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President Carlos Salinas de Gortari’s administration is attempting to improve trade relations with China, although the government's aggressive campaign to eliminate imports of unfairly subsidized products by several of Mexico's trade partners could hinder these efforts. Until now, the administration's aggressive anti-dumping stance has especially affected imports of Chinese products. In April, the Trade Secretariat (Secretaria de Comercio y Fomento Industrial, SECOFI) imposed duties ranging from 16% to over 1,000% on eight categories of Chinese products. Duties were later reduced for four of the eight categories (see SourceMex, 04/21/93, 05/26/93, 10/20/93). Moreover, in late November, SECOFI announced plans to investigate new complaints that imports of luggage and handbags originating in China were dumped at below market prices in Mexico. The investigation also directed against imports of those products from Hong Kong and Taiwan was requested by leather luggage manufacturers Altro, S.A. and Productos Para Viaje, S.A. de C.V. The companies said the prices of luggage products imported from China between January and July were 64% lower than those produced in Mexico. According to the petition, a number of the luggage and handbag items are purchased from Asian countries by companies based in the US, and then re-exported to Mexico via a third country in order to mask the country of origin. The Mexican importers named in the complaint were: Representacion Imer, Exportaciones e Importaciones Sherdi, Distribuidora de Encendedores Joskes de Mexico, Bolsas y Accesorios, and Estrategias Deportivas. The strong campaign against imports of some products from China comes at time when Salinas is attempting to boost trade relations with Asia. In fact, Salinas was scheduled to lead a trade mission to China and Japan in mid-December. According to sources at the Mexican embassy in Beijing, the delegation was due to meet with President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Li Peng, and Zhu Rongi, the vice minister in charge of economic affairs. Mexican and Chinese leaders are expected to sign cooperation accords in the areas of science and technology, archeology, fisheries, and rural development. Nevertheless, the sources said two major themes were expected to dominate the discussions: China's concern about Mexico's aggressive stance against imports of Chinese products, and how China could tie into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by boosting trade with Mexico. Mexico's recent entry into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, of which China is a member, was expected to provide a common ground for discussions on trade. Mexico's efforts to strengthen trade and economic ties with China were initiated by Salinas's predecessor, former president Miguel de la Madrid, who visited Beijing in 1986. During the Asia trip, Salinas is also expected to visit Japan another key member of APEC to discuss trade matters, especially how Japanese businesses could benefit from NAFTA. In fact, on Dec. 3, a delegation of 50 Japanese business leaders, bankers, and government officials visited Monterrey to explore such opportunities. The delegation met with Nuevo Leon governor Socrates Rizzo Garcia and other representatives from the private and public sectors. According to La Jornada, the Japanese business leaders representing companies such as the industrial giant Nisho Iwai expressed interest in investing in such Nuevo Leon-based industries as steel and petrochemicals.
(Source: El Financiero, 11/30/93; Associated Press, 12/03/93; La Jornada, 11/30/93, 12/01/93, 12/04/93; Agence France-Presse, 12/09/93; Notimex, 12/13/93)

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