

August 5 - 11, 2008

**Topics**

- Economy Secretary sacked
- Replacement criticized for lack of experience
- President announces anti-kidnap measures
- Martí case heightens tension between federal government and Mexico City
- Military command reshuffle

President Calderón **replaced** Eduardo Sojo as **Secretary of Economy**. Sojo, who was a holdover from the Fox administration, had been at the forefront of efforts to restrain prices through agreements with tortilla makers and producers and marketers of other basic foodstuffs. His successor is the current presidential chief of staff, Gerardo Ruiz Mateos. Ruiz, 43, has been closely associated with Calderón since joining the PAN in 1995, and was the administrative head of the presidential campaign. The President nominated Sojo to be the head of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), an appointment that must be ratified by Congress. Patricia Flores, who worked in Los Pinos as general coordinator of the Office of the President, will become the new chief of staff. (Reforma, Universal 8/6)

Columnist Jorge Zepeda Patterson, in a comment echoed by many others, noted, "Calderón errs one more time. Again, amidst a series of problems, he decides to surround himself with his inner circle and to express his distrust towards anything that is not *calderonista*. As in the cases of the Ministries of Social Development and Government, he chose from among his friends: young people with little experience and lack of leadership." (Universal 8/6).

More than 10,000 persons mourned the **kidnapping and murder of Fernando Martí**, while the Ministry of Justice acknowledged that on average there were more than two kidnappings per day in Mexico. President Calderón urged Congress to authorize life sentences for kidnapping minors, and the Ministry of Justice announced the creation of a special 300-agent anti-kidnapping task force. Noted the *Templo Mayor* column: "Nothing is gained with life sentences or with the death penalty when the real problem is the impunity of the criminals. They don't worry about the increase in penalties when they know they will never be caught." (Reforma 8/9, Universal 8/10)

President Calderón also blamed the **lack of coordination** between federal and state authorities. "If the Federal Government and the state authorities were more united, we would have advanced much more in the path to improve the quality of the police, particularly in Mexico City," he said. Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard defended his administration's actions, saying there had been full coordination between the D.F. and federal agencies working on the Martí kidnapping. (Reforma 8/7, Universal 8/8)

The Ministry of Defense **reshuffled seven general commands**. Most notably, General Sergio Aponte Polito, the head of the second military region encompassing Baja California was sent back to Mexico City to head the Supreme Military Tribunal. General Aponte raised eyebrows when he published open letters in the local newspapers in April and early August accusing the state prosecutor's office of corruption and many of its agents of being members of kidnapping rings. (Reforma 8/8, Universal 8/9)

**Key Dates**

- 9/1: Presidential Informe
- 9/8: Budget submitted to Congress
- 9/28: Coahuila state elections
- 11/14: Deadline for budget approval

**Polls**

**Which of the following best describes what you think about the course of the government?**

An *El Universal* national survey (8/11) noted that while President Calderón overall approval rating was 60%, much of the support was soft, and more than one-third of respondents said a change of course was needed. Four in 10 respondents said the economy had worsened in the past six months.

