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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

712-00/8-3161

FROM : Amembassy MEXICO

288

NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

August 31, 1961

DATE

REF : EmbDes 250, August 24, 1961

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SUBJECT: Political Polarization of Left and Right in Mexico

The simultaneous appearance of two manifestoes of divergent political tendencies and ideologies in the Mexico City press of August 24 only brought into the light what had been dimly but unmistakably discernible for several months: the marshalling of the political forces of the left on the one hand, and a movement to create an anti-communist, national force on the other.

From all indications the anti-communist coalition came into being as a reaction or counter-force to ever-increasing leftist activity led by ex-President Lázaro CARDENAS, whose boldest public action was his organization and sponsorship of the Latin American Conference for Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence and Peace (EmbDes 1103, April 3, 1961). Cardenas' reappearance on the political scene after almost two decades of enigmatic silence that had earned him the epithet of "The Sphinx", can be directly traced to the advent to power of Fidel CASTRO in Cuba. The Cuban revolution offered the pretext for the stepping up of leftist agitation and propaganda - witness the student demonstrations of August 1960 and April 1961 which were manifestly pro-Castro and anti-U.S., and the emergence of the leftist periodical "Politica". The defense of Cuba was also the main theme of the "Peace Conference".

One of the aims of the "Peace Conference" was the organization in each Latin American country of a committee that would be charged with seeking the implementation in each republic of the resolutions adopted at the Conference. In Mexico this resulted in the formation of the Provisional Committee for National Sovereignty and Economic Emancipation that held its first national assembly on August 4 and 5, 1961. At this meeting the Movement for National Liberation (MNL) was constituted and the following twenty-six persons were elected to the MNL's national committee: Lic. Alonso JUILAR, Ignacio Aguirre, Lic. Clementina B. de BASSOLS, Lic. Alberto BREMAUNTZ, Ing. Narciso BASSOLS Batalla, Marta BORQUEZ, Dr. Enrique CABRERA, Guillermo CALDERON, Ing. Cuauhtémoc CARDENAS, Dr. Jorge GARRION, Lic. Fernando CARMONA, Heberto

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FORM 6-61 FS-439 GPO 9 12596

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CASTILLO, José CHAVEZ Morado, Carlos FUENTES, Lic. Ignacio GARCIA Téllez, Lic. Enrique GONZALEZ Pedrero, Dr. Eli de GORTARI, Mario H. HERNANDEZ, Jacinto LOPEZ, Braulio MAIDONADO, Ing. Manuel MARCUE Pardifias, Arturo ORONA, Carlos SANCHEZ Cárdenas, Gral. José SIUROB, Manuel TERRAZAS and Profesora Adelina ZENDEJAS.

Although not elected to the national committee, Lázaro Cárdenas is still the leading figure of the MNL. He made the keynote speech at the opening session of the August 4 meeting, linking US imperialism with the Mexican clergy and oligarchy. He said, in part, "All the peoples of America since their independence have had to struggle against conservative and regressive interests...Neither in the fight for Independence, nor in the Reform or the Revolution of 1910, had the forces of the dominant oligarchies, of the political clergy and of the North American imperialism joined forces as is happening today." Resolutions comprising 115 pages were adopted at the assembly; they covered almost every conceivable subject of national and international activity. While many recommendations were of the type that all Mexicans could agree on, such as need for economic development, improvement in the standard of living, and better education facilities, others clearly revealed their communist inspiration. Among these may be cited those advocating the repudiation of international agreements such as the Rio Pact, the dismantling of the "North American satellite tracking station" at Guaymas, and the dissolution of the Inter-American Defense Board and of the Joint Mexican-US Defense Commission. With respect to Cuba, the resolutions called for the creation of a National Committee of Solidarity with Cuba, for the denunciation of the aggressive US policy toward Castro, and for the maintenance of a policy of non-intervention and self-determination with respect to the island. The assembly also advocated the establishment of diplomatic relations by Mexico with the Peoples Republic of China, and the latter's recognition in the United Nations.

Spurred by the leftist initiative openly displayed at the "Peace Conference", and the pro-Castro, anti-U.S. demonstrations of April 18, which included the sacking and burning of the U.S.-Mexican Cultural Institute at Morelia, Michoacan, Mexican anti-communist elements began to take counter-measures. In late May former President Abelardo RODRIGUEZ in a letter addressed to leaders of associations representing commercial, industrial and banking interests suggested an organization designed to spread among workers, farmers, white collar workers and youth, the principles of political, social and economic liberalism as an antidote to communism. Soon after, in early June, large gatherings of Catholics were held in front of churches in leading Mexican cities. Since then posters and stickers condemning communism have appeared in abundant numbers throughout the Republic. The seventh anniversary of the Cuban July 26th Movement was marked at the University of Mexico by the burning of an effigy of Castro by anti-communist groups, while the pro-Castro followers remained comparatively inactive. This anti-communist sentiment, under the slogan of "Cristianismo, si - Comunismo, no", was widely exploited by the Church and lay Catholic groups in a national campaign against the left. It was probably out of fear that the left-right rift was getting too acrimonious that the President made his widely publicized speech of June 7 in which he said that his government would not tolerate agitation from either extreme (EmbDes 1487, June 21, 1961). The nationwide congressional elections of July 2 in which the anti-government, pro-clerical Party of National Action (PAN) polled slightly over thirty per cent of the vote, have been interpreted by some observers as attesting to the effectiveness of the Church's role in mobilizing the citizenry with an anti-communist slogan.

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With this background the stage was set for the appearance of the two manifestoes on August 24. The anti-communist one reportedly drafted in part by former President Miguel ALEMAN was signed by several politicians known to be anti-clerical, among them former Foreign Minister Ezequiel PADILLA. This fact has led to some speculation that this manifesto constituted an attempt by experienced politicians of the PRI right wing to steal from the Church the leadership of the successful anti-communist campaign. The Embassy has heard various reports that the text of the text of the manifesto was either cleared by or made known to the President. At least he did not strongly oppose its publication. The simultaneous publication of the leftist manifesto is widely believed to be more than a fortuitous coincidence. Two explanations are being heard: 1) that the leftists learned about the preparation of the anti-communist manifesto, and rushed completion of theirs to coincide with the former, and 2) that the President approved the publication of the anti-communist manifesto on condition that a leftist one also appear in order to give some balance.

It is too early to assess the effect of the polarization of the left and the right, as evidenced by their respective statements. The immediate purpose of their issuance appears to be to influence the President's Annual Message to the Congress (the Informe) to be delivered on September 1, on the convening of the new legislature. In his informe the President enumerates the achievements of his administration over the past twelve months, and defines the policy to be pursued in the future. Both camps undoubtedly hope that the President will feel pressured to lean their way, either by the adoption of favorable policies or the awarding of key governmental positions.

In the longer view, ideological lines are being drawn with sights focussed on the next presidential elections, still three years away. Whether the manifestoes augur the formation of new political parties should the President's PRI fail to reconcile the new groupings is too speculative an issue to consider at this time. However, most observers agree with an editorial in the Marxist "El Popular", which said, "The simultaneous appearance of two manifestoes which define the ideology of two groups of Mexicans important for their ideas, their social position, and their participation in the politics of the nation, is without a doubt the most important event in national affairs at this moment."

For the Ambassador:


Joseph J. Montllor
First Secretary of Embassy

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