

Mexico's earthquake: Was it enough to shake off IMF dictatorship?

by Timothy Rush

The cartoon in Mexico's leading newspaper showed a vulture, initials "IMF" labeled on its side, perched on a pile of rubble, squawking to a still-buried victim, "Hey Mexican, are you better now? Don't forget, we've still got some unfinished business."

The intense and general bitterness in Mexico against the country's foreign creditors—starting with the International Monetary Fund—in the wake of the devastating Sept. 19-21 earthquakes, is not restricted to what one journalist termed the "amazing blunder" of the IMF in announcing a suspension of credit to the country the day the first quake hit.

Even without a suspension, the Mexican economy is a walking corpse because of IMF policies. The earthquakes simply put on the finishing touch, the "extra straw" which has brought the underlying rot to the surface.

Stunned and grieving Mexico City residents throughout the first days after the Sept. 19 tragedy noted the contrast between super-modern high-tech U.S. mine-rescue techniques, based on lasers and ultra-sound, which were successfully locating and extricating survivors—and the desperate efforts of Mexican search teams, at best equipped with picks and shovels, to tunnel through the debris. This epitomized to much of the population the criminality—and not just incompetence—of the "appropriate technology" and "cheap exports" tags given to Mexico's precipitous de-industrialization.

Army specialists noted the effects of past years' budget-cutting on their ability to respond to the enormous emergency functions thrust upon the army.

Successive political capitulations and concessions to demands of foreign creditors had also sapped the vitality of nationalist decision-making. Mexico's economic managers, grouped around Harvard- and Yale-trained economists such as Finance Minister Jesús Silva Herzog, Planning Minister Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and central bank chief Miguel Mancera, had nothing to say after the buildings of the capital swayed and tumbled: Any serious reconstruction effort would throw all their slavish adherence to creditor interests out the window.

But just as more than 50,000 members of Mexican rescue teams, with all the limitations of an IMF-debilitated economy, performed innumerable acts of heroism and sacrifice to bring as many out alive as possible, so the Mexican system

is tapping extra political resources to meet the crisis the earthquake so suddenly pushed to the fore.

On Sept. 24, Carlos Mireles, the head of the National Chamber of Manufacturing Industries, demanded that creditors defer interest payments for the next 12 months, so that Mexico could invest those \$13 billion in rebuilding the city and the country.

Labor is mobilizing in the same fashion behind Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM) leader Fidel Velázquez. On Sept. 30, he called for a "pause" in payments, and in Monterrey two days later, said: "The CTM will support all efforts the government may make to suspend its debt payments for now . . . to make way for national recovery."

On Oct. 1, the Yucatan state legislature passed a unanimous declaration, introduced by the ruling PRI contingent in that legislature, which called on Mexico to "stop paying interest on its foreign debt," because now "the country's international financial commitments can only be met with the hunger of the people."

"Coming from the very center of the Mexican political class," wrote the daily *El Universal* Oct. 2, are "positions suggesting debt moratoria."

If Mexico is ever to break with the murderous IMF regime, that time is now.

'Get rid of dead wood'

As far as the public spokesmen for the international banks are concerned, earthquakes are good for Mexico. "The quakes which killed thousands last week may have done Mexico's debt-ridden economy more good than harm in the long term, bankers and economists say," reported the British Reuters news service Sept. 24. "If anything, it's a golden opportunity to get rid of a few hundred bureaucrats and a lot of dead wood by simply not rebuilding their offices," one banker told Reuters.

The reaction of creditor circles goes beyond callousness. The "Establishment" apparatus of Anglo-American liberal media, and think-tanks such as the Council on Foreign Relations and Kissinger's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at Georgetown, want to see Mexico's institutional framework snap like kindling wood. The earthquake is seen as a major opportunity to push Mexico into ungovernability.

The *Wall Street Journal* on Sept. 26, in the first of a series of front-page profiles of Mexico after the quake, poured contempt on President Miguel de la Madrid as a man of "small ambition" who had been overwhelmed by the disaster. The target of the attack was the institution of the Mexican presidency itself.

The jackals of the foreign press have published inflammatory, lying reports on "government corruption" being "responsible for collapsed buildings." From the very first "on-the-scene" reports, the *Washington Post* took the lead in passing on assertions from an "anonymous" businessman, with the demonstrably absurd statement that "only" government buildings had collapsed. This showed that "government corruption and laxity in applying building codes" would become a giant scandal, the *Post* "forecast."

Dan Rather of earthquake in Nicaragua, when corruption in the rebuilding effort fueled the eventual Sandinista take-over, so the Mexican quake had the potential for "major shifts" in the future. The *Journal* entitled its series, "Nation in Jeopardy."

Killing Mexicans

The fanatic Malthusians at the top of the banker "blue-blood" crowd want to see Mexicans dead—30 million of them, in the plan of Environmental Fund founder William Paddock. These genocidalists have emphasized that disease is "much better than wars" for depopulation.

The potential for mass outbreaks of disease in Mexico City will remain high for at least three months, experts have stated. Yet, Mexican Health Minister Guillermo Soberón has insisted that Mexico needs no international relief supplies. Several million doses of vaccines sent in from Houston remain undistributed, according to some reports. Soberón stepped in to specifically ban any vaccination program against typhoid.

Similarly, Dr. José Luis Zeballos, of the Washington-based Pan-American Health Organization, told a press conference in Mexico City Sept. 24 that special tetanus and typhoid vaccination efforts established by a few public and private medical centers were an "erroneous policy." "We should not be using valuable resources in a massive campaign of vaccinations," he insisted. Zeballos admitted that one-third of the city still had no water and that 25% of the water system was "deteriorated."

After the initial period of searching for survivors, the number-one priority shifted to fumigation, demolition, and bulldozing of rubble, to inter bodies before disease began to spread. Yet, a "survivors lobby" suddenly sprang up, led by Televisa, a private media empire which is wholly committed to "Global 2000" population reduction schemes, and U.S. Ambassador John Gavin. Gavin culminated a series of outrageous and insulting interventions by personally going to one collapsed building and "ordering" Mexican officials there to continue searching for bodies, even after army authorities

had ordered a switch to demolition. Earlier in the week, the ambassador from Hollywood had called a press conference with much fanfare to announce exaggerated death figures of "10-20,000." Gavin also put the cost of repairing the damage at only \$1 billion—a fraction of what it will actually cost.

Due to partial or complete disruption of water supplies to up to 6 million of Mexico City's 18 million residents, the greatest immediate danger is typhoid. But AIDS is a threat as well, given general deterioration in the population's immunological capacities.

The disease threat is intensified by Mexico City's huge rat population, estimated at 17 million, roughly one per inhabitant. Authorities had to clear quake refugees from makeshift shelters in Chapultepec Park five days after the quake. Rats had infested the area. Rats which survived the quake have now begun to radiate out into parts of city not previously infested. Heavy rains in the first days of October further compounded health dangers.

On the very day of the earthquake, one of Mexico's most prominent "in-house" specialists in "futurist" forms of population elimination, Club of Rome disciple Manuel Camacho, was the featured speaker at a select seminar on Mexico in Washington hosted by Kissinger's CSIS. The thesis of Camacho and his planning ministry boss, Salinas de Gortari, under tutelage of the Wharton School of Philadelphia, is that Mexico City must be forcibly decreased in size by simply evicting millions of its residents, and dumping them in miserable, undeveloped rural surroundings—a formula for mass extermination.

A real program of reconstruction

A real reconstruction program would both rebuild in Mexico City and create major new centers of technology and industry capable of being attractive alternative living sites for portions of Mexico City's population. The previous government of José López Portillo began such a project, designed around four new industrial-port cities. These plans were put in mothballs when Volcker/IMF policy collapsed the economy in 1981-82.

It is now estimated that minimal time to get the admittedly inadequate water system back into full functioning is a month; telephones, 3 months; 3 months to demolish damaged buildings, and 10 months to replace demolished housing. In the meantime, the number of dislocated is above 500,000. Only 2,000 of 10,000 required pieces of heavy earthmoving equipment can be marshalled in the entire country, according to the head of the construction workers union.

The Mexican Labor Party (PLM), in a press release issued four days after the earthquake, summed up the position of those fighting for real reconstruction: come clear: the debt can no longer be paid; and the national priority, which is the reconstruction of Mexico City, will be impossible without the reconstruction of the national economy."