

Letter From California

by Roger D. McGrath

The Reconquista of California



On February 6, 1998, the Mexican consul general in California, Jose Angel Pescador Osuna, spoke at the Southwestern School of Law in Los Angeles as part of a symposium on the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave the Southwest to the United States. Osuna proclaimed, "And even though I am saying this part serious, part joking, I think we are practicing *La Reconquista* in California." It was an astonishing admission for a career diplomat to make. But he was only admitting what has been a policy of the Mexican government for more than three decades: Surplus people are encouraged to immigrate, legally or illegally, to the United States, California in particular, and to maintain their Mexican identity and loyalty.

Ernesto Zedillo, then president of Mexico, admitted as much when he spoke before the National Council of La Raza in Chicago on July 23, 1997. Said Zedillo, "I have proudly proclaimed that the Mexican nation extends beyond the territory enclosed by its borders and that Mexican migrants are an important, a very important part of it."

That the Mexican nation extends beyond the territory enclosed by its borders has been clear to anyone living in Southern California during the past 30 years. The Hispanicization of the population, schools, and culture has been dramatic and stunning. The process was well described by Carlos Loret de Mola in the Mexico City newspaper *Excelsior*. Wrote Mola:

A peaceful mass of people, hard-working, carries out slowly and patiently an unstoppable invasion, the most important in human history. You cannot give me a similar example of such a large migratory

wave by an ant-like multitude. Stubborn, unarmed, and carried on in the face of the most powerful and best-armed nation on earth. The result of this migration is to return the land to the jurisdiction of Mexico without the firing of a single shot.

These are not the words of the hated *gringo* but of a Mexican journalist, a Mexican president, and a Mexican consul general. If an old-stock American had said any of these things, the media would have branded him a paranoid, xenophobic bigot. Am I such, because I take these men at their word? I believe *El Presidente* Ernesto Zedillo was earnest when he proudly proclaimed that the Mexican nation extends beyond the territory enclosed by its borders.

Few people realize that California was only very sparsely populated by Mexicans when it was annexed by the United States, and that most of the Mexicans in California had little or no love for Mexico. The Mexican population of California in 1845—on the eve of the American conquest—was only 7,000. In 1845, San Francisco was a small village called Yerba Buena, containing fewer than 200 souls. Again and again, local Californians ran Mexican governors out of the territory and established a quasi-independent state. Those in the upper class of society called themselves *Californios* and considered themselves Spaniards. They spoke pure Castilian Spanish, sent their sons off to Spain to be educated, and imitated the manners and fashions of the Spanish court. They wanted little to do with Mexico and conspired with the United States for protection should they attempt to establish a fully independent state. Mexico, meanwhile, exercised almost no control over California and had little influence on the people.

Today, 7,000 Mexicans come across the border illegally every month. Nowhere are the effects of this invasion more apparent than in the public schools. Between 1984 and 1997, white enrollment in California's public schools increased by less than 4,000, while Hispanic enrollment increased by more than a million.

The terms "white" and "Hispanic" are

commonly used today in school enrollment data as they are in the U.S. Census. When I was growing up in California, all the Mexican-American schoolchildren were classified as white, as indeed many of them were. Most people today use the term "Mexican" to mean "*mestizo*," someone of mixed Spanish and American-Indian descent. This is not entirely misguided: The great majority of Mexicans are *mestizo*, although a substantial minority are of pure or nearly pure Spanish, or other European, ancestry. Social class in Mexico is generally color-coded, with the mostly European Mexicans at the top and the mostly Indian Mexicans at the bottom. The society is highly stratified. In California, Mexicans are all lumped together as Hispanic.

California's largest school district, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), is now 70 percent Hispanic. English is a second language in most of the elementary schools. Whites account for only ten percent of the district's students. This is a dramatic reversal of conditions that prevailed until the 1970's. In 1965, for example, whites constituted 60 percent of the district; Hispanics, 16 percent. The raw numbers are shocking: In 1965 there were some 350,000 whites in the district and 100,000 Hispanics; now, there are only 70,000 whites and more than 500,000 Hispanics. The number of white students in the district has thus declined by a factor of five while the number of Hispanic children has increased by a factor of five. That Los Angeles schools should have so many Hispanics is not surprising. Los Angeles has a Mexican population second only to Mexico City.

Many schools in the LAUSD are virtually all-Hispanic. This is true even for the high schools, which tend to be more racially diverse because their attendance areas are much larger than those of the elementary or junior high schools. Garfield, Roosevelt, and South Gate high schools are 99 percent Hispanic; Huntington Park and Bell are 98 percent; San Fernando is 97 percent. Thousands of illegal-immigrant children arrive every year, and thousands more are born to illegal aliens. The influx has forced the district to put nearly half of its elementary schools on a year-round schedule. A quarter of the high schools also operate

year-round; by 2006, all of the high schools are slated to be year-round.

To say that Los Angeles schools are in a crisis is to understate the case. More than 50 percent of the students are doing failing work at their grade level. Unbeknownst to the general public until recently, the school district has been following a practice of "social promotion" for more than 20 years. Students can fail their course work in any grade and move on to the next grade. Few are held back. In 1999, the school district admitted that the practice of social promotion was the rule rather than the exception.

There has been some public demand for reform. As a result, the school district came up with a plan. Children in grades two and eight would have to perform at grade level or they would not be promoted. The other grades would be phased in over a four-year period. A great hue and cry went up from parents of children in grades two and eight, who claimed that their children were being discriminated against. The parents were right. The school district realized it could not end social promotion for all grades at the same time—that would mean holding back more than half of the students in the district, some 360,000. The logistics and expense of such a move are prohibitive. The school district scrapped the plan almost as soon as it was announced.

The school district moved on to plan two. Students had to pass English, only English, to be promoted from grade to grade. They could fail all of their other subjects, but they had to get at least a D in English. Again, a hue and cry was raised. Two-thirds of the Hispanic students are not fluent in English. Thus far, the policy has not been implemented.

The Stanford 9 test scores reveal a huge disparity between Hispanic and white students. In 1999, white students averaged in the 60th percentile in reading and the 65th percentile in math. Hispanic students averaged in the 20th percentile in reading and the 25th percentile in math. Asian students scored a few points below whites in reading and eight or nine points above them in math. Blacks scored slightly above Hispanics in reading and slightly below them in math.

I graduated from a Los Angeles public high school before the 1965 immigration act and forced busing. We, too, took a standardized test to assess the performance of individual students and the school as a whole. I remember spending part of each day for a week in 1962 taking

the Iowa Test. Our principal later proudly announced that our school scored in the 99th percentile. Most Los Angeles public high schools today score below the 30th percentile. Several are in the single digits. If a school scores above the 50th percentile, it is cause for district-wide celebration.

In the early 1960's, my high school was virtually all white. We did not think much of it because our neighborhood was virtually all white. Schools simply reflected the demographics of the neighborhood, and whites tended to live in white neighborhoods; Hispanics, in Hispanic neighborhoods; blacks, in black neighborhoods; and Asians, in Asian neighborhoods. There were even two distinctly Jewish high schools and several high schools that had an Okie-Arkie-Texan flavor, where most of the students were the children of Dust Bowl migrants. Left to their own devices, people tend to segregate themselves. Los Angeles was a clear example.

At least half or more—the exact number is unknown because the school district is unconcerned with legal status—of the Hispanics in the Los Angeles public schools today are illegal aliens or the children of illegal immigrants. This amounts to at least 250,000 students. The average expenditure per student in the state of California is about \$6,000 per year. In Los Angeles, the cost is \$10,500 per student, thanks in part to the large number of students who are taught in Spanish. The Los Angeles Unified School District is spending more than two billion dollars a year on these children. What do we have to show for this? A school system where 55 percent of the students are doing failing work at their grade level. Meanwhile, the mayor of Los Angeles, Richard Riordan, inanely chants the mantra, "Diversity is our strength." If only George Orwell were alive to hear that.

The school problem is only going to get worse. More than 100,000 children are born to illegal immigrants each year in California, and most of those illegal immigrants are Mexicans. As with public education, the births are at taxpayers' expense. Various studies estimate that at least 60 percent of all births at county hospitals are to illegal immigrants. In Los Angeles County alone, this costs nearly \$200 million per year. As soon as the child is born, he is an American citizen, making the family eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. I don't know how many hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars this costs the American taxpayer, but I am certain that even Sen. Everett Dirksen would have considered it real money.

The state of California recently sweetened the birthing package. The Mexican lobby thought that pregnant illegal aliens should have free medical care. Dutifully, state Assemblyman Gilbert Cedano introduced a bill providing for free prenatal care. Against some opposition, the bill made its way through both houses and was signed by Governor Gray Davis. Illegal aliens now get free prenatal care to go along with free births.

Illegal immigrants also use the emergency room for basic medical care. Not too long ago, I had a personal experience with the routine. My daughter had split her eyebrow open in an accident, and my wife and I rushed her to our local hospital. Although our community is not more than eight percent Hispanic, a third or more in the emergency room were clearly recent arrivals from south of the border. They were *mestizo* or Indian in appearance and speaking only Spanish. While my wife held an ice pack on my daughter's eyebrow, I filled out a stack of insurance forms for the hospital and watched illegal alien after illegal alien go ahead of us. Moreover, most of them seemed to be there for problems that were not of an emergency nature.

Controlling my temper, I asked one of the nurses what was going on. She looked at me sympathetically, nodded in the direction of the illegals and, with a hint of disgust in her voice, said, "If they don't pay, the county and the state cover our expenses. If you don't pay, we're stuck with it." Illegal alien to the front of the line; American citizen to the rear.

The cost of medical care for illegal immigrants exceeds one billion dollars a year in California. Their education costs more than three billion dollars. Taxes paid by illegal aliens cover only a small fraction of this. A 1992 study by Los Angeles County concluded that American citizens in the county pay \$7,000 per capita each year in taxes; illegal immigrants pay only \$500. A National Research Council study in 1997 found that Mexican immigrants receive \$3,400 more in benefits than they pay in taxes. On the other hand, the study found that immigrants from Europe and Canada pay \$126 more in taxes than they receive in benefits. The study concluded that each California household pays nearly \$1,200 more in taxes each year to support

Mexican immigrants. When you look around at so-called cheap Mexican labor, remember that your tax money is paying for it.

Another increasing cost is crime. Although most Mexican immigrants come here to work, not to engage in illegal activities, there has been an ominous trend toward criminality since the early 1990's. Hispanic gangs in Los Angeles used to be homegrown. Now, several of them have large numbers of illegal aliens as members. The notorious 18th Street gang is the largest and most violent in Los Angeles. The California Department of Justice, in a special report, estimated that 50 to 60 percent of the members of the gang are illegal aliens. The gang has been responsible for dozens of murders over the past several years. In fact, Hispanic gangs have been responsible for far more murders in Los Angeles County during the last two decades than have black gangs, including the infamous Bloods and Crips. Between 1978 and 1995, there were nearly 7,300 gang killings in Los Angeles County. Hispanic gang members accounted for 59 percent of them; black gang members, for 37 percent. Whites accounted for only one percent.

One would think that criminal illegal aliens could be quickly identified and deported, but not in Los Angeles. In 1983, the Los Angeles City Council mandated that the LAPD prohibit its officers from questioning anyone arrested about their immigration status. The LAPD was not happy with the mandate but issued Special Order 40, under which an officer may continue to ask those arrested about everything under the sun—except for their immigration status.

The Los Angeles Police Commission, a watchdog body, supported the policy. One of the members of the police commission was Edith Perez, who is also a member of the board of directors of MALDEF, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund. The name of the organization makes it sound rather innocuous. Nothing could be further from the truth. The cofounder of MALDEF is Mario Obledo. In a live television interview, Obledo declared, "California is going to become a Hispanic state and if you don't like it you should leave." If the police commission is influenced by MALDEF, then it's not surprising that the LAPD was pressured into not cooperating with the INS.

Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti, himself the son of Mexican im-

migrants, issued a legal opinion that the LAPD has no obligation to cooperate with the INS. Whether the opinion was a reflection of favoritism for Mexicans or just another in a long list of Garcetti's blunders is difficult to ascertain. After all, it was Garcetti who allowed the O.J. Simpson trial to be moved from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles, thus assuring a Simpson-friendly jury, and it was Garcetti who gave us the embarrassingly weak Simpson prosecutors.

On October 4, 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of a landmark decision by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Tenth Circuit had confirmed that state and local police are free to arrest persons solely for being in the country illegally. Now is the time to revoke Special Order 40. Thus far, neither Police Chief Bernard Parks nor District Attorney Garcetti has taken any action.

On April 12, the city council did entertain the issue, allowing Los Angeles residents to address the council—but only for a total of ten minutes. Taking most of the time, and supporting Special Order 40, were representatives from MALDEF and the National Lawyers Guild. Cut off in the middle of his comments was Glenn Spencer, the leader of the American Patrol, a grassroots organization based in the San Fernando Valley and strongly opposed to illegal immigration. A dynamic speaker and energetic worker, Spencer has produced two documentary videos on illegal immigration and has a weekly radio program on KIEV (870 AM). Threats on his life and other attempts at intimidation only seem to invigorate him. His remarks before the city council were on target as usual, which is probably why he was cut short. The council then quickly voted to continue to support Special Order 40.

Despite Special Order 40, so many Mexicans have been arrested for crimes other than illegally entering California that the jails and the courts are near the breaking point. At the Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic, racial battles between Mexican and black inmates are common. Since 1991, there have been 150 such brawls. Three days of fighting at the end of April left 80 inmates, mostly black, injured. Mexicans now outnumber blacks in the lockup two-to-one; and many blacks have demanded that they be segregated. Inside and outside of jail, Mexicans refer to blacks as *mayatés*—black flies found on excrement. Jesse

Jackson's rainbow coalition has a long way to go.

Ventura County has taken a different approach from that of its neighbor, Los Angeles. In 1996, the Ventura County sheriff's department, with the cooperation of Republican Congressman Elton Gallegly, initiated an experimental program to identify illegal aliens in the county jail. Twice a week, INS agents conduct inmate interviews. Of the inmates interviewed during 1997, 65 percent (847) were illegal aliens, nearly all from Mexico. Their crimes? Murder, rape, robbery, drug trafficking, burglary.

One of the Mexican illegal aliens snared in the pilot program at the Ventura County jail was a serial rapist. He had been in custody before, but he had never been identified as an illegal immigrant. He had served time for previous offenses and had been released, but not deported. A half-dozen women paid dearly for this failure. His story is not unique. With the border so permeable, however, deportation is only a temporary fix. Since 1995, some 32,000 criminal aliens in California have been deported; 12,000 of them have returned to commit new crimes.

Two towns in Ventura County, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley, compete each year for the distinction of being the most crime-free city of more than 100,000 residents in the United States. Each has won the title several times during the past decade. Both cities are more than 80 percent white, about ten percent Hispanic, one percent black, and five or six percent Asian. In both cities, Hispanics commit a disproportionate amount of crime, usually robbery, burglary, assault, and rape. Occasionally, they murder. In Thousand Oaks, such an act still shocks citizens. There are many years in which Thousand Oaks experiences no murders.

That is why the city was stunned when, on November 29, 1999, Ram Gonzales stabbed to death David Smith. It was the city's second murder of the year, an epidemic by Thousand Oaks' standards. The first murder occurred five months earlier and was committed by another Gonzalez, Jesus Gonzalez, who stabbed to death still another Gonzales, Antonio Gonzales. Ram, Jesus, and Antonio are not related, but they are all Mexican immigrants.

For almost the first four months of 2000, there were no murders in Thousand Oaks. "America's Safest City" was back on track. Then on the night of Friday, April 28th, two cars pulled up to the

sidewalk where Edgar Cruz and Andres Morales stood talking. Gunfire erupted, and Cruz and Morales crumpled to the ground. Cruz died on the spot; Morales survived. Cruz's uncle, Pedro Caballero Cruz, said he would return his nephew's body to their hometown, Hidalgo, Mexico, for burial. On Sunday, gunfire erupted again when bullets from a speeding car were sent in the direction of mourners on their way to a memorial service for Cruz.

Ten men have been arrested in connection with the murder and the shooting. Police say the violence is the result of a rivalry between a gang of Mexican immigrants and a gang of Salvadoran immigrants. Diversity evidently has not strengthened the Hispanic community.

The communities that have been affected most severely by the Mexican invasion are not the far-flung middle- and upper-middle-class suburbs of Los Angeles, such as Thousand Oaks, but the middle- and lower-middle-class white areas of the San Fernando Valley and the central core of Los Angeles. Ironically, black South-Central Los Angeles has been particularly hard hit. Blacks in South-Central are voicing their complaints in a manner that whites would never dare for fear of being branded racist, xenophobic, or bigoted. Terry Anderson is a black auto mechanic who has lived nearly all his life near the Coliseum in South-Central Los Angeles. He managed to get an editorial published in the *Los Angeles Times* voicing his concerns over Mexican immigration. If he had been a white auto mechanic, I doubt that the *Times* would have printed his views.

Wrote Terry Anderson in part:

Today, teenagers can't get after-school or entry-level jobs—something to put on a resume. When I was 16 and 17, I had jobs at McDonald's, Burger King, Jack in the Box. Now these jobs in L.A. are held by 30- or 40-year-old immigrants—100 percent Spanish-speaking and probably 90 percent from Mexico.

We have schools here that used to be 80 percent to 90 percent black and now, after a period of 10 years, are 80 percent to 90 percent Latino. As this trend spreads, blacks either can move to other neighborhoods or watch their children stuck in schools listening to Spanish all day. Yet nobody speaks

up for our children the way the pro-immigrant organizations do for immigrant children. As a result, our children are getting the equivalent of half a day of school. Why should our children be deprived?

My two-bedroom house near the Coliseum is worth about \$100,000. A comparable house two doors away sold for \$135,000 and the buyers put five immigrant families in it. A black family can't pay that and can't live like that. In the American culture, we have one family to a house. Each of my immigrant neighbors has seven or eight children, while we Americans have two or three. Before long, all these children are going to need a place of their own. Does a black homeowner have to put four families in the house and a fifth in the garage in order to survive? A for-sale sign in our neighborhood causes panic. We know who will get the house. There will be 20 to 30 people living in it, they will keep goats, they will grow corn in the front yard, they will hang their wash on the front fence. It's a culture clash.

An identical process has been going on in lower-middle-class white neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley. In 1960, the San Fernando Valley was nearly 95 percent white. Today, it is only 60 percent white and the majority of public-school children are Hispanic. Neighborhood after neighborhood of blue-collar whites has been destroyed in exactly the manner described by Terry Anderson.

Some may argue that these demographic changes are nothing new in America, that this process has gone on with every new immigrant group—Irish, Germans, Jews, Poles, Italians. To some degree, the argument is true. However, those groups came into the country legally, and an individual immigrant could be denied entry for a whole host of reasons. Moreover, there was no taxpayer-supported welfare system to greet them. Most importantly, they were not here to extend the boundaries of their mother country into the United States.

The majority of Mexicans who have come into the United States during the last 30 years have come in illegally. Exactly how many we do not know, but estimates put the number at upward of ten million. Half of those reside in Califor-

nia. In 1986, Congress granted amnesty to most illegals, declaring that major reform would be instituted to stop future illegal immigration. Yet nothing much has been done. Now, another amnesty is being suggested. Unlike the 1986 amnesty, this one is supported by the AFL-CIO, which believes that illegal aliens are organized labor's secret weapon to replenish its depleted ranks. Big business also favors amnesty and tacitly approves of illegal immigration. Cheap labor is hard to beat, especially when the taxpayer picks up the tab. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the American people in poll after poll has not only voiced its opposition to amnesty but called for deportations and an increased border presence by immigration agents.

In 1994, Californians passed Proposition 187 by a vote of 60 percent to 40 percent. The proposition would have expelled illegal aliens from public schools and cut off all government benefits (except emergency medical treatment) for illegal immigrants. Even a substantial number of Hispanics (27 percent according to exit polls) voted for it. I suspect that these were the old Mexican-American families of California, known for their social conservatism and patriotism, who have seen their jobs taken and their neighborhoods devastated, and have been embarrassed by the Mexican nationalism of illegal aliens.

Pro-illegal immigrant groups immediately sought to overturn the will of the voters. State legislator Art Torres, addressing a group of Hispanic organizations assembled at the University of California, Riverside, said, "Power is not given to you, you have to take it. Remember Proposition 187 is the last gasp of white America." Subsequently, the pro-illegal groups tied up the proposition in the courts by challenging its constitutionality before a sympathetic judge, Mariana Pfaelzer. Then the new governor of California, Gray Davis, cut a deal with the activist groups, agreeing not to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. This was all done against the will of the people of California. Since then, Supreme Court decisions suggest that Proposition 187 would have passed constitutional muster.

The most disturbing aspect of Mexican illegals is their Mexican nationalism. A graphic demonstration of this occurred in the Los Angeles Coliseum in February 1998, when the U.S. national soccer team played Mexico. There were 91,000

fans in attendance. The U.S. players naively assumed that they were the home team. Their education commenced when the huge crowd began waving Mexican flags, then whistled, blew horns, and booed when the American national anthem was played but cheered wildly during the playing of the Mexican national anthem. Then things got worse: When a group of U.S. fans raised an American flag, they were pelted with fruit, bottles of water, and beer cups filled with urine. "Something's wrong when I can't raise an American flag in my own country," exclaimed Paul Stewart, ducking as a lemon whistled past his head. Stewart, an artist for Disney and the father of three young children, was an obvious target. Tall, blond, blue-eyed, and freckled-faced, he might as well have had an x-ring painted on his chest.

The American players received the same treatment. Some suffered injuries. U.S. player Kasey Keller remarked, "I would have no problem with Mexican-Americans who wanted to support the U.S. team. After all, you live in America. Why don't you become American?" Soccer mom Pat Orland, who brought her son to the game, couldn't believe what she saw, exclaiming, "It's very strange. It feels like I'm in a foreign country."

If anyone tries to argue that the incident at the Coliseum was only an example of unruly soccer fans, I would respond that the Hispanics in the crowd were uniformly unruly in favor of the Mexican team. And I would remind them that the Coliseum is smack-dab in the center of Los Angeles, well within the borders of the good old U.S.A. Moreover, manifestations of Mexican nationalism are not confined to sports. Hispanic organizations in California espouse Mexican nationalism unapologetically. MEChA, a very popular organization among Hispanics on college campuses, calls for the creation of the nation of Aztlan, which would return the Southwest to Mexico. Charles Truxillo, a professor of Chicano studies at the University of New Mexico, calls the creation of Aztlan or "*Republica del Norte*" an inevitability. He says its capital would be Los Angeles. He has further stated that the creation of such a state should be brought about "by any means necessary."

Activist Joe Sanchez declared, "We may not overcome but we will overwhelm." Ricky Sierra, at a rally held by the One Stop Immigration organization, said, "We are here united and we're re-

colonizing America so they're afraid of us—they're very afraid. It's time to take back what is ours." At the same rally, the leader of One Stop Immigration, Juan Jose Gutierrez, was videotaped talking, gesturing, and moving about while the American national anthem was played. He then stood at attention, placed one hand over his heart, and raised his other hand in a clenched-fist salute when the Mexican national anthem was played.

At a demonstration in Westwood, Christopher Cebeda was videotaped leading several organizations in the chant, "Mexicans, Yes! Immigration agents, No!" He then declared, "We are here in Westwood to show white Anglo-Saxon-Protestant L.A.—the few of you who remain—that we're the majority and we claim this land as ours. It's always been ours and we're still here—and none of this talk about deporting. If anybody is going to be deported it's going to be you."

How do politicians in California react to this? Republicans are struck dumb by their fear of being branded racists and their delusional hopes of winning the Hispanic vote. Democrats actively support illegal immigration, knowing that their electoral base is being expanded. Hilda Solis, a California state senator, told the Southwest Voter Registration Project that Mexicans in California are Americans whether they are here legally or not, thus implying that they should be registering and voting. Antonio Villaraigosa, the speaker of the California Assembly, has called for the state to issue driver's licenses to illegal aliens. State Senator Joe Baca has introduced a bill that would make *Cinco de Mayo* and Mexican Independence Day official state holidays. Assemblyman Gil Cedillo has introduced a bill that would outlaw all sanctions or discrimination against illegal aliens. Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante has demanded full medical benefits for illegals. His boss, Governor Davis, declared, "In the near future people will look at California and Mexico as one magnificent region."

One magnificent region! Well, one region, anyway.

A nation has the right to defend its borders, and a people have the right to defend their culture and identity. Isn't this the very essence of nationhood—of sovereignty? When I was growing up, I thought of America as something like one's mother—to be loved, respected, honored, and protected. Now America is up for grabs—to be used, trampled, de-

filed, invaded.

I think of the 28th Marines clawing their way up Mt. Suribachi in the face of murderous fire—and I think of all the American boys on all the hills and on all the shores who fought and died to protect our homeland—and I pray, "Let not their sacrifice be in vain."

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Letter From Forte Dei Marmi

by *Andrei Navrozov*

Culture for the People



The photographs were commissioned by a music company for the cover of Andrea Bocelli's next cult album. The last one had sold five million copies. We were visiting the popular tenor at his house in the resort of Forte dei Marmi, and decided to spend a few days at one of the town's innumerable beach hotels, all equally deserted as the starting gun of the Roman holiday stampede had not yet been fired. As he Nikoned away at his subject with a lens the size of a hog's head ("Cheeky eyes!" he almost demanded at one point, before remembering that the singer is indeed blind), my friend Gusov kept hissing to himself in Russian a 1960's hooligan ditty:

*Culture for the people,
A store where you shop for free!*

I thought that in the circumstances this, too, was a bit tactless, but all the same we had a great big elitist cackle about it afterward.

And then the long journey back to Venice on a hot, muggy summer day. I was beginning to feel irritable. Time seemed to stand still, like the hour and minute hands in magazine advertisements for wristwatches, which, Patek Philippe or Wizard of Oz, are always showing either ten minutes after ten or ten to two. The idea behind this universal convention is that the moment is