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from abroad

FROM MEXICO

Million Fathers Desert

Family desertion by fathers appears to be growing in Mexico, due to the combined forces of poverty, rural-urban migration and machismo—an exaggerated male sense of virility.

Figures on the desertion rate are not available from official government sources in Mexico. But the Catholic church estimates that close to a million families have been deserted by fathers over the past two decades, and says the practice is growing by five percent each year.

The Church, which has stepped up the fight against desertions through its Christian Family Movement, blames machismo for the abandonments. Parish priests have been instructed to preach against the "sin of family irresponsibility," but according to the Movement itself, the warnings have had little effect.

"Mexican males, despite their ingrained Catholicism, unfortunately do not let this deter them in the sexual pursuit of females," says a spokesman. "They form family alliances, with or without a formal ceremony, very lightly, and just as lightly they walk out when the situation becomes overburdensome, or there is a younger woman receptive to their overtures."

Machismo is a long-standing and prevalent pattern of behavior in Latin American countries. Some U.S. investigators have claimed machismo also operates among the lower class poor in the United States, although this explanation for desertion is not common.

Typically, the machismo male proves his virility by moving from one woman to another, breeding children along the way. Sometimes marriage goes with the move; sometimes not. According to the machismo creed, a man drinks hard, never lets a pal down or brooks an insult, and keeps women in their place, usually under the threat of a beating. On occasion, a man may simply retire from work and collect a harem of wives who work to support him.

In the view of the Christian Family Movement, machismo accounts for much of the delinquency, child begging and other social troubles in Mexico.

An anthropologist at Howard University in Washington points to an alternate explanation. Dr. Joan Snyder, who has spent several years in Mexico and South America, and who has also studied poverty in the United States, says male desertions are closely tied to the stresses of poverty and rapid urbanization.

After first studying conditions in a Mexican village, Dr. Snyder thought machismo could be to blame for the desertions. But when she returned to the United States and viewed the same phenomena in that context of rapid migration of rural poor to cities, she changed her mind. "It strikes me now as a feature of poverty," says Dr. Snyder.

Emil Zubryn

FROM AUSTRALIA

Japan May Share Rocket Range

The Australian Government has offered Japan the use of Woomera missile range as a launching base for satellites and sounding rockets engaged in upper atmospheric research. All of Japan's previous launches have been from its own territory.

The Japanese have reportedly expressed interest in the offer, but have made no definite commitment. Australia would like the Japanese business for Woomera to fill the gap which will be left when ELDO (the European Launcher Development Organization) phases out its operations and switches to French Guiana in the early 1970s.

The first Japanese sounding rockets were built in 1955. Now the country's space efforts are concentrated in a vast complex at Kagoshima on the tip of Kyushu Island—a remote spot of still-smoking volcanoes and a broken landscape of hardened lava, where blockhouses and launch pads sprawl over the hillsides.

All launches are made out to sea, which prevents recovery of the rockets and their instrumentation. Australian sources believe that this may be enough of a handicap to interest the Japanese in the use of Woomera's overland facilities.

The next item on Japan's space schedule is the launch of a large scientific satellite early next year. The satellite is to be carried aloft by a four-stage Mu booster, reportedly capable of putting up to 3,000 pounds in orbit around the earth. The country's three attempted satellite launches to date, however, have all ended in failure, and all because of various malfunctions in the Lambda 4S booster being used.

Australian facilities at Woomera and near Canberra have already been used to help track the Japanese launches, with antennas up to 85 feet in diameter. The Australian installations are also part of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration's worldwide tracking network.

Future Japanese plans include launch-
(See p. 15)