For the next few days editorials blasted *U.S. News*. Then, on June 15, Diaz Ordaz said that Mexicans would rather "die a thousand times" than invite foreign troops on their soil. And since then, almost every Mexican has been talking about fighting the *gringos*, remembering Vera Cruz, Pancho Villa, even muttering words of "getting even" for the loss of Baja California. It's as if Mexico is being geared for a great crusade—on paper only, of course.

Americans in Mexico are dumbfounded. "A good public relations man should have told Diaz Ordaz to ignore the whole thing," a fat little lady from Wisconsin assured me in the Almeida bar, in between songs by "The Cousins," a rather good trio of bearded Semites which bills itself as "the only Arab-Israel ensemble." At the International Press Club, an American newsman agreed. "Most



embarrassing," he said, "and, besides, the whole thing is preposterous."

At the university, a city of dazzling, if at times incongruous, modern buildings at the edge of town, one American student wailed that "everywhere I go I now have the feeling Mexicans think of me as one of those guys who stole Texas from them. We all know *U.S. News* was all wet. Diaz Ordaz should have said nothing, or maybe just canned the guy out of Mexico."

Fact is, however, that *U.S. News* was not all wet—and Diaz Ordaz was probably delighted with the story. To begin with, Carl Migdail is an old pro. A jolly, smiling reporter who has lived in Mexico for 17 years (seven of them for *U.S. News*), he may have some very conservative ideas about U.S. imperialism, but he knows how to get the facts. And he told them in his piece. He pointed out that 50 years after its revolution, Mexico's "wealth remains concentrated in comparatively few hands." Statistics show, he said, "that 11 million Mexicans cannot afford bread made from wheat, and that 5 million go barefoot because they cannot afford shoes."

Such conditions have caused so much unrest that armed uprisings have swept the provinces. During the last year, peasants have rebelled and been murdered in Jalisco, Yucatan and Sinaloa. Last May, riots in Sonora, which borders Arizona, became so ferocious that the Mexican army had to be called in. In Morelia, paratroopers had to occupy the university. Almost everywhere impoverished *ejidos* (communal lands) are fermenting rebels, and landless peasants are

smashing down offices of government credit institutions. While the industrial class and the new landed oligarchy grows richer, unemployment soars; half a million new jobs are needed every year just to keep up to present statistics.

What is even worse to Mexicans, who pride themselves on their independence, is that Mexico is being Americanized more every day. Not only is most of the credit money now controlled by U.S. banks; not only do such companies as Anderson-Clayton dominate cotton and other crop sales; but so are U.S. products, from toothpastes to pajamas—becoming necessary standards. No wonder that one Mexican student told me, "Diaz Ordaz doesn't dare come to the University."

Besides government violence, there is also an increase in government repression. In one section of the Lecumberi jail that I visited, I found some 30 political prisoners, all arrested more than 14 months ago and still to be tried. In another section are various union leaders, some jailed nine years ago when dissatisfaction began in earnest. In still another, are more recent political prisoners, harmless Trotskyists, arrested on the absurd ground that they were trying to foment a pro-Chinese revolution.

But the repressions do not quell the discontent. Leftwing communists (as opposed to regular Moscow-lining communists who believe in "coexistence" and cooperation with the government) are active everywhere. Che Guevara's "many Vietnams" thesis is very popular with the youth. And for the first time since 1910, important Mexican intellectuals are again talking of revolution—a second one. As for Diaz Ordaz, he has become the most unpopular president since the first revolution. Thus he badly needed an issue or a cause to reassert his revolutionary fervor.

Carl Migdail gave it to him with his article. By denouncing it, by telling Mexicans that they would rather die than let order be restored by gringo troops, Diaz Ordaz became a patriot, a leader of national independence. It is most probable, therefore, that Mexicans will be encouraged to shout "Death before Intervention" for quite some time—until he copes with his spreading opposition, or smashes it. If he fails, a second revolution may yet force Mexicans to put to a test their new, beloved slogan.

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