

MEXICAN POVERTY HIDDEN BY FACADE

**Census Also Shows Literacy
Has Not Kept Modern Pace
—Population 25,791,017**

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MEXICO CITY, July 30—The wastes of misery behind the shining, sunny façade of modern Mexico have been coldly charted in the first partial breakdown of the 1950 national census, to be published in a fortnight.

This first installment on how Mexico now lives, eats, works and suffers reflects progress. But the tragedy in the statistics still overwhelms the light of improvement.

The total population at the time of the census was 25,791,017, and it was still predominantly rural, with only two-fifths living in the towns and cities. The figures showed that despite heavy moves to urban centers in the past generation, the abandoned places in the overpopulated countryside are being filled up with mounting births.

Mexicanization has pushed forward in the last decade with only 795,069 persons left who speak no language but their ancient Indian tongue. Another 1,652,540 speak both Spanish and an Indian language, and the rest speak Spanish.

Literacy Has Not Kept Pace

But literacy has not kept pace. Half of the population over 6 years of age can read and write, and a third of those over 6 and under 25 have never been to school.

Shoes and bread, Mexico's economic dividing tracks, follow the distribution pattern of literacy. Slightly more than half of the population is on the right side of the tracks in the simple sense that they eat bread and can afford shoes and probably very little more. The majority of the other half falls in the upper banks of those who can manage to buy or make some kind of sandals, but 4,768,827 Mexicans always go barefoot.

Unemployment figures are low, about 100,000, but statistics on living conditions show how little employment can mean.

Of the country's 5,259,208 listed habitations 2,283,695 get piped water either for themselves or on a communal basis. Another 1,909,442 homes get water from wells, 633,850 from cisterns and 432,221 have no regular water supply at all.

Although three-quarters of the country's dwellings are owned by their inhabitants, nearly half of the total are made of adobe, the poor peasant's unbaked mud brick that washes away after two or three rainy seasons. One-fifth are made of wood and the rest of brick masonry, sticks, flattened tin cans and whatever else is available.

The country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, less than 500,000 people declaring themselves of other religions. Yet of about 7,000,000 couples living together, 1,795,167 have not been married by either civil or religious authorities. Mexican law recognizes only civil marriages but still 1,427,037 of them who have been married went through church ceremonies only.

Infant Mortality 10 Per Cent

Mortality details were not included in the first breakdown of the census but the National Pediatric Society has compiled some recent figures.

Infant mortality was shown to be still averaging 10 per cent across the country—down sharply from the 35 per cent of fifty years ago but still very high among modern nations. The great majority of child deaths are from pneumonia and diarrhea, comparatively unimportant causes in the United States. Of about 500,000 deaths a year throughout Mexico, half of them are children under 14 years of age. About half of the country's 12,000,000 children under 14 are undernourished, according to the society and of these about 1,500,000 are sufficiently badly off to impair seriously their physical and mental growth.

Contrary to what most Mexicans believe, the worst conditions are found, not in the barely civilized green jungle, but in mud and dust wilderness of the city slums. Hidden behind the handsome cosmopolitanism of the city avenues warrens of poverty that few visitors and not so many Mexicans ever see emerge brazenly in statistics.

In the Mexico City district of Ixtacalco one out of every two children born dies before it is one year old. In general, infant mortality rates are the worst in the developed central plateau, the institute said, and it gave the cause as promiscuity and bad water.