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Background

The film *Fate of a Child* was commissioned in the 1950s by the United Nations Technical Assistance Division to dramatize and personalize the need for a technical assistance program to help undeveloped countries.

I have made social documentaries in Latin America for various governmental and private agencies, in El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Bolivia, and Uruguay. Insofar as there never was more than a minimum, ineffective program of technical assistance in Latin America, and the countries continue to be economically and politically exploited, the film *Fate of a Child* reflects the conditions that exist today as precisely as it did in the 1950s, when it was made.

The name of the village, San Juan Ixtacala, is real, although it no longer exists. On a trip to Latin America several years after the film was made, Nacio, the artist/interpreter for the film, and I tried unsuccessfully to find the village, to renew our friendship with the people. The major source of employment and means of survival for the villagers had been the dairy farm, around which the village had developed over the years. When the absentee owners decided to close down the dairy farm, the resident workers were left with no local source of income and were forced to move to other locations to seek work. This situation, of course, reflects that of many underdeveloped countries whose economic and social welfare depends on the international market for the few raw materials they produce—except that the people usually cannot move to other countries or other locations to find work.

The living scene and the living story . . . the drama of real experience . . . the intimacy of involvement, the fulfillment of creative interpretation—these are the essential qualities of the documentary film, qualities that give drama and validity to the simplest story, that give life to an idea.

Photographs by Leo Seltzer

Leo Seltzer is Professor in Film, Brooklyn College. He is an eminent photographer and documentary filmmaker and has received many international awards for his work, including an Academy Award for Best Documentary. In 1962 he served as cinema-biographer to the White House for President Kennedy.

This is the story of how a documentary film, *Fate of a Child*, was made, to give face, voice, and dimension to the problems facing our neighboring continent, South America, helpless in the grip of a semicolonial economy.

The scene of *Fate of a Child* is one of Latin America's so-called underdeveloped areas, and the story searches out the basic reasons for the death of a child—one of the countless children living in these areas who die before reaching a first birthday.

To shoot the film, I, as documentary producer-director, and cameraperson Poul Gram drove 3000 miles south from New York with camera, lights, film, and a script that was essentially a list of specifications, to find not a studio and professional cast but a land and a people.

Because a documentary film must grow out of the subject in a natural way, it must at each step be tested against reality and translated into living terms, not only by the acuity of the writer and the art and intuition of the director but also by the openness and cooperation of the people who are its subject. It becomes then a film the people help to make, a film of their lives and their land.

The village of San Juan Ixtacala.

The Village

Once we were on location, this process of translation developed, from script to life, from life to film. It began with the finding of a village, which the writer, Joseph March, had described this way in his script:

... the street is squalid ... decrepit houses ... refuse in the gutters ... a pool of stagnant water in the rutted road. There are women in the street ... many children and dogs. The men are in the fields.

Ignacia Aguirre, called Nacio, our local guide and interpreter, knew his country and the people like the back of his hand. He was a mural artist, employed by the government to teach in the school of the arts and to travel to all parts of the country, to villages large and small for which a work of art had been planned. To Nacio the term "work of art" means what it says. It is an objective and accurate term rather than an emotional or critical phrase. The artist is considered a worker like any other worker, and he is called upon to exercise his craft in the same way as a bricklayer or an architect or a roadbuilder. Nacio had painted murals in many places, on the walls of post offices, stores, schools, and gas stations.

We spotted village after village along the highway, each following the same pattern: houses, backs to the road, behind high walls of adobe brick. The life of the villages went on behind these walls; we saw no people, no children, no animals. There was only the street, lined with adobe walls—only one perspective.

Finally, our search ended in the village of San Juan Ixtacala. A rutted dirt road led off the highway, skirted a canal bordered by eucalyptus trees, and dead-ended in a village square, surrounded by mud-brick houses set apart from one another. Some had fences, waist-high, of piled-up refuse and lopped-off branches, behind which pigs and chickens and dogs rooted and roosted, and children played. There were people in the square. Women washed clothes in the yards, ground corn with stone mortars, appeared in open doorways slapping tortillas between their hands. Everywhere there was the sound of that slapping.

An open sewer ran down the center of the street, leading to the village square, which had a stone cross and a spigot from which two girls were drawing water. Around the square were a few stores and the *pulqueria*—the local gin mill. In the near distance was a church spire.

The thing to do, Nacio explained, was to find the commissioner. A small village like Ixtacala elects a commissioner as manager of the village affairs. He would be the one to talk to about shooting the film here. The children collected around the car were delighted to show us the way to the commissioner's house. It was a short walk.

Ixtacala.

Anghil Fragosa is a welder and the father of eight children. Besides being commissioner, he is also an unofficial judge; because of his reputation in the community for honesty and wisdom he is often called upon by neighboring villagers to arbitrate disputes and help decide issues.

Anghil and his family live in a two-room adobe house. Chickens scatter in the yard. Two boys, his oldest sons, looked up from their work. They were heating a bar of iron over a blacksmith's forge and bending it into a spiral to replace a broken section of an iron grill fence.

The house was immaculate. It had a painted concrete floor of earthen yellow. Light from a glass-covered hole in the roof fell in a pattern of a square on the yellow floor and diffused throughout the room, which took on the color of sunshine.

Anghil was friendly and understanding. I explained through Nacio the purpose of our visit: that we came to make a film that would bring knowledge to the world of the problems faced by Anghil and his countrymen.

Nacio then told Anghil the story of the film. Anghil listened. His wife and dark-eyed children stood by and also listened.

Nacio.

... in this village a child, Jose Hernandez, has fallen sick. The parents, Luis and Felicia, do not know what to do for him. Luis is a worker in the fields. Felicia is young. Jose is their first child. No one—neither the neighbors, nor the priest, nor the estanciero, the landowner—can help. The child grows worse. Luis's anxiety and desperation turn to anger. Why has this happened? Why? Is he at fault? He reviews his life. Always he has worked hard, trying in every way to make a living. Still there has never been enough ... only poverty. Why?

The priest and the neighbors bury the child.

"This is roughly the story of the film," Nacio told Anghil. "You will see as we go along."

"It is *not* a story," Anghil exclaimed. "It is the way things are. It has happened to me and to many others. It is the way things happen here in my village." With Anghil and the villagers willing to help, the task of making *Fate of a Child* had begun.

The written script continues:

It is carnival time. Somewhere in Latin America, a child named Jose Hernandez died. ...

Carnival time. There is dancing and music. People throng the streets in costumes and masks.

In San Juan Ixtacala there was a celebration, a fiesta, September 15, their Independence Day. Benches were brought out from the schoolroom and arranged around the square. Refreshments were served. Anghil read the Proclamation of Independence to the people, who listened and who had their own understanding of the meaning of independence.

A recent experience in emancipation in this village had concerned fresh water, a schoolhouse, and a road that wasn't built. Up until a few years ago Ixtacala had not really been a village. It had been a collection of huts clustered around the walls of an *estancia*, or estate, a feudalistic remnant of the past which still greatly influenced the present village economy. The *estancia* was operated as a dairy. Those who worked for the *estancia* lived within its confines and were, in a sense, the village. The six *estancia* owners, members of a wealthy family living in the city, had not entirely abandoned their control over the village. There came up, for instance, the issue of fresh water, which those assembled to listen to Anghil's reading of the Proclamation of Independence certainly remembered.

Anghil, after his election to the position of commissioner, had made some improvements. The first of these was a water tank to replace the open well in the village square. The people built the water tank, a hand pump, and a spigot over the well, and planted grass in the square and flowers.

One day the six *estancia* owners came to Anghil in a body and asked him by what authority he had taken it upon himself to spend village money to make these "unnecessary" improvements. "Perhaps," said Anghil, appearing to give the matter some thought, "the six of you would care to take up this question directly with the four hundred people of Ixtacala, of whom I am only the representative."

The *estancia* owners retired to the city, but several days later a surveyor and his crew appeared and spent the day in the village, measuring and mapmaking. Word got around that the *estancia* owners themselves planned to improve the village to secure their status and control. They would build a new paved road from the village to the highway. This road would cut diagonally across the town to the square. A house or two would fall in the path of the bulldozers—Anghil's house, for instance.

The people dealt with the matter in their own way, and soon they had erected a clean, new, adobe schoolhouse, lying, coincidentally, in the path of the proposed new road. The *estancia* owners made a second trip to Ixtacala to see about things. They saw the schoolhouse, and went back to the city. They dared not suggest that the new schoolhouse be torn down to make way for the road. Nothing more was heard about the proposed road or about the bulldozers that would have cut through Anghil's house.

Although this episode had no direct bearing on the filming of *Fate of a Child*, it clarified the character and temper of the people about whom *Fate* was written.

When Anghil made his speech after reading the Proclamation, he told the people that their village had been chosen by the director and cameraman to be the location of a film. The film's plot, which he also told them, found a sympathetic response.

"This is to be a picture about ourselves," Anghil told them, "the way we live. It is about our village, and our people, and gives us an opportunity to help to strengthen the understanding between people. Here in our own village we help each other; so it may be in the world that nations will help each other, in the same way. That is the idea as I see it," Anghil said. "And this picture will be part of that idea."

The people of Ixtacala agreed to stand behind this idea and to help in any way they could.

... to end the darkness in which so many live and die ... people like this ... for behind the fiesta's mask, the mask of gaiety ... is the face of reality ... the face of the people ...

Casting

The next step in the making of *Fate* was the casting. It was clear to us that Anghil was meant to play the part of Luis.

"But I am not an actor," Anghil argued. "To help, yes, but I am not an actor." "That is the point the director wishes to make," Nacio assured him. "That for this picture people are wanted, not actors. Still it will be on a professional basis, the director wants it understood." Anghil was to be paid, since he would have to give up his own work for the time required to shoot the picture. Anghil agreed to try; he would play Luis.

The question remained of who would play Felicia, Luis's wife in the script:

... at the edge of the field where Luis is standing, a young woman comes forward with a pail of water and a dipper. It is Felicia. She is young and seems beautiful to him. Perhaps they had no right to marry. They couldn't afford it, but, even the poor fall in love. ...

Maria was one of three village women Anghil brought for my inspection. It was obvious why he had chosen her. Although she was self-conscious and shy, she did not conceal her interest nor her vivacity, and warmth. She would play Felicia.

Since Maria was not giving up profitable employment, I suggested that she be paid something less than Anghil. Maria was agreeable to the suggestion, but Anghil asked whether her work would be equal to his. If so, he pointed out, this village's custom was to provide equal pay for equal work. So Maria and Anghil were paid equally.

Filming

A production crew was organized: Tony, Anghil's 18-year-old son, and two helpers. As the story unfolded more and more of the village was drawn into the shooting of the film: a child playing, a woman's face, a house, a street, a worker, a priest ...

and so Luis and Felicia were married ... married by the priest ...

In a small village like Ixtacala, although there was sure to be a church, and in each house the family altar—a shelf against the wall with a crucifix, a candle, and a sprig of flowers—there was usually no resident priest. The film wedding of Luis and Felicia could not very well wait for the visiting priest, who traveled from village to village performing marriages, baptisms, and communions.

"There is a worker in the fields named Romero," Maria told me. "He is a lot older. He looks more like a priest than the priest." She was right.

Romero's arms, firmly adapted to the movements of the hoe and the pick, found it difficult to learn the new motion of holding a Bible and gesturing in the sign of a blessing. But the awkwardness of his movements was unimportant because of the gravity and beauty of his face, luminous and controlled as befits a dignitary of the church. Romero performed the marriage ceremony.

... and after the marriage, Luis takes Felicia home. Felicia looks around with shining eyes. The stove. The altar. The window. The floor. It is earth. A straw mat is spread out in the corner—the marriage bed. ...

The hut chosen as the home of Luis and Felicia was at the outer edge of town, where the houses were a little further apart from one another. Its curtained doorway and a row of cactus plants in front were framed by the feathered branches of a mimosa tree.

In the hut were what was left of a large bed, the entrails of a spring and a littered mattress—a questionable improvement over the usual *petate*, or straw mat for sleeping. The stove was an open brazier; there was the customary altar; there were no windows but a hole in the wall beside the doorway opening into the yard. The room was thick with flies. The family, mostly small children, followed and watched as arrangements for the shooting were made. The bed was moved out to make space for the camera. The family would live in an adjoining room during the making of *Fate*.

The "set" was prepared simply and naturally. The earthen floor was watered down and swept, and perhaps a table would be borrowed from a neighbor—and a cradle.

Carnival time. Somewhere in Latin America, a child named Jose Hernandez died, child of Luis and Felicia Hernandez, their first child. Why did Jose Hernandez die? It could be said he died of a fever. It could be said . . .

The child, one of twins, named Angelita was tiny, with a face that looked withered and aged. The other twin, robust and unconcerned, crawled with the animals and other children on the dirt floor. But this little one was not ill, simply tiny—no one knew why. Perhaps she was undernourished.

Angelita did not cry, like most of the much-loved and nurtured children in Latin America. She was nearly 2 years old but looked like an infant, an ancient infant. She would play the child who dies of a fever.

All day yesterday Jose was fretful. Felicia picks him up and rocks him in her arms. He is feverish. . . .

Maria had difficulty with this scene. There was no reason for trouble, certainly, in performing a gesture so natural. But now and then in the course of shooting she would suddenly become self-conscious, usually when performing a gesture as familiar as this. I explained that her movements did not seem right, that her action was not as important as her feelings. Maria was patient and smiling but helpless in the face of her own distress. She turned to Anghil for assurance. Anghil took her by the arm and together they walked up and down the room talking. Maria must have understood what he told her, because she came back into the part and was right. Anghil seemed to have this ability with others; he was noticeably trusted and reassuring.

Angelita's little 6-year-old sister carried the tiny baby with her wherever she went, swathed in the *rebozo*. She was always there watching the filming, always solemn, always with her tiny burden. She was the family's second mother. (In families where there are many children, the lot of caring for a new baby falls to a 5- or 6-year-old daughter, who is not yet old enough for school yet not so young that she cannot care for a baby. In well-to-do families the daughters of this age play house with their dolls.) For Angelita's second mother it was not play; it was reality.

Anghil, who takes the welfare of children to heart, told us that these little second mothers were problem students. School for them meant freedom and release from their burden and responsibility. They could not be made to sit down and learn; they wanted only to run and play with others of their age.

Anghil could not read or write. The percentage of literacy was very low even after the building of new schools, many of which the government could not afford to staff. And in most families there was no time to be spared for schooling.

The script often contrasts the wealth of the land and the poverty of the people, the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many, and the curious way in which the continent of Latin America has been throttled, cut off from the wealth of the world, even from its own wealth.

Luis paces up and down the room. He is caged. There is nothing he can do for his child. Why?—it is important to ask this—why must his child die? The candle burning on the altar gives Luis back his shadow, moving on the wall following him like his hardship and poverty; always poverty, no matter how hard he tried.

The land around him is rich in corn, in minerals, in food, but it has never come his way, not any of this wealth. It has always gone out somewhere, to others, out of this country. He had seen with his own eyes, for Luis had worked on the docks. . . .

Anghil had never been further from home than the city, an hour's ride—unless it was by bus, in which case it was likely to take forever. The bus often would end up in a field with the hood open and the driver and half of the passengers peering into the motor while the rest slept or decided to walk.

The Port City

The sequence of Luis working on the docks was to be shot in the nearest port city on the Pacific, a 2-day ride from Ixtacala. And it was to be shot over the coming weekend, which happened to be Anghil's birthday. The village had planned a small fiesta to honor Anghil, but he consoled himself and his friends with the recognition that this trip to a city and to an ocean he had never seen would be the best birthday present he could have.

Anghil had his first look at the Pacific, with a mile of beach and tremendous surf. As the sun went down Nacio's clothes came off and he dove in. I was next. Anghil, not hesitating to taste this new experience, stripped and plunged in to meet the waves. For three hours we played in the ocean like delighted children. Finally arriving at the hotel after dark, we explained why we were late, and were told "no one swims there—that place belongs to the sharks!"

In the morning there was a ship in port.

Luis's hands had helped load the ships with cargoes of wheat and beef—none of it for his own stomach, no matter how hungry he might be. . . .

Anghil, introduced to the foreman in charge of loading, was given a barrow and a hook. He fell into line, working along with the other longshoremen. They questioned him about the film, the same kind of skeptical questions that had been asked by the estancia workers of Ixtacala: Why show this? Why show the misery of the workers rather than the new tall buildings or the pyramids or the fiestas?

Anghil answered their questions this way: "In my region the land is green with corn and yet the people are poor and often go hungry. Why is this? Is it different here? Here we are all working and loading this ship with coffee and yet do you have coffee enough to drink, or money enough to buy it with? If we are to have help, we must show things the way they are."

The longshoreman answered Anghil's questions in turn. It was no different at the dock; this was the first ship to come to port in three days. Who knew when the next would appear? And meanwhile . . . they shrugged.

Was this part of the script? Was this where the story left off and life began? Certainly the dividing line between the two was thin.

The region depended on its foreign trade, with only food-stuffs and a few raw materials to be traded for the many necessities of life. When foreign trade slackened, the docks stood empty and people went hungry.

People in this port city did go hungry. In the mornings, the longshoremen told Anghil, men gathered on the dock, as many as a hundred or more in need of work. This gathering was called a shape-up. If a ship came in, the boss would pick a dozen men, maybe twenty. Men would stand around and wait until it became clear there was nothing more to wait for. Unemployment was more than just a line in the script.

The police station was a room 20 feet square with a wooden bench running around three sides of it. People sat and waited—old men, young men, women, a few children. At the table in the center sat the police chief, without a uniform, his shirt open at the throat. He was sympathetic but not optimistic about finding my still camera, which had been stolen from our station wagon. "In normal times," he said, "it is easier to trace these things. One knows at least where to look. Unemployment has made thievery anybody's business."

Our status as guests gave the matter special importance. Six men, plainclothesmen, were summoned from among those waiting on the benches. A secretary transcribed my testimony, including a description of the camera, a map of the location of the station wagon, and a map of the location of the camera on the seat of the car. Everything possible would be done.

Felicia and Luis are married (played by Maria and Anghil).

"After their marriage Luis took Felicia to their home."

"A cradle—for their future hope."

Jalapa.

Angelita and her second mother.

Jalapa.

Nacio left his phone number with the police just in case. There was no use waiting around; it was this unemployment.

In the street people collect. A man on the steps of a public building speaks to a crowd of unemployed. There is a demonstration. Banners. Angry voices and gestures. . . .

Again our script would be paralleled by life. This sequence happens in the film just as it happened in reality.

Jalapa

Jalapa, a town of 1500 people, was our first stop on the way back to Ixtacala. Jalapa had a prosperous look, with a factory, paved streets, and many houses.

It was Sunday morning and many people were out in the streets, walking toward the square where there was a demonstration. The faces of the demonstrators reflected anxiety, anger, determination. Their absorption was such that none noticed our camera.

Anghil lost himself in the issue, which involved a protest against the high price of drinking water. The town's drinking water was supplied by a private concern; they had raised its price. The people could not pay the increase and considered it unjustified. Anghil could not be torn away. This organized, collective voice was something he had never heard before. In it echoed the voice of his own village, standing together in its own way against the new road, protecting its right to decide for itself, asserting its independence and its democracy.

. . . and beyond the bright lights of the industrial centers still lay the old darkness, the old way of life. Things were happening but they had not yet happened for the men who worked in the fields. And so a child by the name of Jose Hernandez died. . . .

The end of *Fate* approached. We were confronted with the problem of shooting the death of the child, the funeral, and the burial. Everyone was disturbed by the need to photograph the child in death. It touched perhaps too closely the reality it portrayed.

Death in Latin America is not a thing apart from life. It is too common an occurrence. One out of five children dies before the first birthday. Funerals are frequent sights—processions behind a coffin; flowers, palm leaves; mourners and children. The dead are not forgotten. Friends, the wife, the sons, the mother may picnic on a fine day beside the grave.

Shots of the funeral.

Romero and Felicia with
Jose's coffin.

Even the simulated death of a child, of Angelita, is disturbing. Angelita, taken from the arms of her sister, began to cry. Perhaps this is why attempting to film the child's death was so disquieting. A plan was worked out to keep her from crying.

Dressed in her best clothes, Angelita had her noon-time meal and was left to fall asleep on the family bed. Lying on that large bed, she looked tinier and more withered than ever. Her sister bumped the bed now and then to chase away the flies, the chickens, the cats and dogs. When Angelita was asleep, two boards, joined like the corner of a small coffin, were placed around her. The camera focused on the wooden corner of the quasi-coffin behind her head. Now and then in sleep she turned her head.

"Wait," Nacio advised. "Ten minutes and she will turn her head back again." She did so, although how Nacio knew this remained a mystery. With these 10-minute lapses in filming, all went well.

The next day we planned to shoot the scenes of the nailing down of the coffin lid. The bottomless coffin was ready to be placed like a frame over the sleeping child. Only this day the child would not fall asleep. She was remarkably awake and active.

Anghil and Angelita's mother talked, and Anghil reported the trouble: Coca-Cola. In every village, even those that have no other electric current, there are Coke coolers. Coke is a much-loved treat for children, preferred even to coffee and tortillas because it is special and American.

So that day they had allowed Angelita to have a Coke. There was nothing to be done about it. She could not sleep because of the caffeine in the drink.

Luis comes out of his house with Felicia, following the small coffin carried on the shoulders of a neighbor. Other neighbors leave their doorways and join the small procession. . . .

For the funeral procession, a cast was assembled from the villagers. No directions were needed; they were told only to behave as mourners behave. They had experienced their role too many times in reality.

Still, the funeral became something of an event and even a source of amusement to the village. The procession moved from street to street, following an itinerary dictated by the needs of the filming. It passed the house of Luis and Felicia, located at one end of town; it cut across the square and then through a field to reach the cemetery. I filmed this sequence during the afternoons when the sky became cloudy, just before the daily rain. The gray sky and soft natural light reinforced the somber mood of the action. For a few days the funeral procession could be seen here and there at various points along the way.

Romero, who had performed the wedding, was again called in from the fields, this time to assume the role of pallbearer. He found it easier to hold the coffin than the scriptures. The coffin was not an uncommon burden.

The morning of the shooting of the burial, a messenger was dispatched from Anghil to advise me that on this day there happened to be a real funeral. An old man had died and was to be buried that afternoon. The movie funeral should therefore get a good head start.

Everything went smoothly, although there was some confusion apparent among the villagers: "Is it this time the real funeral or the movie funeral?"

Small wooden crosses mark the graves. Some are weatherbeaten and grey with age. In the foreground is a freshly dug grave. Jose's coffin is lowered. . . .

Just as the shooting of the film funeral was completed, the real funeral approached the cemetery gates. A real coffin was lowered into a real grave. The camera turned from the staged burial of Luis's "child" to catch the stricken faces of the real mourners, who were captured on film to weep for the imagined death of a child.

Viewing the Rushes

From the film laboratory in New York came the rushes of the film. Anghil and Maria, Romero, Angelita's parents, and Tony and his two helpers wanted to see themselves and their village on the screen. A trip was organized to the city to project the unedited film.

The rushes of *Fate* took them by surprise, for in spite of everything they knew and understood about the making of this picture, it was like no other movie they had ever seen. It was nothing like the fantasies of Tarzan, for instance, shown once a month or so in the next village; it was nothing like the love story or the action of a western. It didn't look like a real movie, they confessed. They could have "acted" so much better if they had seen themselves earlier, they said. It was one thing to perform natural and understandable actions in front of the camera, but it was another to see the result on the screen, which had always been for them a source of fantasy.

It was, I pointed out, what they had seen on the screen before that had not been true to life. In our film they were *supposed* to look like themselves; their houses and streets and the way they ground corn and laid flowers on the altar and rocked their babies—all this was in the picture the way it really happened in their lives, not acted or contrived to be different or special. Still, it was not easy for them to accept the reality of their own lives reflected from the

The World Medical
Warrior of Nineteenth-Century America
Nacio Seltzer

Nacio, Leo Seltzer, and Poul Gram.

Filming *Fate*.

"Luis and Felicia depart
from the sadness of their
village."

"The way things arrange themselves here in Latin America—the beauty of the landscape, the misery of the people."

movie screen on which they had previously seen only fantasy.

Meanwhile, certain changes had begun to take place in the village of Ixtacala, visible changes. . . .

Other countries might give valuable assistance, but the final results would have to be achieved by the people of Latin America themselves. . . .

At the house with the feathered mimosa tree in the yard, the house with the littered bed and the tiny child, a load of red brick and freshly quarried stone appeared one day, bought with the money earned by participation in the film. So this house would have a new fence, not a fence of piled-up refuse and lopped-off branches, but one of red bricks and stone, the first in the village of Ixtacala. Behind it the pigs and chickens and the half-naked children would enjoy the privacy and pride they had earned for themselves.

And in the yard of Maria's house, a fresh well and a cistern were dug and the water was piped into the house where, with the money Maria had earned in the making of *Fate*, a real bathroom had been built. It had green tile walls, a tub, and a toilet that flushed—the only one in Ixtacala.

"Yes, progress was quickening its pace . . ." and in the household of Anghil there was an improvement of another kind. A new shed, built with the money he had earned in the making of *Fate*, would serve as a workshop for his two sons. In Anghil's words: "My boys have to choose now, the way they will go as men, of work and achievement or of drifting and trouble. Perhaps this workshop of their own will help: help them to choose the right way."

Another of the changes that would come about for the villagers as a result of their contribution to the film was the pipes that would carry water into the houses of Ixtacala from the covered tank in the square.

In life, as in the script, the incidence of disease is high, but hunger and malnutrition are still the basic problems of Ixtacala, as they are in all underdeveloped areas of Latin America.

Jose Hernandez died because he lived in an underdeveloped area. But the old colonial system which was responsible for the death of this child was doomed. The people were determined to destroy it. Help was on the way and the knowledge put new hope into the hearts of the people.

Fate of a Child is a story about people forced to live under pressures of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, people who in spite of these pressures live with natural grace and dignity, determined to make for themselves a way of life in which deprivation, ignorance, and death, as it came to Jose Hernandez, will no longer be. There can be no clearer statement of the aim and purpose of *Fate of a Child*.