

MEXICO

An immoral sacrifice (January 19-20)

A packed up camping stove reminded our already self-consuming stomachs of their sadness this morning. Our clothes were washed, our bodies clean, our backpacks arranged, and our stomachs were still empty. We surpassed each other in turn in a competitive stomach rumbling concert. Thank goodness that soon we stumbled upon two iced coconuts. When we finished slurping them down, the seller swung his machete to crack our coconuts wide-open. With relish we scraped the coconut meat out of the shells, and in addition, devoured a dessert of two ripe and sweet bananas; an extremely satisfying meal.



Around early afternoon we arrived in Dzitaa (20 km North of Pisté). Our worries about finding a shelter for the coming night were wiped away by our driver. He offered to talk to the head of the town. Hardly reaching the town's centre, Carlos came rolling along in his VW-Minivan in the company of his pals who were bombarding us right away with endless questions. As soon as we mentioned our origin one of the pals retorted at the top of his voice, "Germany! Hitler! Ha-ha! Welcome!" Although I already had been asked several times about Hitler, this welcoming gave me the impression that here time had come to a standstill long ago.

Our driver passed us on to Carlos, who took us, like kids, by the hand and led us to the church in order to get the pastor's permission for letting us camp right in the church's garden. Since the pastor was absent we all went over to the nearby town hall. On the way there Carlos stumbled into an intense conversation with a friend, followed

by a long-lasting discussion with a local police man (obviously another good fellow), and once arriving at the town hall's office got – for us unexpectedly - handed over the key for an iron-barred gate of the gigantic town hall, about ten meters distant to the market square.

We arrived at the gate where Carlos started demonstrating carefully and with thorough explanations how the gate's old rusty padlock was to be opened. "Look here! Insert the key, exactly like this (he showed the position of the key), fix the padlock with your right hand, and turn the key, SO!" At a snail's pace he turned the key forwards and backwards in the padlock. "And, don't you see now the padlock leaps open..." We were asking ourselves in that moment if we made the impression we were descendants from another planet on which neither keys nor padlocks existed. At last we were standing



inside. In front of us lay a place of the size of a soccer field. We were speechless for a while. For all the space being offered to us we faced a problem in choosing the right spot for putting our tent. Toilets were available, water wasn't. Though, with good fortune the hall was big enough that we could keep out of range of the intense smell of urine.

We seemed to have arranged our visit to Dzitaz at the perfect moment. Without suspecting anything special, the evening of our arrival began with a festival paying homage to Santa Ines, the patron saint of the village. An enormous amount of people pushed their way through the market square, which actually doubled as an amusement

park. Quite a few men and women were absorbed in a game of table football. We expected a wide range of things to happen, but table soccer, the main attraction during Santa Ines festival, was definitely not one of them. We reached the arena, which was assembled with simple wooden branches and posts covered with banana leaves for the roof. Here we met Carlos again who introduced us right away to the president of Dzitas village. We extended our hands upwards for a handshake as the president sat enthroned, dressed in a traditional cowboy costume, on top of his proud stallion. Having done so, we



received his personal and thus free of charge invitation to the festivities taking place at the arena. It saved us the entrance fee of 5 Mexican Pesos (\$ 0,50).

We choose to sit in the back of the stand, but regardless, nearly all of the spectator's eyes were fixed with curiosity towards us from all sides. Snack sellers balanced their huge baskets along the wobbly stand construction, offering green-yellowish fruits called ciruelas (a plum reminding us of cherries in shape and size). We took one small bag of these salt-and-chilli-sweet ciruelas. The fire in our mouths was close to what we expected to happen once we stuffed them with those ciruelas, since chilli is not one of our favourite spices. Carefully we tried and noticed that the sweet-sour combination was not that bad,