

López Portillo's Plan for Food Self-Sufficiency

Lyndon LaRouche's friend, José López Portillo, during his 1976-82 Presidency, proposed a Mexican Food System (or SAM, for its Spanish acronym) which detailed how Mexico must, and could, attain food self-sufficiency and dramatically improve the level of food consumption by Mexico's poor.

In a March 1, 1980 memo drafted by the Office of Advisers of the President, an ambitious, can-do physical-economic proposal is detailed, which, in its prescience, reads as if it had been written yesterday. Like most of López Portillo's actions—including his October 1982 United Nations speech, and his break earlier that year with the policies of the IMF that were strangling Mexico—it serves as a useful aide memoire for those who wish to seriously address the current systemic breakdown crisis, including the food catastrophe.

The 1980 memo begins with a "Strategic Outlook," which says that Mexico should take advantage of its recent giant oil discoveries, and move to achieve "a rapid increase in the production of basic food, and the multiple means of supporting the consumption of the impoverished majorities of Mexico.... We propose an ambitious scheme of production of basic foods, aiming at self-sufficiency."

The memo continues: "The viability of Mexico seems to increasingly assert itself, in a world in crisis where grave confrontations are being prepared.... We have a favorable energy situation which allows us to eliminate restrictions to development and financial sovereignty.... Our government has the perhaps unrepeatable and unique possibility of satisfying, without unnecessary concessions, our great potential for growth, broadening the productive base and the internal market, thereby establishing the solid bases of sovereignty and of an efficient and powerful economy...."

"We now have the elements needed to grow without the restraints of foreign strangulation and financial servitude.... Only by the route of massively producing and distributing basic foods, can the country organize itself to save its agriculture.

"A policy of self-sufficiency in basic foods, above all cereals and oilseeds, is necessary.... We believe that the 'wage commodity' par excellence, food, cannot be subjected to the whims of foreign supply.... We also see that, in this case, the premises of 'comparative advantage'... must be subordinated to the need to take a step towards a real and efficient potential of producing basic grains...."

"In point of fact, five or six firms, mostly American, control nearly 85% of the world market in grains...."

The document's strategic overview concludes by decrying "the real deterioration observed in the nutrition of more than half of the planet's inhabitants over the last decade, as the FAO [UN Food and Agriculture Organization] has noted."