

taken its toll on the Colombian economy. Production in the major industrial department of Antioquia has been seriously threatened as a result of devastating 12-16 hour a day rationing of water and electricity. Most schools, clinics and commercial establishments have been shut down for an undetermined period. The country's association of small and medium businesses, ACOPI, has declared itself in a state of national emergency, protesting publicly that the unavailability of credit, stratospheric interest rates and collapsing consumer demand has brought it to the brink of bankruptcy — which will produce severe unemployment and consumer and industrial shortages.

The living standards of the Colombian population have plummeted. One newspaper reports that health standards for over one-third of the population are considered below minimal recommended levels. Another article reveals that meat consumption per capita has fallen from 23 kilograms in 1961 to less than 14 in 1974, threatening to lead to reduced work capacity among the working class and lowered resistance to disease. Unrelieved drought conditions in major regions of the country have led to the fear of epidemic outbreaks. Stories are beginning to spread of people resorting to drinking sewage for lack of potable water.

**EXCLUSIVE**

## Mexican Chief Of State Slapped Around By Carter, Brzezinski On Washington Visit

In a scandal which will have wide reverberations in the Third World and Europe, the Carter Administration welcomed its first official state visitor, President José López Portillo of Mexico, to Washington this week with a combination of brutal private armtwisting and public snubs. The Mexican chief of state, who according to inside sources came to Washington "ready to give 90 percent" on the U.S. demands, left the capital deeply shaken by the affronts.

This is the story, constructed from a variety of well-placed sources, of how this diplomatic disaster — kept largely out of the press of the two countries — was engineered. This story is especially of interest to other Third World and European leaders who are being lured to Washington on the Carter promises of a "new era" of "open and friendly" diplomacy.

López' willingness to please his hosts had been evident for months. He made it clear he would interpret Mexico's foreign investment laws "flexibly"; he accepted plans for a massive increase of Mexican oil exports to the U.S.; he accepted a stringent International Monetary Fund program of austerity to reduce deficits and increase debt repayment. He drew back sharply from the insistent Third Worldism of his predecessor, Luis Echeverría, and on arrival in Washington delivered a cut against those "ambitious and bad-intentioned ones" who "would impede good U.S.-Mexican relations" — a comment widely taken to be aimed against Echeverría's group. In an eight-column headline, the daily *Excelsior* reported the comment as a commitment to "repress" such elements. In exchange for his concessions, López was asking for increased exports to the U.S. and some breathing room on the debt.

Yet in Washington, López' accommodation apparently served for nothing. After being knocked sharply about, López emerged empty-handed. High sources report that National Security Council chief Zbigniew Brzezinski personally took charge of the discussions and insisted that Mexico cede control of its oil development, now

under state monopoly, to U.S. firms.

Well-informed sources have speculated that a subsequent "leak" to the *New York Times* that Mexican oil reserves are considered by U.S. government officials to total a whopping 60 billion barrels, putting increased pressure on Mexico to bring in U.S. contractors for offshore drilling, came directly from Brzezinski's NSC offices.

In addition to the pressure on the oil question, inside sources report López was pressured to purge remaining Echeverristas from his government, and told that Mexico's population growth must be reduced — a pressure point vented publicly by Carter conduit James Reston late in the week.

The effect of the Carter Administration's snubs and slaps to the face, according to the qualified observers, is to undermine López' balancing acts within Mexico and to increase the chances for an early social explosion. These observers have indicated that such may in fact have been the purpose of the Carter treatment, and have linked the hard-line treatment to imposition of the so-called Paddock Plan which calls for reducing Mexican population of 60 million by half.

The visit began on Valentine's Day — an appropriate day for a meeting prepared so effusively from both sides of the border as the "healing" of the U.S.-Mexican relations strained during the term of Echeverría. In reciprocal greetings on the White House lawn and the toasts at Carter's first White House state dinner that evening, the two presidents stressed the warm personal relationship developing between the two First Families. López thanked Carter as a representative of "Latin America and the developing world."

But if López' historical sense served him right, he already must have been taken somewhat aback by Carter's toast comment that Carter knew what Mexico felt about Yankee imperialism, "being from Georgia" himself. During the Civil War, the Confederate States allied with the hated Emperor Maximilian of Austria —

imposed on Mexico by European powers to collect foreign debt — in common cause against Lincoln and Mexico's nineteenth century statesman Benito Juarez.

In private talks the next day, Carter reportedly made a few introductory remarks and then Brzezinski completely took over and ran the show.

By the time López entered the National Press Club for an address an hour later, observers noted that he looked poorly, his face drawn. In his speech, given with more vehemence than expected, he included a defense of the Third World's "right of association" among his protestations of cooperation with the U.S. to ease mutual problems, an uncommon addition for him.

That evening, López Portillo and his wife prepared a reception of 1,000 guests for the Carters to reciprocate the White House dinner the night before. There was only one hitch — the Carters were not coming, as they informed the Mexicans only that morning. In his place Carter sent his evangelist "born-again" sister, Ruth.

Top Congressional sources acknowledged in embarrassment that some "eyebrows were raised" from the Mexican side; British press headlined that "Carter Upsets Mexican President."

Things got worse for López. In a quick trip to Chicago the next day, he was flatly turned down by bankers on a \$380 million syndicated loan package he sought.

But nothing could have prepared him for the events of his last day, Thursday. Although top members of the House Foreign Relations Committee have privately tried to cover the scandal by emphasizing how "most unfortunate" it was to schedule an address to Congress during a "district work period," the national press was not so kind. Public accounts emphasized that only a small fraction of the House showed up. Pages were dragooned from the corridors to fill empty seats. Applause interrupted the speech only once — when López declared "Mexico must solve its own problems." Repeating his

snub of Tuesday night, Carter did not show up — though Mexicans in López' entourage had been led to expect the Chief Executive would continue the established custom of presidential attendance. House Speaker Tip O' Neil told a group of Mexicans he thought López' speech was lousy and threw a copy on the floor in front of them. He then announced to the press that he thought it a "waste of time" for the House to receive foreign dignitaries.

One Carterite Congressman who hosted López for the House visit and was clearly dismayed by the accumulated offenses against the visitors to the U.S. indicated privately that perhaps the U.S. had been "overly blunt and direct" in its treatment. "Let's hope they understand that we did this because of our proximity to Mexico, because we want them to be as frank with us," he said. Yet he emphasized that Carter's snubs, under the rubric of "reduced protocol" will be the norm for future state visits. A top west coast Latin American expert, similarly inclined to minimize intended offense in the Administration reception, nevertheless conceded that the affair showed all of the same "clumsiness" as the Administration's "awfully belligerent" attitude toward the Soviet Union on the "dissident" question.

From the Mexican side, López and his advisors have not made any public protests over the treatment they received. But a source close to U.S.-Mexican business circles stated circumspectly that "I did get the idea that López Portillo was not entirely pleased."

López' speech to the House provided perhaps the most fitting rebuke to the hosts he had previously been so willing to accommodate. He renewed Mexico's call for a "New World Economic Order" in much stronger language than he has used before, warned of excessive power of "private interests," defended the living heritage of the Mexican Revolution — and, of all U.S. historical figures, chose to quote Abraham Lincoln.