



SPORTING PICTURES

A chorus of boos: De la Madrid and his wife at the Cup

Soccer Sí, de la Madrid No

Soon after Mexico's World Cup game with Belgium ended last week, the crowds began to gather around *El Angel*, the independence monument on the capital's stately Paseo de la Reforma. Someone painted *México Sí, Gringos No* at the base of the sculpture. Vandals broke through steel gates and climbed to the top

balcony, where they waved Mexican flags. By midnight a hard core of 2,000 people remained, and at 1:30 a.m. some 50 police cars arrived to break things up. The crowd reacted by throwing soda, wine and beer bottles at the cops, who fired shots into the air, then waded in with clubs flailing. Photographers were beaten,

their cameras broken. More than five dozen people were arrested and scores injured. Said a visiting Scot: "You could get killed here."

It might have been worse. At least, the home team had won the soccer game.

Fiscal failings: President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado and his government had good reason to hope that the Mexican team would keep on winning, because losses might make the popular mood truly ugly. The crowd in Azteca Stadium booed de la Madrid during the World Cup opening ceremonies—a rare public insult in a country where dissidents keep their opinions to themselves. The crowds in the streets were ruder, chanting scatological insults aimed at de la Madrid and the ruling establishment of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Even wealthy Mexicans in restaurants in the Zona Rosa were restive, shouting "*México, unido, jamás será vencido.*" The chant meant that Mexico, united, will never be defeated; but what Mexicans seemed united against was their own government's fiscal failings. "It is general frustration over a lot of things: inflation, the

illusion that we're in the middle of a difficult situation with no immediate exit," said political scientist **Lorenzo Meyer** of El Colegio de México, a prestigious think tank. "Mexicans have the feeling of a certain humiliation."

The popular mood was reflected in numbers that were watched last week almost as closely as World Cup scores: the declining value of the peso. On Monday the peso stood at 554-564 per U.S. dollar. On Wednesday it dropped below 600 for the first time, and in frantic trading on Friday it fell below 700. Nor did anyone think the devaluation was over. "Now the psychological barrier is 1,000 pesos to the dollar," said the manager of a private exchange house—and some analysts expect the peso to be at that level by year-end. The value of the peso is a barometer of Mexicans' confidence in their government. "If anything worries them," said one Western diplomat, "they start to buy dollars."

Will Mexico default? There was good reason for Mexicans to feel jittery. The government, strapped by falling oil prices, was talking openly about suspending interest payments on

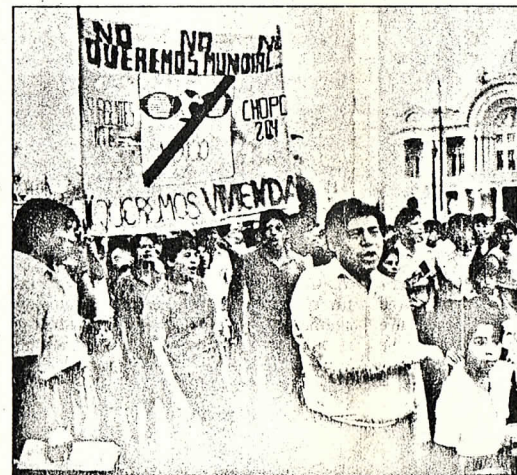
its \$97 billion foreign debt. "It would not be reasonable to use our scarce resources only to cover payments on the foreign debt," Finance Minister **Jesús Silva Herzog** said Thursday. Silva Herzog may have been bluffing. He is currently trying to persuade the International Monetary Fund to lend Mexico some fresh cash without requiring in return that

Mexico swallow some harsh austerity medicine. The private banks to which Mexico owes money have already told Silva Herzog to "go fly a kite" in response to his requests for more loans, according to a banking source in Mexico City. The United States, facing its own budget problems, says it has no money. If the IMF refuses, will Mexico default?

It well might. To reach the IMF's austerity targets, de la Madrid would likely have to impose some politically dangerous measures, selling off inefficient "parastate" enterprises that employ thousands of people and removing the subsidies that keep the consumer's price for everything from transit fares to tortillas far below actual cost. At the moment—with two and a half years left in his single, six-year term—de la Madrid is an unpopular lame duck whose political capital seems largely spent. To muster popular support—or at least forbearance—for such austerity, de la Madrid would likely have to do something spectacular to show the people he is on their side. And the most likely move would be suspending interest payments to the gringo bankers.

Mexicans are already beginning to look anxiously through the PRI ranks in hopes of finding a dynamic successor to de la Madrid. "Moses parted the waters," said **Meyer**, "and we need someone who can do that to restore credibility to government." The front runner at the moment, Energy, Mines and Parastate Industry Minis-

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M. GOLDWATER-NETWORK-JB PICTURES

An ugly mood: Protesters in Mexico City streets

military presence was especially noticeable around Mexico City's cavernous, 114,500-seat Azteca Stadium, where a small convoy of camouflage-green Panhard armored personnel carriers had been deployed.

But the relative tranquillity also seemed to flow from the laid-back attitude adopted by most of the visiting fans. The contingent from Scotland, the birthplace of soccer hooliganism, endeared themselves to the Mexicans by parading around in kilts, sporrans and huge sombreros. And their notorious English brethren, authors of the brutality in Brussels last year, turned out to be more housebroken puppies than Mongol hordes. Before the tournament, Mexican authorities had worried about the potential for violence in Monterrey, where the English team would be playing its first matches, especially after head coach Bobby Robson infuriated locals by criticizing the selection of the high-desert city on the ground that it would be too hot. As it was, the English fans got on famously with their hosts, with each side vying to buy the other drinks in the numerous cantinas. Even

when one English fan was arrested for allegedly hitting a waiter, the townspeople provided him with an attorney free of charge and a television in his jail cell so he wouldn't miss the games.

On the field, however, matters went rather less cozily for the English eleven. A 1-0 loss in their first game to the cautious

Portuguese didn't augur well. Then on Friday night the squad staggered through the 95-degree heat in Monterrey to post a humiliating 0-0 tie against the lightly regarded Moroccans. Though that in itself didn't mean mathematical elimination for England, chances were that the team would be heading for home at the end of this week.



PHOTOS BY JOHN McDERMOTT

Showdown: West German goalie Toni Schumacher lunges to make a save...



... and does, foiling star Uruguayan striker Enzo Francescoli

pushing the ball. Playing for theudent strategy, the fans backed convinced that the spark it performance. Carefully coiffed seems determi performance i he was the lat American socc den he had to b Maradona nev Argentina didi finals. Last we game again coiffed star put tals of the ga match fullback vicious tackle side the penal into the wall dona quickly p headed it to tes was cutting to Maradona ult