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MEXICO, APRIL 1973

REPORT

BY

Senator Mike Mansfield

TO THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ON A

STUDY MISSION TO MEXICO

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, D.C., May 8, 1973.

Hon. J. W. FULBRIGHT,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: There is transmitted herewith a report on a visit I made to Mexico in April, 1973. The trip was undertaken by me, as Co-Chairman of the United States delegation, in order to discuss with leaders of the Mexican Congress final plans for the forthcoming Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference.

Preparations for the reception of the United States delegation for this 13th annual meeting are now complete. The agenda is set. The Mexican leaders have spared no effort to insure a cordial, interesting and useful encounter for the two delegations.

My presence in Mexico during the Easter recess also afforded me an opportunity to make some first-hand observations of the current situation in that country which, in brief, are set down in the attached report. While limited in scope, the report is intended to be for the background use of the United States delegates to the Interparliamentary Conference.

In closing I wish to express my appreciation to officials of the Mexican Government and of the United States Embassy in Mexico for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness, I would also like at this time to restate a view which I have long held. In my judgment, United State-Mexican relations have prospered and can continue to prosper on the basis of the principles of non-intervention, self-determination, mutual respect and mutual forbearance. These principles have been scrupulously adhered to in the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conferences.

Sincerely,

MIKE MANSFIELD,
Chairman, Senate Delegation,
Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference.

[Enclosure.]

MEXICO—1973

I. Introduction

The 13th Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference will be held in Guanajuato beginning May 24. Two facts about Mexico help to establish a framework for the work of the United States delegation. The first is an overriding concern on the part of the Mexican Government to maintain a high rate of economic growth. Within that context, the Mexicans believe that steps can be taken to broaden the distribution of income and to enlarge popular participation in the political process without bringing on a breakdown in stability. In Mexican eyes, essential social change in peace is inextricably linked with continued and rapid economic progress.

The second basic fact about the current situation in Mexico relates to foreign affairs. At the present time, the Mexican Government is engaged in a dynamic expansion of its international role. While this expansion derives from various impulses, it is closely linked with the needs of economic development.

These two facts form the most vivid impressions with which I returned from Mexico. They are, in my judgment, very relevant to the forthcoming Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference.

II. The Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference

It will be recalled that these interparliamentary conferences are provided for by law in both countries.[1] They have convened annually since 1961, with the meetings in Mexico taking place in odd-numbered years and those in the United States in even-numbered years. The meetings have been a significant factor in maintaining a general atmosphere of cordiality and understanding in Mexican-United States relations during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. They have also made a direct contribution to the settlement of specific problems between the two countries. There is little doubt, for example, that the Interparliamentary discussions of the Chamizal dispute laid the basis for subsequent resolution of that difficulty in the treaty negotiated in 1963. Much the same parliamentary paving of the way preceded the treaty of 1970 which involved other boundary rectifications. The issues in these two instances were not only brought into focus for the executive branches by the parliamentary meetings but, in addition, both treaties were subjected, as a result, to minimal opposition during the ratification process.

It is inherent in the United States and the Mexican constitutional structures that the Interparliamentary Conference can neither nego-

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[1] The United States provision is Public Law 86–420, April 9, 1960, wherein the purpose is described as "discussion of common problems in the interests of relations between the United States and Mexico."

tiate binding solutions nor establish binational policies. Those are functions of the executive branches and, on that score, there have been no pretensions among the parliamentary delegates. In fact, it is a longstanding rule of the meetings that no votes will be taken and no resolutions will be passed.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the executive branches in both Mexico and the United States very often operate in matters of interest to the two countries on the basis of granted authority or other legislative directive. What each delegate learns from the formal discussions and other contacts at these Conferences filters into the legislative process. In that fashion, the work of the Conference is reflected in the official relationships between the two countries.

III. Issues of the Interparliamentary Conference

Over the years, most of the discussion at the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conferences has centered on very important "bread and butter" issues. Considered repeatedly, have been problems of trade and private investment, the drug traffic, and migratory labor and various difficulties affecting areas adjacent to the international boundary on both sides.

Salinity of the Colorado River

In the latter category, the most important issue from the Mexican point of view has been the salinity of the Colorado River. Under the Mexican Water Treaty of 1944, the United States is obligated to furnish to Mexico annually 1,500,000 acre-feet of water from the Colorado River. This water is essential for the irrigation of 400,000 acres in the Mexicali Valley of Lower California. For many years the water has been arriving in Mexico in such a saline condition from prior usage in irrigation in the United States as to impair its usefulness to Mexican farmers. This situation has been the subject of repeated Mexican complaints and has been discussed time and again at the Interparliamentary Conferences. President Nixon and President Echeverria also considered the matter at a meeting last year.

There have been many expressions of understanding but still, no satisfactory solution has been found. Mexican farms remain adversely affected by the salinity of the water. So serious is the problem that there have been indications from time to time that Mexico might bring the issue to the International Court. One would hope that that point would not be reached, but, in my opinion, the United States does have a treaty obligation in the situation.

Joint Nuclear Project on Desalinization of Sea Water

Important as is the Colorado's salinity, in a more fundamental sense, the problem is a much larger one. There is an enormous and growing demand for water on both sides of the border, not only from this one river but from whatever source it can be obtained. The time is fast approaching when the lack of water will halt growth both in the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Not only is

there a need to deal with the problem of the Colorado's salinity, there is also an urgency in devising new sources of usable water on both sides of the border.

As long ago as 1965, the question of the growing overall water shortage was discussed at the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference. At that time, I advanced a proposal for a joint project mutually financed. It was then recommended that consideration be given by the executive branches to setting up a joint Mexican-United States nuclear power facility at the governmental level, on the Gulf of California for the desalting of sea water. Preliminary studies have been made by the executive branches but that is all. The matter should and will be considered again at the coming Conference in an effort to determine whether it is possible to move ahead on this highly constructive concept.

TRADE QUESTIONS

Trade questions, as considered in these parliamentary meetings, have traditionally been pressed from the Mexican side in terms of preference and the removal of U.S. tariff and nontariff barriers to a long list of specific agricultural products—tomatoes, strawberries, onions, etc. Such commodities are grown in quantity and in excellent quality in Mexico. In this year of agricultural shortages and high food prices, it may be that these questions will take on a somewhat different perspective and a greater mutuality of interest than has seemed to be the case in the past. The other side of the coin are protectionist trade policies which act to exclude U.S. manufacturers from Mexico.

MIGRATIONS ACROSS THE BORDER

The movement of people across the Mexican-United States border gives rise to still other questions which are likely to confront the Conference. This movement is not a one-way street. It involves a great number of Mexicans who come into the United States for work, often illegally. It involves hundreds of thousands of travelers who journey to Mexico for pleasure and education and tens of thousands of U.S. citizens who have taken up more or less permanent residence inside Mexico.

DRUGS

Mexican authorities have become increasingly concerned over the abuse of drugs in Mexico, and United States-Mexican cooperation in combating the drug traffic has steadily improved. This is true both as to movement of drugs across the border and as to search-and-destroy missions directed against illicit drugs in Mexico. Agents of the U.S. Customs Service, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and other law enforcement agencies have close cooperative working relationships with their Mexican counterparts. Given the terrain of the border areas in both countries, it would be idle to suppose that the traffic in drugs—or in other contraband, for that matter—can ever be entirely eliminated, but the important fact is that authorities of both countries are working together more closely than ever before to reduce it to manageable proportions and that they are making progress toward this mutual goal.

IV. Domestic Pressures in Mexico

Mexican sensitivities with respect to such questions as are discussed above are better understood in the light of current economic, social, and political conditions in Mexico. In the generation since World War II, Mexico's economy has consistently outperformed others in Latin America. Concurrent with this economic growth, however, Mexico's population has doubled, from 26 million to more than 50 million—and of these 50 million, roughly three-fifths are less than 25 years old. As in most other nations, Mexico has to run faster just to keep up with the requirements of a growing population. Unused arable land in Mexico is almost exhausted, and new land can be brought into production only through increasingly expensive irrigation and reclamation works. These two factors have greatly increased population pressure in the countryside which, in turn, has accelerated the long-term rural-to-urban migration.

The ingredient for social discontent are invariably present in circumstances of this kind. Mexico has had its share of militant student movements and political disturbances. There is, as here and in other countries, an insistence especially among the young and the poor for a wider sharing of the fruits of economic development as well as for a more accessible political system.

On the whole, the responsiveness to political restlessness on the part of Mexican leadership, with its heritage of a revolutionary tradition, has been recognized and the Government has moved to deal with these pressures within the framework of Mexico's unique political system. Nevertheless, the sources of discontent are deep and longstanding and, as noted, a continuous economic expansion accompanied by greater social justice, is seen by the Mexican Government as the essential factor in dealing with them. These realities underlie the urgency with which Mexican parliamentarians tend to press such demands as more export markets in the United States and protection of the farms of the Mexicali Valley against the salinity of the Colorado's water.

V. Developments in Mexican Foreign Relations

A wider view of world affairs has been taken by Mexican governments, at least since the Presidency of Lopez-Mateos (1958–64). In the decade of the 1960's Mexico moved to strengthen its relations with the countries of Central America. It has played a constructive role in the United Nations Disarmament Committee and was the principal force behind the treaty establishing a nuclear free zone in Latin America, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, after the site where it was signed in 1967.

Cuba and the OAS

Mexico maintains diplomatic and other ties with Cuba and, of course, is a member of the Organization of American States. While not on the agenda, it seems to me that the questions of hemispheric relations with Cuba as well as an examination of the relevance of the role of the Organization of the American States in its present form are pertinent subjects for preliminary and informal discussion at the coming Conference. From the point of view of the United States, we need to know more about the nature of the current Mexican experi-

ence in dealing with Cuba and of Mexican views with regard to the future of the OAS. It should not be overlooked that the existence of contact between Cuba and Mexico was a significant factor in bringing about the safe release of the kidnaped U.S. consul general, Terrence G. Leonhardy, a most difficult achievement which the Mexican Government engineered in a most admirable fashion. To be noted further is the fact that since an understanding was reached between the United States and Cuba three months ago, there have been no planes hijacked in this country.

President Echeverria has thrust Mexico prominently onto a world stage which extends far beyond the Western Hemisphere. At the time of my return from Mexico, he was also just returning to great acclaim from a 4-week, 25,000-mile trip around the world. In the course of that voyage, he visited six countries—Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China. He persuaded the Chinese to consider signing Protocol II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, by which nuclear powers agree to respect the Latin American Nuclear Free Zone. This was a notable and extraordinary achievement. Moreover, an economic agreement was apparently worked out between the People's Republic of China and Mexico for cooperation in the manufacture of light trucks, with parts being manufactured in Mexico to be shipped to China in Chinese ships for incorporation into Chinese-produced truck bodies.

MEXICO AND THE "THIRD WORLD"

Mexico has emerged as a leader and spokesman of the "Third World." In this connection, President Echeverria has been untiring in seeking support for a Charter of the Economic Duties and Rights of States, which he proposed in Santiago in April, 1972. The Charter would include the following points:

Free disposition of natural resources.

Total respect for the right of every people to adopt the economic structure which suits them best and to impose on private property the modalities dictated by the public interest.

Renunciation of the employment of economic pressure to reduce the political sovereignty of states.

Subjection of foreign capital to the laws of the country where it is invested.

Explicit prohibition of transnational corporations from intervening in the internal affairs of nations.

Abolition of commercial practices which discriminate against the exports of nonindustrialized countries.

Economic advantages proportionate to levels of development.

Agreements which guarantee a fair price and stability for basic commodities.

Extensive and adequate transfer of technological and scientific advances more cheaply and rapidly to underdeveloped countries.

Greater resources for financing development, at long terms, low interest, and without strings.

At last year's Interparliamentary Conference, the Mexican delegation pressed for endorsement of this Charter by the United States. The question is again on the agenda. Some of the points are subject to

varying interpretations and it will be helpful to have an elaboration during the Conference. No doubt, members of the U.S. delegation will hold differing views on the proposals. For my part, President Echeverria's initiative seems to me to be sound in principle.

In any event, the proposed Charter as well as President Echeverria's recent trip abroad are reflections of Mexico's expanding international role. They represent a trend of diversification in Mexico's lines of international contact which heretofore, especially in trade, have run heavily north to the United States and still do. It seems to me that diversification is not only inevitable in the contemporary world but eminently desirable both from the point of view of Mexico and the United States.

VI. The Changing Mexican South

From Mexico City to Oaxaca to Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz, Tuxtla Gutierrez, and San Cristobal de las Casas in the southern-most state of Chiapas is more than a journey of 700 miles. It is a route which traverses centuries and multiple cultures. After discussions in Mexico City relative to the coming Conference, I travelled this route by plane and car, from the cosmopolitan metropolis of Mexico City through the vestiges of Zapotec and Mixtec civilizations in the parched countryside of Oaxaca; to Tehuantepec, where a vast regional development program contemplates the investment of the equivalent of U.S. $160 million and where there is already a first-rate, modern port complex at Salina Cruz, with the biggest drydock between Panama and California; to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the growing capital of Chiapas state surrounded by mountains overhung with smoke from the centuries-old practice of burning high mountain fields in preparation for planting; to San Cristobal de las Casas, set high in the mountains, in the midst of traditional Indian communities where Spanish is still a foreign tongue.

The changing Mexican south and particularly the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is indicative of what is taking place in the more remote parts of Mexico. From time to time in the past, consideration has been given to construction of a canal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, a distance of approximately 138 miles as part of an integrated development plan. There is already in existence a transisthmiam railroad which transports oil by tank car from a refinery on the gulf coast to the port of Salina Cruz on the Pacific.

The region is being brought into the mainstream of Mexican life by road extensions and by various policies of the Mexican Government such as tax concessions and the like which are designed to encourage industry to locate away from the urban centers of Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. It is noteworthy that one industrial plant connected with Mexican economic agreement with the People's Republic of China previously mentioned, is expected to be located near the town of Puerto Madero in the southern state of Chiapas.

VII. Concluding Comments

This report reflects some of the main considerations, as I see them, which underlie the issues that the Mexican delegates will bring to the

table of the 13th Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference. On the part of the United States, we will have, in turn, our own concerns, what with the parlous condition of the dollar and our own economic and political problems at home, to mention only a few.

While the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conferences have provided useful forums for the discussion of specific bilateral issues between the two countries, it seems to me, that there is a danger in such discussions of devoting so much attention to specific irritants that larger questions are lost to view. This is not to say that specific problems ought not to be faced in timely fashion. However, it is also desirable to be aware of the larger forces which are moving beneath the specific issues. Indeed, it is essential if the latter are to be considered within a framework of mutual understanding and accommodation.

Geographic proximity, if nothing else, compels a close relationship between Mexico and the United States. It continues to be a fact that Mexican fortunes are tied closely to those of the United States. The United States remains Mexico's biggest trading partner and Mexico is high on our list. The value of the peso is linked to that of the dollar. When there is inflation in the United States, price stability becomes harder to maintain in Mexico.

We tend to take for granted the fact that our southern border of 2,000 miles is undefended. Yet, consider the immense savings which that consideration represents in defense expenditures for the United States and that is only one of its blessings. A little imagination as to what might be on the other side of that border is sufficient to underscore the importance of preserving and deepening a relationship of comity and warmth with the nation to the south. While the United States is important to Mexico in ways which are direct and highly visible, Mexico is no less important to the United States, in ways which are sometimes overlooked. To reiterate, Mexican-United States relations have prospered and can continue to prosper on the basis of the principles of nonintervention, mutual respect, self-determination, mutual forbearance, and mutual understanding.

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