

The central figure in *The Children of Sanchez* is the authoritarian, self-centered father, whose absence of affection toward his four oldest children, who tell the story, made the book such a moving, strange tragedy.

As Oscar Lewis described his first impression in October 1956: "The father, Jesus Sanchez, walked in brusquely, carrying a sack of food supplies over his shoulder. He was a short, stocky, energetic man, with Indian features, dressed in blue denim overalls and a straw hat, a cross between a peasant and factory worker." At that time Sanchez had been "food buyer and kitchen manager for almost thirty years" of the "La Gloria restaurant" which "catered to the middle class." He was then "about 48 years old."

Twenty-one years later, on June 1, 1977, I watched a short, stocky, energetic man, with Indian features, blue denim overalls, a straw hat, and a peasant look, approach very brusquely up Mexico City's Tacuba Avenue. Incredibly, he was carrying a sack of food supplies over his shoulder. With considerable excitement and mustering what tourist guidebook Spanish I could, I stopped him and asked, "*Perdon, pero Usted era Jesus Sanchez?*"

Indeed he was.

His real name is Santos Hernandez Rivera. Now, after almost 50 years, he is still food buyer and kitchen manager of the Café de Tacuba, a

famous old restaurant long celebrated as a meeting place of Mexican intellectuals. It is not far from Mexico City's main plaza, or the Zocalo, with its great Cathedral and Presidential Palace. Hernandez lives in the same house in Casa Blanca *vecindad* or slum tenement—"Casa Grande" in the book—in the poor Tepito section, a ten-minute walk away. He invited me to his home for an interview.

Hernandez, who looks incredibly fit and who smiled and laughed frequently during our talk, guessed, "I'm about 70, but I still feel young." His daughter Cristina (Consuelo) is married with two children and lives in New Laredo, Tamaulipas, near the Texas border. Berta (Marta) lives with her husband in Acapulco and has "nine or ten kids—it's cheaper by the dozen." Pedro (Roberto) sells clothes and furniture from his home and occasionally works in an automobile factory "whenever they call him." He is recovering from a broken leg suffered in a car accident three months ago. Luiz (Manuel) also "sells things from his house."

Hernandez said his family originally preferred to be anonymous because "we didn't want people to know our real names as long as we didn't understand how Señor Lewis was going to use those interviews." Now that a film version of *The Children of Sanchez* is due for release in October, the Hernandez family prefers to be identified. Hernandez said Anthony Quinn, who plays Jesus Sanchez in the film, and Hollywood

producer Hall Bartlett came to his house for a meal in April while filming location shots in Mexico City's Tepito slum, La Lagunilla market, and Chapultepec park. He said they assured him that the picture would be "decent" and "an example for other families."

"They promised to pay me and the children some money when the picture comes out," Hernandez said, "I'll take anything they give me. Unless it's just a little. But they told me, they'd show the picture all over the world." He said the author's widow, Mrs. Ruth M. Lewis, visited him in early February and also promised the family some earnings from the film.

In the 14 years since *The Children of Sanchez* was published, Hernandez continued, he and his 4 children together have received only a total of 125,000 pesos, which, even before devaluation, came to only \$1,000, or \$200 apiece. Hernandez also disputed Lewis's claim he did not pay the four Hernandez children for their long tape-recorded autobiographical interviews, mostly done in the study of his Mexico City home. In his introduction to *The Children of Sanchez* in 1963, Lewis wrote (see xx-xxi):

In obtaining the detailed and intimate data of these life stories, I used no secret techniques, no truth drugs, no psychoanalytic couch. . . . The Sanchez family learned to trust and confide in me. . . . I did not follow the common anthropological practice of paying them as informants. . . .

I was struck by the absence of monetary motivation in their relationship with me. Basically, it was their sense of friendship that led them to tell me their life stories. . . .

They have often told me that if their stories would help human beings anywhere, they would feel a sense of accomplishment.

Challenging this, Hernandez said the 4 children received "\$50 to \$100 from time to time." Playwright Vicente Lenero, who adapted the book to the stage in 1972, when it had a successful four-month run in Mexico City, in a separate interview also said Lewis had told him he had paid the Hernandez children for the original interviews and had shared some of the book profits with them. Journalist Joaquin Diez Canedo, who made a study of Lewis's work, "*El editor de Lewis en Mexico*," was also under the impression the Hernandez children were paid. (Contrary to Lewis's remark, few anthropologists do pay their informants. One who did, George Foster, stated frankly in his study of Tzintzuntzan village that he found it became "sometimes necessary to pay a man to devote time to the ethnologist which he would otherwise devote to his customary manner of earning a living.")

Hernandez spoke of Oscar Lewis with admiration, describing him as

"simpatico, very correct, very hard working." He said his family first met Lewis when his daughter Cristina was engaged as his secretary. (Lewis himself said he first met the family in their *vecindad*.) Hernandez said, "I didn't want to tell him my story" but that he had finally agreed to a few interviews when Lewis showed him an agreement "I had signed sixteen years ago." (This may have been in connection with *Five Families*, in which the Sanchezes are first introduced. Sanchez's own story takes up only 28 of *The Children of Sanchez*'s 499 pages and Lewis wrote "it was difficult to gain his confidence.")

Hernandez said he had read "parts" but not the entire book, though as *Los hijos de Sanchez* it was a best seller in Mexico.

"Was it true?"

He grinned. "Five percent. Not even half of it was true."

"What, specifically, was not true?"

"He wrote that Cristina was a prostitute." (This appeared to be a reference to Consuelo's account of being coerced into sexual relations while trying to break into the Mexican film industry.) Hernandez said Roberto's prison history, one of the more sensational parts of the book, was, however, in the main accurate.

Hernandez said he felt Lewis tried to get at the exact truth, but that "the children were too young to know what to say, to know how to answer his questions. They made up whatever came into their minds." (The 4 children ranged in age from 25 to 32 when the book was published, but Lewis had been interviewing them off and on during the previous 7 years.)

Hernandez, of course, has a highly prejudiced viewpoint, as the portrait of Sanchez is not a flattering one. Playwright Lenero, who made both a careful study of the book and Mexico City slum life while working on the stage version, contended "Everything in the book was true." Describing life in Tepito, he broke off to exclaim, "Oof! Terriblement!"

Hernandez had not read the screenplay but said his daughter Cristina had. In March, in an interview with *El Sol de Mexico*, she claimed Italian Screenwriter Cesare Zavattini (who played the role of Elia Kazan in "America, America") had badly distorted the book, especially by adding a scene in which a mother gives birth in front of the entire Sanchez family. Cristina (who like all four children has the last name of Hernandez Ramirez, in the Mexican custom of taking both parents' names) denounced the scene as "against Mexican tradition" and declared "This picture is against the dignity of my family and my country." (In Tepoztlán, Sara Rojas, a friend of the Lewises, told me Mrs. Lewis had told her during her visit in February that the movie would not be like the book.

Cristina has claimed she possesses "promises and agreements made when we originally agreed to help Dr. Lewis write one of the most honest portrayals of lower-class family life ever written." She has said, "I have sufficient documents from Oscar Lewis with me, including arrangements for payment to be made if the book was translated to the screen.



At last—the author (right) finds the real Jesús Sánchez (Santo Hernandez Rivera) on a Mexico City street.

No matter. Oscar Lewis was an honest man, very good, but his promises have been ignored." The family appears anxious to get publicity and Hernandez said *National Geographic* magazine had recently interviewed him for five hours and paid him for it.

Finding Hernandez was not easy. Mrs. Lewis declined to provide his name and address or those of any of Lewis's subjects, though she did give me the name of Sara Rojas, an old friend in Tepoztlán who was never an informant whom she "would need to protect."

Mrs. Rojas told me Sanchez had died of diabetes in Mexico City eight years ago and that she had attended the funeral and met his sons among the mourners. She said his wife had also since died. In May and April three photographs had been published in the Mexico City press of a man identified as the real life Sanchez. In one of these, published in *El Sol de Mexico* April 4, he was named Jose Chavez Trowe, which turned out to be a completely incorrect name.

Mrs. Rojas felt the photographs must be of pretenders trying to cash in on the film. But further questioning of her revealed that the Sanchez she knew—his name was Aurelio Sanchez and his wife's name was Antonia Ferrada—had driven a bus, as had his son, and that he stuttered badly and had suffered from diabetes for some years. It turned out that this couple were the Agustin Gomez and Rosa Hernandez of *Five Families*, who originally had come from Tepoztlán. (See page 71, "His stammer had become worse and he had developed diabetes" in the story of the Gomez family.)

Mrs. Rojas then remembered that Lewis was the godfather of one of the Sanchez-Gomez children and that when *The Children of Sanchez* was published, Antonia Ferrada (Rosa Hernandez) had protested, "*Compadre*, you only came to write bad things about us."

"Oscar said, 'No, I'm writing about someone else,'" Mrs. Rojas went on. "And he brought another man and said, 'This is the Sanchez of the book. He works in a restaurant.'"

We may have simply had trouble with translations, but for a time Mrs. Rojas certainly confused things. Finally, it was playwright Lenero who said that Sanchez could not have died eight years ago as he had attended the play and Lenero had met him and all four Sanchez children. Lenero recalled the true family name had been Hernandez and that at that time, 1972, the father was still working at the Cafe de Tacuba. When I encountered Hernandez outside the restaurant, there was no doubt who it was; it is a tribute to the veracity of Oscar Lewis's portrait that the man's identity was unmistakable.

Does the question of ethics—did Lewis not pay the family as he himself claimed or did he pay them as Hernandez, Lenero, and Cristina claim?—really affect the value of *The Children of Sanchez*?

No, if the book is judged as a work of literary art rather than the kind of pure anthropology that has to stand up to scientific scrutiny. Ethics and literature have seldom been closely allied. Nancy Milford has told us in *Zelda* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) how F. Scott Fitzgerald ruthlessly used passages from his wife's diary and letters, even when she was mentally ill, in *Tender is the Night*. We know that Theodore Dreiser lifted long passages from newspapers without attribution in *An American Tragedy*, that Sinclair Lewis practically did an anthropological study of Sauk Center, Minnesota, in *Main Street*, and that even Leo Tolstoy did not simply base the characters in *War and Peace* upon his family and friends, but drew the most clinically accurate portraits of them. Lewis, in the end, achieved a kind of truth about the human predicament and that, surely, is what counts.

The Film

Can a serious anthropological study of slum life in Mexico City be a box office success? Hollywood is betting it can and is finally filming "The Children of Sanchez" to prove it. Until now the poor two-thirds of the world have been studiously ignored by most commercial filmmakers. Such notable exceptions as "Pather Panchali," "La Strada," and "Zorba the Greek" have mostly been filmed abroad. Luckily the star of the last two, Anthony Quinn, will play the title role in "The Children of Sanchez."

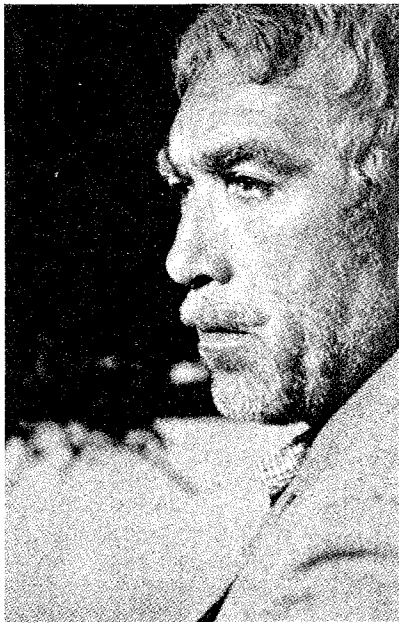
Quinn seems just right for Jesus Sanchez, who was in his 50s at the time of the story. Quinn himself has 10 children, is Mexican, and feels strongly about the survival of the family as an institution. "In all humility," he said, "I don't see anybody else who, at this moment, is better suited to play Sanchez." He said he and his son, Duncan, who will play Roberto in the film, spent a good deal of time in Mexico City slums "trying to imbue ourselves with the feeling of a poor inhabitant of the capital."

Though Quinn's father came from Ireland, he fought with Pancho Villa against General John J. (Black Jack) Pershing's "punitive expedition" to capture Villa, which boomeranged against President Woodrow Wilson though it toughened up the American army for trench warfare in France (the U.S. press found Villa more exciting than the New York Yankees.) Quinn is a native of Chihuahua and his part-Indian mother's name was Oaxaca. "It has bothered me to hear people say that I don't love Mexico," Quinn said. "I have never lost my Mexican spirit."

Though he has made 145 films, some shot in Mexico, Quinn has never worked with the Mexican film industry before. "The Children of Sanchez," due for release in October, was shot at Mexico City's Churubusco Studio, with scenes filmed in the slum district of Tepito, La Lagunilla market, and Chapultepec

park. The almost entirely Mexican cast, who will speak English in the film, includes Katy Jurado, Lupita Ferrer, Helena Rojo, and Lucia Mendez.

Anthony Quinn hopes to make it an "honest and worthy" film and since he knows from his own youth what it means to be poor and a Mexican, it may be the most truthful picture of Mexican slum life we are likely to get. A serious man, Quinn is also the author of four books and feels movies should portray actual life.



Anthony Quinn.

"We need to go back to the family," he said, "because that is the basis of everything. I never go to erotic movies and I didn't even see 'Last Tango in Paris.' But then I'm not offered sexy pictures anyway, on account of my age. Current films lack reality. 'King Kong' and 'Jaws' are tremendous exaggerations. Nowadays, there are enough problems, enough dramas, in life itself."

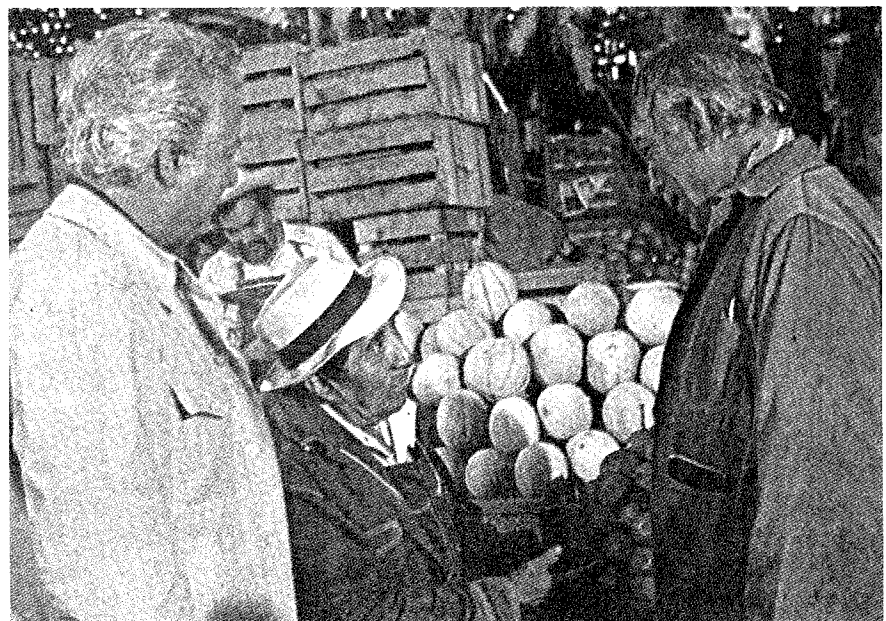
Though Quinn feels movies are "made by a team," he is putting a good deal of himself into his role of Sanchez and is evidently making him a more sympathetic figure than Lewis did. "I hope Italians, French, English, North Americans, and people all over the world will be able to identify themselves with Sanchez," he said. "I hope I'm an honest man and what I'm interested in is humanity." Quinn said he was sorry there would not be a Spanish version of the film, which had turned out to be too costly. "Mexican movies have concerned themselves very little with the country's political and social environment," he said. "I would like to do a film about Pancho Villa, for instance, but it would require complete freedom, with nobody, absolutely nobody, behind my shoulder telling me what I must say."

What may help Quinn most in portraying Sanchez is what he called the

"social theater," i.e., life in the slums, where he got his start. "I suffered a great deal," he said quietly.

Tepoztlán Today

There are handsome villas everywhere, and in the lovely valley below, the vast walled estates of millionaires, trailer camps, and a YMCA recreation park have replaced the old fields of corn and beans. *Time* and an English language daily are sold in the plaza, TV antennas sprout from every rooftop, a new cinema shows Kung Fu and bloody and macabre Mexican shoot-'em-ups. Express buses leave every hour for Mexico City, 77 kilometers and 70 minutes away over a new four-lane superhighway completed in 1965. Some 3,000 bus fares are sold daily to the city of Cuernavaca, 15 miles below on the plains to shoppers and a good many commuters to schools and jobs. Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Nescafe, and ice cold beer are standard fare in the grocery shops. The German colony is the biggest, but there are plenty of rich Mexicans, Americans, Italians, and French, and an artists' colony of Mexican painters and film stars, and even Hollywood invades now and then to shoot a movie, such as "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." On weekdays the plaza and market look dingy and desolate, but



Anthony Quinn and the man identified as the real Jesús Sánchez during the filming of "Los Hijos de Sanchez."

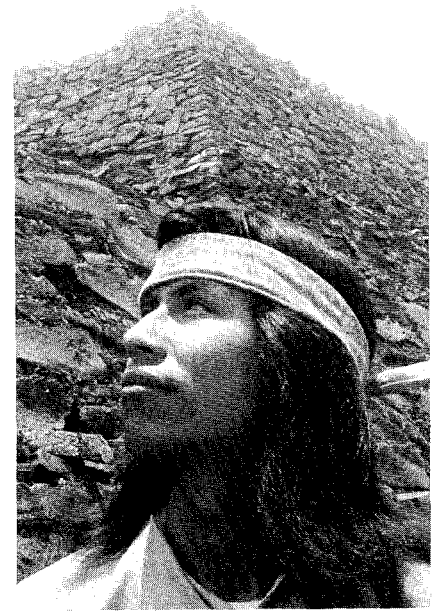
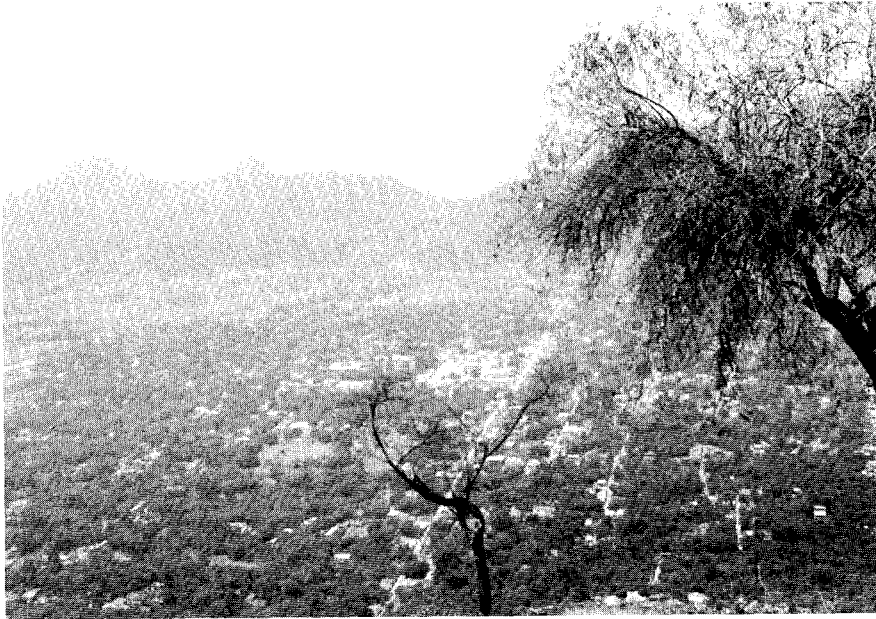
on Saturdays and Sundays thousands of tourists pour in from Mexico City, jamming five hotels and ten restaurants. Real estate values have skyrocketed; land currently sells for 200 to 250 pesos (about \$10) per square yard.

These are prosperous times for Tepoztlán and the Indian peasant village Redfield and Lewis wrote about is no more. Its population, 2,500 in 1926 and 3,500-4,000 in the Lewis books of 1951, 1959, and 1964,

was 9,978 on June 1, 1977, and if one counts the 7 small outlying hamlets now almost indistinguishable from Tepoztlán proper, the *municipio* has 18,623 people, and has become a fair-sized town.

Though a good many Tepoztecos remain part-time cultivators, growing corn, beans, and alfalfa on 2,100 hectares of land from a large *hacienda* 4 miles down the valley turned over to Tepoztlán in 1929 after the Revolution, there has been an enormous shift of peasants into

the middle class: professionals, white-collar employees, skilled workers, artisans, shopkeepers. Today most menial work, from washing dishes in the cafés to peddling souvenirs in the market, is done by immigrants from neighboring Guerrero state. Another measure of prosperity is the dramatic fall in the number of men who temporarily migrate to the United States as agricultural workers. In 1948, there were about 30, in 1957, more than 600; today there are less than a dozen.



Above left: Tepoztlán—a village becomes a town.

Above right: A young Tarascan Indian at an ancient temple of the Tarascan Empire, where human sacrifices were once made.



Below: Tepoztlán market.

This prosperity has been almost entirely fueled by land sales, mostly since Tepoztlán became fashionable among the rich after the superhighway was built and since Mexico City has become so badly polluted by smog. The shift from peasantry into middle class occupations, however, began earlier and also reflects Mexico's remarkable advances in education the past 20 years. Unless the Mexican economy itself goes into protracted decline, there seems no turning back.

And yet you can still feel the years under you in Tepoztlán, as everywhere in Mexico. One can ascend the cliffs that surround the community on three sides to an Aztec stone temple where children were sacrificed to the rain god, Tlaloc, in 1580, by having their hearts cut out and the blood given in offering. There is still a record of how Tepoztlán, along with 24 other towns of pre-Hispanic Huastec province, gave tribute of 46 warriors' costumes with shields to Montezuma's Aztec court. One can see fragments of a heavy wall said to be part of the house of Martin Cortés, the Spanish conqueror's son. And the old men can still relate almost bullet-by-bullet accounts of the fighting that waged back and forth through Tepoztlán between the Zapatista guerrillas and the federal troops during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

Redfield in 1926 described Tepoztlán as it still looks: "It remains hidden in large part until it is actually entered. A density of trees conceals the houses. . . . The great central church on the *plaza* is by far the largest building in Tepoztlán; its great walls, crenelated to serve as battlements, and its two tall bell towers dominate a village that, in the rainy season, escapes into and is lost in foliage." In *Five Families*, Lewis begins,

The ancient highland village of Azteca [Tepoztlán] lay quiet and serene on the mountain slope in the early morning darkness. . . . Spreading from the top of the slope to the broad valley below, eight

barrios, each with its chapel and patron saint, formed little communities within the larger village. A paved road connecting Azteca with the main highway cut across the village and ended abruptly at the plaza. Here were the municipal building, the central church, the mill, a few small shops, and a bare park. Extending up and down the slope the old terraced streets, laboriously constructed of blue-gray volcanic rock, were lined by small, one-story adobe houses with their patios of semitropical plants and trees set behind low stone walls.

Today Tepoztlán looks the same except that almost all the old houses have been rehabilitated or torn down and replaced in the past 10 years. Lewis, in the 1940s, described the streets of Tepoztlán as "uniformly quiet and rustic and stamp Tepoztlán as a rural village." Redfield said of the same streets in 1926 that they were "very still; in them no wheel ever moves." Today the steep cobbled lanes remain the same but cars move over them; on weekends there are even traffic jams. At the same time a good many Tepoztecs ride horseback, apparently since what village fields remain are so far away. (Lewis described the villagers walking two to three hours each way as late as the 1960s.)

Neither Redfield nor Lewis quite prepares you for the spectacular scenic beauty of Tepoztlán's setting. Nestled into a sloping alluvial valley, the settlement of houses is surrounded by very sheer cliffs and fantastic and massive rock outcroppings. These are partly forested with pine, fir, oak, and madrona, and with breathtaking vistas of stone cliffs. Mist and mossy green in every direction, it looks very much like the Bavarian or Tyrolean Alps (this may explain Tepoztlán's popularity with rich Germans). Redfield later wrote his first impression of Tepoztlán was of its beauty; mine was to wonder why either Redfield or Lewis chose such a unique and exotic setting to portray Mexican peasant life.

Fifty years ago, according to Redfield, the Tepoztecs were "Indians of almost pure Indian blood" who spoke their ancient Nahuatl language. Many engaged in pre-Hispanic hoe culture of maize, called *tlacolol*; they grew plums and burned charcoal to supplement what was a bare subsistence livelihood. Redfield found their homes, cookery, medical cures, and belief in sorcery followed ancient Aztec customs. Lewis, in his studies from 1943 to 1960, recorded the transition from Indian to *mestizo* culture (being "Indian" in Mexico is more a matter of life style than of race). In 1947 Lewis found only half the people spoke Nahuatl. I was told today only about 20 percent do, and no one under 25. Hoe culture has all but disappeared and charcoal burning, now illegal, is practiced only by a few men in the outlying hamlets. Wood gathering and selling, though also illegal on government forest reserves, is still flourishing and about half of Tepoztlán's poorer people still use wood as a cooking fuel.

A young Chilean anthropology student, Claudio Zomnitz, who is spending the summer in Tepoztlán doing research into its politics, told me, "Redfield, if he is remembered at all, and only by a handful of old people, is remembered well. Lewis is not remembered so kindly. People here in Tepoztlán know that Lewis didn't like them and that he wrote a lot of bad things about them."

Sara Rojas, an elderly woman who was a friend of the Lewises, told me, "Few remember Oscar Lewis today. It was a true story, but people here didn't like it." Lewis's main peasant study was of a man named Juan Rodriguez, who died in 1973 at the age of 84. Rodriguez first appeared as Pedro Martinez in *Five Families* and later as the subject of a book-length tape-recorded autobiography, *Pedro Martinez*.

Modesta Rodriguez, his daughter, is the last family member still living in Tepoztlán, her sons, schoolteachers, having migrated to Mexico City. Mrs. Rodriguez, today 50 and the wife of a Tepoztecán who cultivates the land

for a living—her house was one of the poorest I saw in Tepoztlán—said she had never read any of the Lewis books, although as Macrina, she is an important character in *Pedro Martinez*. She expressed no interest in seeing the copy I carried in my hand, other than to remark, “My father had one.” She said Lewis paid her father “200 to 300 pesos” for periodic tape-recorded interview sessions and gave him 1,000 pesos after the book was published. The interview was cut short when her husband, drunk, arrived home from the fields on horseback and began carrying on about how “Americans” could never understand the life of a peasant. (But they try; American anthropologists are still studying Tepoztlán, the most recent being Philip Bock of the University of New Mexico.)

Since the Tepoztlán of Redfield and Lewis no longer exists, we shall never know whether life there was happy and satisfying, or unhappy and filled with fear, envy, and mistrust. The first day or two, interviewing mostly older people about the work of Redfield and Lewis, I did sense some suspicion, fear, and hostility. But after a week, and becoming acquainted with younger Tepoztecos, I found Tepoztlán's people as cheerful, outgoing, and forward looking as any semirural people to be found in Mexico. The old men, still dressed in their loose, white *calzones*, tattered sombreros and huaraches, and still carrying water to their homes from the nearest fountain, like the old women queuing up to have their corn ground, were just about the only relics of a past that is likely to die with them. The closeness of its soaring cliffs and forests, the dense foliage all about, the tropical snicker of cicadas after dark, give Tepoztlán its own haunting, slightly claustrophobic air. It is a place of incredible beauty, perhaps the most beautiful place in all Mexico, but even were it still a village, I would never choose to study peasant culture there.

Mexico Today

Mexico in 1977 is about to thrust itself upon the American consciousness in a way neither Redfield nor Lewis ever imagined. This is because Mexico has a population growth rate of 3.7 percent, just about the highest on earth. When Redfield went to Tepoztlán in 1926, Mexico's population was roughly 15 million people. In 1951, when Lewis's *Tepoztlán Restudied* was published, there were 25 million. There are 63 million now. There are projected to be 133 million in 23 more years. This will be half as many people as the United States will have.

Until very recently many Americans thought about Mexico, if at all, as a particularly friendly, reliable, “good neighbor,” drowsing peacefully under its sombrero in the shadow of a cactus and a Spanish colonial church, much the image Redfield projected in his original study. The years that Redfield and Lewis studied Mexico were years of stability and advance. During most of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Mexico sustained a yearly economic growth rate of at least 6 percent, one of the best development records anywhere. In the 51 years since Redfield went to Tepoztlán, 20 percent of what were mostly peasants have become industrial workers, another 16 percent are in services. Mexico's soldiers have stayed out of politics, its civilian presidents have peacefully handed over power every 6 years for 42 years. Around 8 million Mexicans live in the United States, 35,000 retired Americans live in Mexico and, until tourism declined about 30 percent two years ago, 3 million Americans were going to Mexico each year to view its scenic beauty, pre-Hispanic ruins, colonial architecture, the art of Orozco and Rivera, and the beach at Acapulco.

But most gains have been eaten up by runaway population growth. By any measure Mexico falls within the 122 countries of the Third World's poor south in 1978. It has a yearly per capita GNP of \$740, one-eighth of what Americans have. Its rural people consume an average of 2,064

calories per day just as they do in Uganda. Half the Mexican population is under 17, as in Bangladesh. Agriculture in the most backward parts of the country hasn't changed much since the Spanish conquest of 1519. Add low standards of housing, education, and health, inflation in recent years of 30 percent, a present \$3.2 billion trade deficit, foreign indebtedness of \$25 billion, an extreme gap between rich and poor, and an almost complete lack of popular political participation. These have been the conditions that produced the “culture of poverty” hypothesis.

In February 1977, Mexico's new President, José López Portillo, went to Washington to ask for a relaxation of U.S. immigration rules, the elimination of restrictions on Mexican imports, and more American investment in industry (28 percent of it is American-owned). López Portillo was really asking for the same increased investment and liberalized trade all the poor countries of the Third World are asking of the rich. His most immediate concern was Mexico's illegal migrant workers, at the moment the country's main safety valve.

How much can be seen in just one small village, Huecorio (population 1,112) in Michoacán state where I lived while writing this Report. As we have seen, Tepoztlán was lucky to be near Mexico City so that land values have soared. In one of his last comments about Tepoztlán (and a condensation, *Tepoztlán*, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston in 1960), Lewis asked, “Will Tepoztecos continue to sell their ancient lands and thereby convert Tepoztlán into a miniature Cuernavaca?” They did and it is.

Villages like Huecorio, therefore, are today much more representative. Quiet and serene, Huecorio spreads from the marshy shores of Lake Patzcuaro, famed for the butterfly nets of its fishermen, up the rocky, eroded slopes of extinct San Miguel Volcano. The air at 6,100 feet is bracing, the view spacious and scenic: forests of pine, fir, and

madrona cover the misty peaks around the island-strewn lake's 30-mile shoreline; the lower slopes are a patchwork of tiny fields enclosed in rock walls, golden with the wheat harvest in spring and green with beans and corn in summer.

Huecorio, like Tepoztlán still, is picturesque: a mossy church and a patron saint, small plaza, and cobbled streets lined with walled-in adobe houses, half-hidden in flowering bougainvillea. Traffic rumbles through on a new paved road, television antennas bring *Bonanza* and *Perry Mason* and Nescafe, and Cheerios and canned beer are standard fare in half a dozen shops. This lake region was the heart of the Tarascan Indian empire in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Great stone pyramids where the hearts of captives were once torn out as offerings to the fire god, Curicaveri, still stand, if in ruins, and a few pure Tarascans survive; they have retreated to the islands of the lake, human relics who fish from ancient canoes.

Huecorio's people are the *mestizos* of modern Mexico; the mating of Spaniard and Indian took place 18 generations ago and only the rich black hair and lustrous skin of the Tarascan remain. Yet scratch the surface and you will find many age-old beliefs—fears of eclipses, sorcery, evil winds, and spirits, a faith in healing herbs, and the practice of *el robo*, or bride theft—the beliefs that Redfield found so fascinating and Lewis so disturbing.

Huecorio's problems, unlike Tepoztlán's today, are the classic ones of too many people for too few resources. The village has only 915 acres of arable land, less than one acre per inhabitant, and holdings are further subdivided into tiny disconnected plots. After the Mexican Revolution, 134 men were given 3 acres apiece from a confiscated *hacienda*. But Huecorio's average family holding is only 13 acres and though there is some good alluvial land near the lake, much of it is on the wind- and water-eroded slopes of the volcano.

Huecorio has 134 full-time farmers, exactly what it had in 1926, the year Redfield went to Mexico. But as agriculture has been forced to absorb more people, there are also now 38 part-time farmers and 60 field laborers. The standard daily wage for field work is \$2.

Since the pioneer studies of Redfield and Lewis, hundreds of American anthropologists, sociologists, and economists have made studies in Mexico, making it the most thoroughly researched poor country in the world. Most of the scholars over the past 50 years, including both Redfield and Lewis, have concluded that Mexico's peasant women want fewer children. They would practice birth control if the Roman Catholic Church would accept it. They are afraid to use contraception now in the face of opposition from the priest and community pressure (as was noted in the chart on the "universal peasant culture" in Part II, fear of the neighbors' censure or "what will people say" governs villages more than government fiat or fear of God.)

With little fall in family size or birthrates, Huecorio's population has grown from 421 in 1922 (4 years before Redfield's first study), to 844 in 1963 (the year *The Children of Sanchez* came out) to 1,112 now.

The villagers have adjusted by:

1. Eating more corn and less other food. Alarmingly, Huecorio today consumes only 15 percent of what it produces. An average Mexican eats just under a liter of corn per day and beans and tortillas have been Mexico's staff of life since its pre-Columbian civilization. Today Huecorio can grow only enough corn to feed its present population for 156 days of the year. This means, like Mexico itself, it must buy corn by selling much of its fruit, vegetables, eggs, milk, cattle, pigs, and fish. Mexico today supplies the United States with most of its winter vegetables. Those lettuce and tomato salads we enjoy in January can be said to be depriving some villager of needed vitamins and minerals.

2. Finding nonfarming jobs; a growing number of former peasants have become tailors, shopkeepers, and drivers.

3. Educating their children. In 1962, Huecorio had only three college graduates, all teachers from the same family. Today 26 youths are attending university and Huecorio has produced a doctor and several lawyers and engineers.

The shift into nonfarming occupations and education costs money. Most of it has been financed by what is Huecorio's real lifeline to survival: migration to the United States.

Huecorio's men first began migrating to California and Texas to work five or six months each year in 1943 during the *bracero* program initiated during the farm labor shortages of World War II and kept up until the mid-1960s. Then Congress, under pressure from organized labor, put an end to it. Or, rather, put an end to its legality.

Today a three-day bus trip and barbed wire fencing in the tawdry outskirts of Tijuana stand between Huecorio's men and *el norte*, that land of milk and honey, \$940-used Chevrolets, apartments with heat, air-conditioning, and telephones, and jobs that range anywhere from \$40 a week (dishwashing) to \$7.50 an hour.

If you happen to be a poor Huecorian and want to save enough to buy a new bull, milk cow, irrigation pump, land, a sewing machine, or get married, it is worth the risk. In Tijuana you pay \$100 to \$250 *mordida* (bribe) or a bribe to a fellow Mexican who waits with a car across the frontier. Then it is a mad dash and scramble over, under, or through the barbed wire, praying to God a car full of U.S. Immigration agents doesn't catch you and send you back.

This illegal immigration has become America's most efficient and cheapest (indeed, costless) form of foreign aid. And it had better not be stopped.

For a good many of Mexico's 90,000 villages like Huecorio, this cash income is what keeps them going. In Huecorio, a laborer cannot make much more than \$800 a year. In the San Fernando Valley, he can make that much in a month. By sharing a \$250 one-bedroom flat with anywhere from 4 to 8 other men, he can save \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year. Without this money Huecorians could not educate their children or move from peasantry into the working, or in some cases, industrial middle class. Though 85 men and 14 women from Huecorio work in Mexico City (usually leaving their families in the village), their savings are small compared with the 130 or so men from Huecorio's work force of 247 who seasonally migrate to the United States.

A few of the migrants are bitter about abuses, the bribes, getting slapped around by Immigration agents or jailed for a night or two. But most have loved life in Texas or California and refuse to hear a word against it. They always come home; it is rare for anybody to settle in the United States.

Typically Fidel, 40, a father of 9 and a veteran of 6 trips as far as Illinois, Wisconsin, and Montana, says, "Sure, I liked everything about *el norte*. Nobody treated me badly and I said goodbye to ignorance. Best of all, there was sufficient work." A few are chauvinistic ("I am a Mexican and I would not change my country for anything"), or *macho* ("An American woman rules the house but here a man is boss"), or object to all the regulations and taxes in American life ("I felt like a slave"). To most Huecorio is the place where they were born, where they have their homes, land, animals, and permanent livelihood, and where there is safety and tranquillity (it would be hard to exaggerate the serenity of rural Mexico).

Huecorio and all like villages might have a happy ending if Pope Paul had a change of heart about birth control, if agronomists found some way to grow more on small holdings in rain-

fed agriculture, and if Mexico had the money to invest in reconstituting its exhausted soil. None is in prospect.

Migration to Mexico City is one alternative. But its population is thought to be pushing 12 to 14 million and, at current rates of growth, will double in just 6 years. This could make it the largest city on earth. Already, air pollution from industry and 1.5 million cars at 8,000 feet (the thinner oxygen at the high altitude makes people more susceptible to the upper respiratory disorders), it has the worst eye burning, throat searing smog I've experienced anywhere.

Almost certainly migration, illegal or not, will grow. This will bring the Third World and its problems right to the average American's doorstep.

President Carter has repeatedly declared his faith in new, wider international systems to tackle global problems. "We know," he said, "that a peaceful world cannot exist one-third rich and two-thirds hungry." But if Carter's ideals are to come to anything, generosity of more than spirit will be required from the rich. A Marshall Plan for the Third World is a political impossibility at present. And so is the kind of trade liberalization the poor countries (including Mexico) seek because, in the short run, it would increase unemployment in the rich countries (or so the AFL-CIO, in opposing continuation of the *bracero* program, argued. Mexicans disagree, saying they meet a demand for menial work that Americans will no longer accept).

A New International Economic Order may be for the millennium. More aid could be for now. But experience shows it needs to go to the poor directly; we do not know enough about the poor, especially out in the world's two million villages, to make such aid really work; nor does the public know enough about the poor to support aid on the scale required.¹

The need to aid the poor does not have to be couched in moral banalities. The energy scare has shown the

necessity of looking at raw materials in global terms. The commodity stabilization sought by poor countries would be welcomed by most American consumers and manufacturers. Aid also produces jobs in the donor country. And, most important, the alternative to cooperation is not necessarily the *status quo ante*. A collapse of Third World economies would be just as disruptive to the industrial world. And a collapse of the Mexican economy, with the present flow of illegal immigrants turning into a flood, if not an inundation, would certainly bring home to Americans the hard realities of the human condition imposed when population growth outruns economic resources.

So a new chapter is beginning that neither Redfield nor Lewis could have foreseen. There is an older, deeper, more intangible legacy of the Indian past in Mexico. On the surface, its people are merry, their courtesy affable and warm, their fiestas noisy and exuberant, their family attachments and affection for their children warm and evident. Yet underneath is the brooding introspection that so absorbed Lewis. The insecurity of the Mexican psyche has never been stronger. And with good reason. Much compassion, wisdom, science, and generosity will be required on our part in the years immediately ahead. And we are very lucky men like Redfield and Lewis blazed a trail to help us through this wilderness.

(May 1978)

1 See my "Small is Beautiful (if Enormously Problematical) in Northeast Brazil [RC-3-'76], *AUFS Reports*, East Coast South America Series, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1976.