

Finally, Egyptian President Sadat in an Aug. 23 speech flatly rejected Begin's proposed "partial permanent peace" and said: "I shall work for an overall peace based on justice, and there is absolutely no room there for partial solutions or separate settlements or a third disengagement agreement."

—Mary Jane Coates

## Chicago Tribune: Lebanese Rightist Seeks Begin's Help

*The following are excerpts of an account of the Israeli cabinet's meeting with Camille Chamoun. The story was published Aug. 24 in the Chicago Tribune and filed from Tel Aviv by Jonathan Broder.*

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his top ministers met in secret early Wednesday with Lebanese Phalangist leader Camille Chamoun in Jerusalem to discuss an urgent appeal for Israeli assistance to beleaguered Christians in Beirut, a high government source told the Tribune Wednesday.

The source said Chamoun, one of two Israeli-backed Phalangist leaders in Lebanon, had requested the crucial meeting and was flown Tuesday by helicopter from the Christian stronghold of Jounieh, north of Beirut, to an Israeli gunboat off the Lebanese coast.

The gunboat brought Chamoun to Israel, the source said, where another helicopter brought him to Begin's official Jerusalem residence after midnight.

Chamoun told Begin, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and Chief of

Staff Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan that Syrian peace keeping forces in Lebanon were planning a decisive attack against Christians in Beirut in the near future, the source said.

The leader of the right-wing Phalangists apparently asked the Israelis not to abandon their Christian Lebanese allies.

But with the Camp David Middle East summit only two weeks away, Begin told Chamoun that Israel had to maintain a low profile in the interest of a comprehensive peace settlement. The source added that Begin advised Chamoun to "hold on" until the Camp David talks had started Sept. 5.

The Syrians began an offensive against the Christians in Lebanon two months ago to bring the Phalangist militias under Syria's peacekeeping authority. The Christians, backed by Israel, have resisted the Syrians in the Lebanese capital and in the south, where Christian villagers are ruling themselves independently of Beirut.

Israel sent warplanes over Beirut Tuesday in an apparent reminder to the Syrians of its support for the Phalangists.

The meeting at Begin's home lasted more than three hours. Then the ministers and the chief of staff left and declined comment to newsmen.

At the same time, a car with curtains tightly drawn across its windows sped off from a side entrance to the Prime Minister's house.

A government spokesman confirmed a late night session between Begin, his ministers, and Eitan, but denied knowledge of Chamoun's attendance.

In the past, Israeli leaders have expressed concern that the Lebanese Christian community in Beirut will be annihilated if Syrian peacekeeping forces renew their shelling.

# Mexico Expropriates Latifundios

*Taking on the enemies of oil and nuclear development*

With less than two weeks to go before his second State of the Union address, Mexican President José Lopez Portillo has given a preview of what his strategy for the coming year will be. Breaking the traditional government silence which precedes the presidential State of the Union address, Lopez Portillo issued a decree ordering the expropriation of a 12,000-acre latifundio owned by the powerful Santos family.

While the actual amount of land involved is not great, the expropriation represents a declaration of war by Lopez Portillo's government against the latifundists and their allies in banking, business, and political layers. Traditionally the latifundists have

been at the center of the oligarchic network, and Santos, a former governor of San Luis Potosi, is known throughout Mexico as *the* leading latifundist. A private army of 700 men protects his property, and since 1940 several Mexican Presidents who have threatened to expropriate his latifundios have backed off rather than risk a bloody and potentially explosive confrontation.

Moreover, since the action against Santos, the government has followed through with further, politically targeted expropriations. On Aug. 22 the Agrarian Reform Ministry announced the expropriation of land owned by Robles Martinez, a

close political ally of monetarist Mexico City Mayor Carlos Hank Gonzalez, and since then Agrarian Reform Minister Toledo Corro has reported that the government is looking into charges that former president Miguel Aleman, the titular head of the Mexican oligarchy with extensive ties to the Black Guelph networks in Europe, owns latifundios.

#### *Support for Development*

At stake in the fight against the latifundists is the implementation of the government's ambitious economic development policies. Since taking office less than two years ago President Lopez Portillo has been able to consolidate a strong industrialization program based on the rapid exploitation of Mexico's vast oil resources. Recently the government has also begun to coordinate this program with the emergence of international agreements for the development of the Third World through transfers of advanced technology.

But thus far the government had only tentatively put forth proposals for dealing with the decades-old problem in the countryside by taking forward a progressive land reform policy based on mechanization, large capital inputs and the establishment of agro-industrial centers. The expropriations this past week are the first move towards implementing that program.

Significantly this offensive against the latifundists has received the full support of the Mexican population. While only two weeks ago the National Congress of the ruling PRI party concluded with division between the peasant, worker, and popular "sectors" of the party, today all attention has been refocused on the tasks of development ahead, with support from all the major sectors for the government's development strategy.

The overwhelming support for the government has forced the oligarchic circles around the local representatives of the European Black Guelph monarchy to respond in a much more subdued manner than is customary. The head of the National Employers Confederation, Clouthier, simply declined to comment "until after the State of the Union address." The ultraright daily *El Heraldo* responded more hysterically. On the day after the first expropriation *Heraldo* ran four editorials demanding "an end to demagoguery" and threatening that if the government continues with this course "national production will be in jeopardy," because the peasants are "too ignorant" to run the productive units on their own.

This was the same threat that was wielded against former President Luis Echeverria in 1976 when he expropriated over one million acres of land in the northwestern state of Sonora. While Echeverria's

### "Beginning of the End of Latifundios"

*These quotes are drawn from the statement issued by Mexican Agrarian Reform Minister Antonio Toledo Corro announcing the expropriation of the Santos latifundio on Aug. 18, as reported by the Mexico City press:*

President Lopez Portillo has said that "Nothing and nobody will stop the advance of the Agrarian Reform," and on this historic date we begin to put into action the presidential resolution affecting the Santos ranch. This legal action will be followed by many others.

When reporters arrived at the airport for the tour with the Agrarian Reform Minister Toledo Corro he indicated to us that the tour was to "witness the beginning of the end of latifundios. You will witness part of Mexico's agrarian history."

"At the latifundio," Toledo Corro added, "you will find that the army has already moved in to provide guarantees for the peasants who, as we well know, have been repressed there in the past. In this way you will see what we have been saying become a reality; under orders from the President

of the Republic we are going to distribute all the lands which are outside the law."

*On the following day the daily El Universal reported in detail on the President's orders for providing the necessary capital inputs for the expropriated land:*

President Lopez Portillo yesterday sent instructions to the Agrarian Reform Ministry to insure that the necessary measures are taken to provide economic and social infrastructure to the peasants who will receive the 12,000 acres expropriated from Santos. Yesterday, while a credit program was being put together for the 133 families who received the land, the various government agencies which will intervene with support programs for the new population center began to coordinate their efforts.

As for credits, the presidential resolution calls on the official banking system to provide the necessary capital, so that the peasants can proceed to clear the land, mechanize their activities and use improved seed.

extensive land expropriation was a defensive move in the face of a full-fledged "economic warfare" against his government, it clearly helped pave the way for the agrarian reform policy which Lopez Portillo has now started.

Significantly the course of the 1976 expropriations — like those under President Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s — contradicts the latifundists' argument that "production will collapse" after expropriations. The Sonora collective farms set up in 1976, their first year of operation, superseded previous production levels.

President Lopez Portillo has emphasized the same point by stating that the issue involved in agrarian reform is not "land tenure" but "the need to increase production." There is clearly a production-oriented focus in the recent actions. On the day after the decree, Agrarian Reform Minister Toledo Corro announced that Lopez Portillo ordered the peasants receiving the land be supplied with the necessary equipment and credits to start production immediately.

The weapon Lopez Portillo is using to implement this development policy is the law. The Mexican Constitution of 1917 clearly stipulates limitations on the amount of land that can be owned, a measure aimed at breaking up the large, unproductive "haciendas" which have existed since the Spanish conquest and were used to loot the country's natural resources and population under a system of virtual slavery. But more important, Article 27 of the Constitution outlines the government's responsibility to insure that all the country's natural resources are subject to the country's development needs as a whole.

This concept of "*utilidad publica*" (eminent domain), combined with the other key stipulation in Article 3 that the government must insure the "constant improvement" of the population's standard of living, are the moving force behind the government's current development policies, particularly as reflected in the energy development program.

#### *No to Nuclear Energy*

For that reason it was not surprising that the monetarist response to the expropriations did not limit itself to agrarian reform. In fact, two days after the expropriation of the Santos latifundio, when all attention was focused on this issue, the daily *Novedades*, controlled by former President Miguel Aleman, started a campaign against nuclear energy. The purpose of the series of articles, interviews, and editorials in *Novedades* is to prevent the Mexican government from adopting the only type of energy policy — nuclear — which could insure that the country can keep moving ahead with rapid industrialization.

— Pablo Silva

## Support for Mexico's Expropriation Action

*The government's expropriation met with immediate support from peasant and labor organizations, progressive parties, and the press. Following are statements of support:*

**Statement issued on Aug. 19, the day of the expropriation, by the largest peasant confederation in Mexico, the CNC:**

The agrarian reform is fully guaranteed under your leadership, Mr. President. The resolution taken by you today is the result of your constant preoccupation and firm decision to ... eliminate all injustices. It has the full and unanimous support of all peasants of Mexico.

**Statement made the same day by Congressman Ortiz Mendoza, member of the progovernment Popular Socialist Party (PPS):**

The expropriation of the latifundios must be done in a planned way so as not to break up the structures set up for production. The agrarian reform would take a great step forward if these latifundios would be converted into agroindustrial complexes. Politically the expropriation has a great significance for it occurs less than 15 days before the State of the Union address and it reflects the outlook of the President.

**Editorial in the Mexico City daily El Sol on Aug. 20:**

This action reflects the government's firmness in resolving one of the ancestral national problems.... If yesterday, the government was able to expropriate land belonging to the "untouchable" it will no longer be possible for other latifundios to remain much longer. Nueva Ahuacatitla (the new town established on the former latifundio) must become not only a symbol of the victory of the law but also an example of collective farming, of joint effort, by those 133 families, to produce better and more.

**Statement by Arturo Romo, spokesman for the largest trade union in Mexico, the CTM, on Aug. 20:**

To expropriate a latifundio also represents a blow to the financial and business monopoly. The expropriation of the Santos latifundio is the first time in a long time that the interests of a political class which has contributed to the undermining of the principles of the Mexican revolution are affected.