Hi Ho, Silver... US runway shops run again

Ed McCaughan & Peter Baird

MEXICALI, MEX. (FNS) — The Mexican border's
other large labor-pastures have turned as hard as
the Baja desert for U.S. companies. And Mexican
workers, who seemed to benefit as scores of U.S.
businesses pulled up stakes in the mid-60's to settle
across the border, are now joining the Americans
they once displaced in unemployment lines.

The U.S. "runaway" shops are
on the move again.

At least a million Americans, says the AFL-CIO, have lost their jobs in the past decade to runaway shops seeking cheap labor in underdeveloped regions like Mexico, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Puerto Rico and U.S. Indian reservations.

Now, as Mexico's "un-
spoilied workforce" has been
organized into unions, more than 20,000 workers have recently been laid
jobless as one U.S. plant after another has shut down its
assembly lines.

"We've made them rich.
They can't just tell us to get lost now."

In the small town of Nogales, for example, only a fifth of the total workforce has been laid
off, while in the Baja California town of Mexicali and Tijuana, more than 40 assembly plants have
closed down. Stelco's subsidiary in Mexicali alone left 2,000
workers in the plant. Mexicali Seguna picked up and moved on.

Many plant managers along the
2,000-mile U.S.-Mexican border blame the current exodus on the U.S. recession. The market for
their products — bras, pocket
computer cases, and toys — has shrunk, they say.

But the key factor is the rising
labor-heavy assembly shops within a 12-mile strip south of the border.

Pay Mexican workers a fraction of the U.S. wage rate and contribute
virtually no taxes or import duties to the Mexican government.

U.S. garment and electronics companies like Mattel, Levi-
Stone, and Hughes Aircraft soon
stormed the border area. By 1967 there were 272 U.S. company
plants there. By 1972 there were
273. By late 1974, the number had
taxed. In a few short years Mexico
became the largest assembler of U.S. components processed abroad and exported to the U.S.

The advantage for the companies was obvious: minimum
wages of Mexico's northern states in the mid-60's ranged from $3.42
to $5.25 per day — less than a fifth
the average salary of U.S. factory
workers.

For the Mexican government the
BIF seemed a sure way to solve the
unemployment crisis. But in fact, though nearly 80,000 jobs were
created, the unemployment rate along the border actually nearly
doubled from 1966 and 1975. The
number of illegal workers had expanded the size of the available workforce by bringing mostly young women — many of whom were not previously
in the job market — and stringing
over five million people from Mexico's interior.

For the 70,000 men and women hired by the assembly plants, the
jobs in the shiny new factories seemed at first glamorous com-
pared to their former lives as housewives, domestic workers or field hands. Companies worked hard to foster organizational loyalties by sponsoring soccer teams and beauty contests.

But the initial glamour of the
long and tedious assembly-line work quickly wore off. Single
mothers, who made up 33 per-
cent of the female workforce in
Nogales — had access to only one
child care center. Most other
child care centers had been closed down to
supplant the expense of baby
sitters.

Faced with staggering inflation and low wages, many such isolated young women joined unions.

Over the past few years, strikes have erupted across the border in companies like VideoCraft, Sarker-
Turkan, Tampico and Mattel, among others, and even some of the strikes have protested cor-
ruption among labor bosses of the government-controlled Confeder.

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Hoover warned of Kennedy plot
CIA agent's letter revealed

A former United States Government intelligence agent has delivered a notarized affidavit to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence swearing that Lee Harvey Oswald was a pawn in a high-level right-wing conspiracy to murder President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

Walter E. Black of Boston-Based Assassination Information Bureau and the William Committee in Inquiry in Washington, D.C. have seen the sworn statement of former CIA operative Richard Case Nagell alleging that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had advance warning of a plot on the life of President Kennedy.

Nagell's affidavit was taken in Northern California on November 19, one day short of the fifth anniversary of President Kennedy's murder, and has not yet been released by the Senate Select Committee of their report on CIA involvement in investigations that covered several Latin American nations.

Nagell is positive, though, of the importance of his information, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a "disissant," right-wing Cuban exile who had apparently moved out of control of the CIA handlers.

Through his investigation--which was reconfirmed with Lee Harvey Oswald--Nagell discovered that Oswald was being manipulated and set up by two rightist Cubans.

"They made him think he was a big man, important," Nagell is quoted as saying.

In a 1967 letter to Senator Richard Russell, Nagell outlined what he had unearthed past, on an eye on Oswald.

"I have investigated Kisack and my investigation has seen the letter, which was then received and acknowledged by the late Senator Richard B. Russell, a Warren Commission member who later vigorously rejected that body's lone assassin conclusion.

The letter to Senator Russell reads:

Dear Senator Russell:

Mr. Oswald and his activities came under my scrutiny during 1962 and 1963. My inquiries, coupled with data furnished me by reliable sources, ascertained the following:

Mr. Oswald had no significant connection with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He had no significant contact or relationship with any Cuban exile elements, though he led to believe he had such. This conspiracy was either Communist inspired nor was it instigated by any foreign government.

In the summer of 1961 I received instructions to initiate certain action against Mr. Oswald, who was the indispensable tool in the conspiracy, under certain conditions, to the United States, legally. Although I did not substitute as registered mail to the FBI Director, the letter did not exceed my authority.

I am prepared to make full disclosure under the existing circumstances to testify before the Warren Commission. I even sent letters to the Chief, Secret Service Division, Mr. J. L. Rankin, then General Counsel for the Commission.

Richard C. Nagell 11-67

Nagell's reference to "existing circumstances" included the circumstances of his being a federal prisoner at the time. This puzzling aspect of the Nagell affair, which is at first appearance to confound his story, is nearer scrutiny tends to verify the accuracy.

On September 20, 1963, after failing to produce his military record in response with his plot warnings, Nagell walked into an El Paso Bank, exposed a pistol, and then fired two shots toward the ceiling. He then walked outside the bank, and was promptly arrested without resisting.

In Sept. 1963, Oswald told Nagell, "We will kill him (JFK) before the month is out."

I furnished a complete and accurate written description of Mr. Oswald's appearance, as well as two of his aliases, his residence address and other pertinent facts about him.

I gathered sufficient data about the conspiracy (an overt act which constituted illegal kidnapping and warrant an immediate investigation if not the arrest of Mr. Oswald..."

The mystery man has always maintained his link to the plot was "stemmed from my ignorance of the conspiracy rather than my participation in it." Nagell's attempt to prevent the assassination and tend to support his claim of non-participation.

Whatever his reason for seeking sanctuary in jail, Nagell got more than he bargained for. With no record except for heroism-in-battle, the CIA man expected a short interment for discharging a firearm on officially-insured property. Instead, he was awarded the maximum, ten years, for entering a bank with intent to rob. In a 42-page, mostly handwritten legal brief, Nagell chronicles the rigors of his political imprisonment.

As for his "intent to rob," Nagell cites the vice-president of the bank who "thought it was a joke."

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