

Kennedy's Visit To Mexico Seen With Confetti, Noise

(Editor's note: Miss Cravotta was a June graduate of UNC with a BA degree in Journalism. She is traveling in Mexico this summer and is registered with the Mexican Embassy in Washington as a foreign correspondent for the UNC News.)

By LINDA CRAVOTTA

MEXICO CITY, June 29 — Hanging out of the window of the 6th floor of the 17-story American Embassy in Mexico, I could easily view the preparations below for the arrival of President Kennedy.

"Bienvenidos Kennedy" (welcome) signs had already been placed on every building, days before. Pictures of the President, signs, flags of the two countries, leaflets, and confetti could be seen everywhere.

Police stood guard below, surrounding the Embassy and casting suspicious eyes on anyone that paid the slightest bit of attention to the building. Patrol cars and an ambulance stood by in readiness. Members of the Mexican Army lined the streets every two feet along the route of the President. Secret Service agents of both countries circulated among the crowd. Marines on special mission from the U.S. were stationed on rooftops and other strategic points. Dressed in plain clothes, they were recognizable only by their crew cuts.

Lucky Day

Tourists adjusted the light meters of their cameras. Mothers called to runaway children. Vendors shouted their wares to the crowd. Photographers from the various newspapers roamed the streets. Newsboys rapidly sold papers with headlines screaming the arrival of Kennedy. Lottery tickets were being bought by the hundreds in hopes that this special day would be a lucky one.

Suddenly we saw a large group of Mexican youths running and yelling down the street towards the Embassy. All of us gathered at the windows to see if the police would stop them. To our surprise, the police made no move to hinder their progress. They continued running and shouting towards the Embassy at a rapid pace. As they neared the building, they stopped running and turned toward the crowd that had gathered below. It was then that we could hear what they were chanting. "Kennedy, Kennedy, rah, rah, rah!" The last thing the Embassy officials expected was a pro-Kennedy demonstration.

Historical Event

We turned our attention to the television set, which was on full volume, in order to catch the arrival of the President at the National Airport. It was difficult to distinguish who was the most excited—the Mexicans or

the Americans. The feeling of tension and excitement mounted and even the most blasé person was aware that a notable historical event was about to take place before his eyes.

Smiling and relieved faces peered at the television as the two presidents, Lopez Mateos and Kennedy exchanged welcome speeches. There was applause after Kennedy's statement, "... we are both children of revolutions, and it is my hope that the spirit of our revolution in the United States is as alive today in our country as is the spirit of your revolution here in Mexico." It was easy to see that the members of both countries represented in that room were filled with pride—for their own country and admiration for Kennedy.

Tranquilizers Necessary

All persons present spent their time going from the window to the television set. Secretaries were hurriedly cutting up office supply paper for confetti. A Mexican secretary leaned so far out of the window that a gust of wind could have sent her flying to the ground. "I'm so nervous and excited that I can't stand it," she said, as she took a tranquilizer. Some newspaper reporters that were using the Embassy as their headquarters were already at their typewriters batting out stories. Marines dashed in and out on errands. On television, one could see nothing but a thick mass of confetti mingled with the silhouettes of Kennedy and Lopez Mateos smiling and waving to the crowds. It appeared that a blizzard had suddenly hit Mexico in June.

And then he passed the Embassy at the head of a parade almost a half-mile long with cars of Embassy officials, secret service men, photographers, reporters, and dignitaries of both countries. The crowd went wild and it took all the strength of the Mexican military men to hold them back. But as one traffic policeman smilingly said, if the crowd had wanted to overcome the police, it could have done so

easily.

Reasons For Reception

After the tremendous reception that was given to Kennedy so spontaneously and so wholeheartedly, many Americans were forced to wonder WHY it occurred. Why should Kennedy get a reception finer than any dignitary has ever received in Mexico, or almost anywhere, for that matter? Why did the people respond so favorably — was it curiosity? The Alliance for Progress? Kennedy's religion? Jackie's Spanish?

All of these things helped promote the interest and enthusiasm in his visit, but basically, a greater reason prompted the response. The Mexican people are genuinely interested in being friends with the United States. They want to understand us and what made us the great nation that we have become. For Mexicans, too, want to become like the United States. They have imitated us in everything from our dress to our rock-and-roll records. ("Amarillo (yellow) Bikini" is tops on the Mexican hit parade.)

Yet we should not let the friendly reception that the Mexicans gave Kennedy blind us to the fact that they need our help and attention now more than ever. Now they are receptive. If we do not respond to their open friendliness, we may find ourselves with a sizeable enemy at our doorstep.

Free Flick

Tonight's Summer Cinema presentation, *The Life of Emile Zola*, stars Paul Muni, Joseph Schildkraut and Gloria Holden, and is directed by William Dieterle. It will begin at 7:30 in Carroll Hall.

The film is a study of the French author and humanitarian which reaches its climax in Zola's classic defense of Captain Dreyfus, which was a seathing denunciation of anti-semitism and intolerance.

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