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### A University with a Future

JULY 01, 1990 by LEONARD P. LIGGIO

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During recent months, the freedom philosophy has been vindicated in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the coming years will show whether the people in those countries understand how to achieve the benefits of a free and responsible society. Having had the most oppressive of governments, they have been led as much by instinct as by reason and knowledge. They have few institutions in their countries around which to expand the islands of freedom.

The importance of building institutions was demonstrated during the recent Western Hemisphere meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in Guatemala. Part of the program was held at Francisco Marroquín University. Founded in 1972, this institution is a monument to the intellectual contributions of Ludwig von Mises and to the organizational contributions of the founding rector, Manuel Ayau.

Dr. Ayau was influenced by the lectures and writings of Mises, and through him by the ideas of Leonard Read and F. A. Harper. Thanks to Mises' teachings, Ayau and Ulysses Dent recognized that higher education is the most important contested area for shaping social change—and the area in which the socialists have seized most of the ground. Thus, Ayau and Dent founded a new university, and through much hard work and with the inspiration of Mises, Read, W. H. Hutt, Henry Hazlitt, Henry Manne and others, the university has become a great success.

I have given courses at Francisco Marroquín on two occasions, and can attest to the very high quality of the students. They are bright, attentive, courteous young ladies and gentlemen with a strong interest in the freedom philosophy. Francisco Marroquín must compete for students with the national university. At the national university, students can study at almost no cost—the university is guaranteed 4 percent of the central government's budget by Guatemala's constitution, which was written by the university's faculty. Its campus looks like a military encampment after it was overrun by the enemy—in this case, by the students from various militant socialist groups.

In contrast, like a medieval monastery, Francisco Marroquín University was built brick by brick by dedicated devotees of the freedom philosophy. Some of these people formed the early faculty of unpaid instructors. Over time, Dr. Ayau was able to add teachers who had been trained in free market economics at New York University with Mises, at the University of Rochester, UCLA, and other leading U.S. colleges. Francisco Marroquín's programs have expanded to include economics, business, accounting, computer science, architecture, dentistry, medicine, theology, teacher training, social sciences, and law. However, all students are required to complete two semesters in Austrian economics, a semester on the social thought of Ludwig von Mises, and a semester on the social thought of F. A. Hayek. One of the most widely attended courses is "The Logic of Social Cooperation" taught by Juan F. Bendfeldt.

The core curriculum reflects the strength of the economics faculty that is headed by Fritz Thomas and includes Julio Cole, Joseph Keckeissen, and Pablo Schneider. Two outstanding scholars, Eduardo Mayora and Armando de la Torre, are heads, respectively, of the law program and the social science program. The greatest limitation on the educational potential of the Francisco Marroquín University is the current lack of Spanish-language books on the freedom philosophy. The university's newly built campus is an attractive and efficient site for educational activities. Built against the walls of a canyon, the main building encloses a natural central area with a descending stream and greenery. The Ludwig von Mises Library is being built; a student activities center is planned.

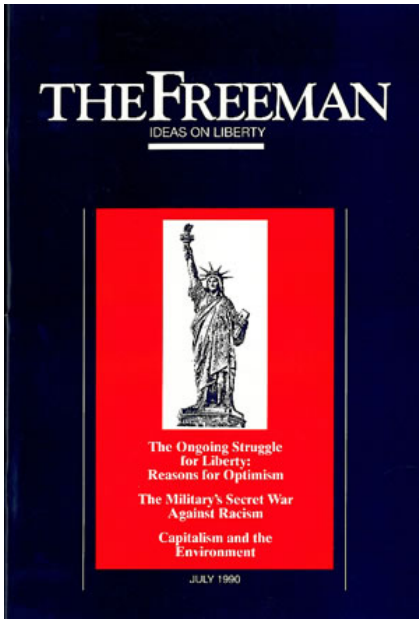
The university is a monument to the Guatemalan business leaders who saw that the true foundation for a free society is built not on short-term political activities, but is based on investment in permanent change. Because of this investment in education, thousands of people will be lifetime advocates of the freedom philosophy. One may need to be more patient for the dividends, but they will be real and permanent.

Manuel Ayau is now rector emeritus, and the current rector is Fernando Monterroso. Rigoberto Juárez-Paz is the vice-rector, and Juan F. Bendfeldt is the university's executive secretary. The trustees and faculty have a broad, international range of contacts, so the curricula are enriched by a continuous stream of lecturers. In addition, there are visiting professors such as Alberto Benegas Lynch Jr. and Eduardo Marty of Argentina, Roger Meiners and Robert McCormick of Clemson University, James Huffman of Lewis and Clark Law School, and Randy Barnett of Chicago-Kent Law School. Thus, the students enjoy some of the best educational programs in the world. These programs receive supplementary support from the Foundation Francisco Marroquín in Stuart, Florida.

Francisco Marroquin students attend the summer seminars of The Foundation for Economic Education, Institute for Humane Studies, and other organizations. They inspire the other students they meet, and return to their unique university with an even deeper understanding of the freedom philosophy.

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## ABOUT LEONARD P. LIGGIO

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