

# Portillo's State Of The Union Address A Rebuff To Right Wing And Carter

Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo delivered his first state of the union address Sept. 1. In a country like Mexico, where the president wields extraordinary power, the president's annual September address to the nation is keenly awaited as a definitive statement of presidential policy. This year, since Mexico's conservative forces had challenged Lopez's authority, the expectation was more intense than usual.

## MEXICO

The right-wing forces of the country, supported by U.S. interests anxious to regain the unquestioned preeminence they exercised before the term of Lopez's predecessor, Luis Echeverria, had unleashed a psychological warfare campaign to convince Lopez that he was not "el que manda" — the real leader of the country. That leader, these right-wing forces alleged, was still Luis Echeverria; and for Lopez to prove otherwise, he would have to disassociate himself completely from Echeverria's collaborators still in public life and from Echeverria's nationalist policies.

Lopez's speech was a bath of cold water for the right-wing rumor-mongers. The President avowed his own "unshared" power and sole, final responsibility for decisions, and lashed out directly at the "pontificating politologists of sidewalks and cafes" who were circulating rumors of supposed Echeverria control.

Lopez then went further: those business interests that have made highly publicized promises of investments and production must come through, he said. "May they profit with Mexico and not at the cost of Mexico." In harsh terms, Lopez warned that this is the only way the people will know that the private interests "have not abandoned (Mexico) nor betrayed it."

### *Hits Carter's Human Rights*

Lopez was no kinder to the Carter Administration, in particular to Carter's recently announced plan to cut off employment for undocumented workers, the so-called illegals, from Mexico. Certain Mexican businessmen have "massively withdrawn money from Mexico" to a country "where they still admit capital but no longer

workers," Lopez caustically noted. "The possible violation of migratory laws does not sanction the counterright of infringement of labor laws and even less of human rights," Lopez said. The President then reiterated his insistence that the illegals "are not delinquents" and must not be viewed as a police problem. In the television coverage of the speech the stations then flashed on scenes of brutal mistreatment of Mexican workers rounded up for deportation in the United States.

In his speech Lopez Portillo also refused to endorse the push for labor-intensive rural work camps, the main component of Carter's recommendations for domestic Mexican measures against unemployment. As can be seen in the following excerpts, Lopez instead reaffirmed that the shift from rural to urban concentrations is "irreversible" and that the country must deal with surplus labor in the rural regions by creating more jobs in industry and the service sectors.

The Mexican president was weakest on economic strategy. Although he insisted that it would be "treachery" to "reduce demand when it corresponds to necessities for survival," he admitted nonetheless that the economy would grow by less than 3 percent this year, a per capita decline of living standards.

Nothing in his speech comprised the kind of full economic program that could turn around the present depression of the Mexican economy, which now operates under strict International Monetary Fund restrictions. This leaves his government prey to the kind of systematic economic sabotage which Lopez labeled as the "destabilization of society."

### *Full Support*

In the days since his state of the union address, President Lopez has received full support from numerous sectors in the Mexican political scene. The Armed Forces held a breakfast in the president's honor Sept. 2 where Defense Minister General Felix Galvan pledged full military backing to the constitution and to the President as commander in chief. The teachers' union held a 400,000-person nationwide mobilization supporting Lopez Sept. 6, and the major peasant and labor organizations have also endorsed the President's address.

## Portillo Speech Excerpts

*The following are excerpts from the state of the union address of Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo, Sept. 1, 1977:*

"A little more than four decades ago, Mexico ceased being a country of the caudillo (boss) and became a nation of institutions. One of them is the Presidency of the Republic. It is the people and only the people who grant the supreme mandate. The people assigned me the high honor and highest responsibility that I carry. It would defraud the people if I did not exercise it with all that I am and can be, without boasting or pride.

"My only commitment is to the people of Mexico.

"As President I respond to the sense of the Nation and listen to the opinions of my collaborators and also of some who are opponents of the government. More, I often promote these opinions. But as chief of the Federal Executive I cannot accept pressure. In the questions of my area of competence only I have decided, decide, and will decide. If there have been correct judgments, that is my commitment; if errors, my responsibility.

"I give a report on my exclusive and indivisible responsibility, because this is the way the political talent of the people of Mexico has wished the executive power to be exercised. Not that it be shared, nor that it be perpetuated by factions. At this moment of the present, as in the past, there are no emissaries but those of the future...

### Criticism of Carter's Policy On "Illegals"

"Economic growth will probably not reach 3 percent and for the second consecutive year, will be less than the growth of the population. The result is recession and in the end more unemployment, which can worsen as a result of policies against our braceros. Let us be duly prepared for it...

"We hope that within our nation Mexicans can achieve their maximum personal and social fulfillment. Nevertheless various thousands of Mexicans find it attractive to cross our northern borders, without requisite documentation, in search of wider horizons. They reflect in part the effect of our unemployment. I reiterate that they are not delinquents; that the possible violation of immigration laws does not generate counterright of infringing labor laws and even less human rights. It follows that we hope that the measures taken against them are not of a police nature, but rather of understanding and good ways to resolve this common problem between the affected parties, (a problem) inscribed in a very old relation of interchange which is unfavorable to us. Correcting it would remedy many ills. We have put all our efforts into treating the causes and tempering the

effects of the problem. We affirm once again that we do not want to export people, but products...

### Defense Of Living Standards

"The Alliance for Production is not a campaign slogan nor a temporary expedient to deal with an emergency. Faced with inflation, either we produce to increase supply, or necessarily, and what is worse, intentionally, we punish demand. In a country with unemployment and without unemployment insurance it is treachery to reduce demand when the demand corresponds to necessities for survival. We must intervene into production. There are, of course, those who viscerally combat production and productivity. If they do so in good faith, it is because they think it hides injustice. They do it in bad faith if they manipulate the issue to destabilize the society.

### No To Labor Intensive Rural Employment Programs

"We must understand that the demand for work in the rural areas cannot be resolved simply with agricultural activity. The modern destiny of labor is increasingly oriented to industrial activities and, above all, services. The change in qualitative structure of our population, from the rural economy to the urban, is irreversible. It has simply fallen to us to live in the midst of the whirlwind, when the population multiplies, the rural areas export hands, and the cities cannot yet absorb them due to the speed of the arrivals...

"It is from this that we insist that the complete solution of the agrarian problem is not in the countryside but in the re-ordering of our economy.

"Clearly this does not free us from the responsibility of carrying out agrarian reforms to its furthest extent...

"In a democratic country in which the liberty to choose one's place to live is a fundamental right, we must correct and foresee the growth of great human conglomerates, without sacrificing that liberty..."

"I inform you that in the current (congressional) session I will present a proposal for the reform of Article 123 of our fundamental law (Constitution), so that the right of workers to training and skills acquires the constitutional status and the character of a social guarantee..."

### On International Affairs

"Our delegation labored hard, in the Conference on Economic Cooperation, the North-South dialogue, for substantial advances in the application of a new socio-economic world order, of which Mexico has been and always will be a champion. The lack of coordinated action and the scant progress achieved, which we lament, show that we still face an arduous and prolonged task ahead of us..."