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# U.S. seduces and unnerves wary Mexico

By OAKLAND ROSS,  
Globe and Mail Correspondent

MEXICO CITY — With her creamy complexion, her dazzling blue eyes and her wavy, shoulder-length, blonde hair she gazes down upon motorists and pedestrians from billboards throughout Mexico.

In television commercials, she pouts, preens, giggles and winks for the camera, then shakes her fabulous golden tresses.

She appears in a dozen different incarnations, but she is always *la rubia que todos quieren* — the blonde everyone wants — the immensely successful commercial symbol used to market Superior, the best-selling Mexican beer.

If anything symbolizes the seductive, insidious appeal exerted by the United States on Mexicans, it is the images that Mexico uses to sell everything from beer, to brandy, to pantyhose, to vacations by the sea. Almost without exception, the images are not of Mexicans at all, but of *anglosajones* — Anglo-Saxons.

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**A shrine  
of affluence  
lies north  
of Rio Grande**

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was seized upon almost gleefully by Mexicans as offering proof of the decadence of U.S. culture in contrast to the high-minded moral rectitude observed by Mexicans — or, at least, by those Mexicans wealthy enough to concern themselves with such comparisons.

There is usually at least an undercurrent of hostility in Mexicans' attitudes to their northern neighbor. In most of Latin America, for example, the term *gringo* is applied casually to almost any light-skinned foreigner whether American, Canadian or European. While not exactly complimentary, it is not necessarily perjorative, either.

In Mexico, however, the word *gringo* is applied exclusively to citizens of the United States, and it is almost invariably intended as an insult.

There are several theories about the word's derivation, but all date from the 1847 war between Mexico and the United States, when U.S. troops marched into Mexico City itself. One theory suggests that *gringo* is a corruption of "green coats," a reference to the uniforms of the invading U.S. Marines. As used in Mexico, the term almost always suggests invaders.

As in Canada, nationalism in Mexico often seems to be more a reaction against the United States than a spontaneous cele-