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The government's decision to impose anti-dumping duties on imports of Chinese products drew strong protest from the National Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (Confederacion Nacional de Camaras de Comercio, CONCANACO), and from the Chinese government. The preliminary duties, announced on April 14, cover 10 products mainly apparel, toys, and footwear (for more details see SourceMex, 04/21/93). In late April, CONCANACO, on behalf of importers and Mexico City retailers, criticized the Trade Secretariat (Secretaria de Comercio y Fomento Industrial, SECOFI) for not giving Mexican merchants a chance to prepare for the duties. CONCANCO asked SECOFI to exempt from duties imports of Chinese products that had been ordered before April 14. According to Marcos Levi, CONCANACO's foreign trade coordinator, the government action placed in jeopardy US$30 million to US$40 million in irrevocable letters of credit, which Mexican importers had already extended to Chinese sellers. Next, Levi said CONCANACO is seeking further evidence that Chinese products were being sold in Mexico at less-than-fair value and has requested access to government records related to the dumping case. However, in an interview on April 28 with El Financiero daily business newspaper, deputy Trade Secretary Pedro Noyola said SECOFI will not allow exemptions for any products covered by the anti-dumping duties. SECOFI's strict application of the new anti-dumping measure was evident at the customs station in Chetumal, Quintana Roo state, where customs officers held about four million nuevo pesos (US$1.24 million) worth of Chinese products covered by the new anti-dumping duties. Importers had attempted to bring the products into Mexico via Belize. Felipe Barquet Armenteros, president of the National Chamber of Commerce (Camara Nacional de Comercio, CANACO) in Chetumal, protested the move, saying the importers had negotiated purchases of the products before the action against China went into effect. In fact, Barquet said another 40 containers of Chinese products, worth 100 million nuevo pesos (US $31.05 million) negotiated before imposition of the anti-dumping duties are in Belize awaiting entry into Mexico. SECOFI's strategy of applying preliminary duties represents an attempt to prevent a sudden surge of imports while the government decides whether to impose permanent duties. In previous cases, no duties were imposed until evidence of dumping had been established, allowing foreigners in the interim to flood the Mexican market with their products. In Beijing, an official for China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation on April 16 said the duties violated the agreement between Mexico and China to grant each other most-favored-nation trading status. The status is designed to guarantee exporters the lowest available duties. The official warned that Mexico's action would "inevitably" harm trade and economic relations between China and Mexico. He hinted that China is considering retaliatory measures. (Sources: Journal of Commerce, 04/19/93; El Financiero, 04/28/93; Notimex, 05/02/93; El Financiero International, 05/03/93)