

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Crackdown in Juchitán

The government has crushed a Pol Pot-like terrorist enclave in the south: is this a warning to the PAN in the north?

A PRI electoral rally in Juchitán, Oaxaca, July 31 ended with two persons dead and more than 50 wounded. A group of provocateurs led by the radical Maoist COCEI group reportedly shot into a crowd of 15,000 which had gathered to listen to candidates of the ruling PRI party.

The incident was the latest in a series of violent confrontations provoked by the Worker, Peasant, and Student Coordinating Group of the Isthmus (COCEI) since the group's leader, Leopoldo de Gyves, won the mayoralty of Juchitán in the spring of 1981.

The response of federal and state authorities was crushing. On Aug. 3, the Oaxaca state congress, controlled by the PRI, declared the COCEI government in Juchitán void, postponed elections 150 days, and appointed a new interim mayor. The state attorney general issued arrest warrants against de Gyves, the chief of the Juchitán police, and two other COCEI adherents, accusing them of homicide, illegal possession of weapons, criminal association, and damage of property.

A review of the de Gyves rule of Juchitán shows that such accusations are an understatement.

For the last two years the group, which originated in the Mexican Communist Party and in contaminated layers of the Oaxaca PRI machine back in 1973, had turned Juchitán into testing ground for a Mexican version of the genocidal policies implemented by Pol Pot in Kampuchea.

Using revolutionary slogans, de Gyves had created his own "people's militia" which had imposed a reign of

Jacobin terror. Dozens of businesses had been forced to close down under the threat of indiscriminate expropriations, and several schools closed after being accused of spreading "bourgeois education." To prevent the past administration of President José López Portillo from building development projects in the area such as a trans-Isthmus container "land-bridge," the group threatened terrorism and sabotage.

Ties to Central America's bloodbath may in fact have been the element which finally forced the government to act. Last October, several sources went to the national press to charge that de Gyves was building a guerrilla camp and a weapons arsenal. On the floor of the Oaxaca congress Aug. 3, PRI deputy Arturo Molina Sosa revealed that de Gyves had set up a weapons channel to bring arms into Mexico from Central America.

Parts of the group's international connections apparently were established through the magazine *Por Esto!*, which specializes in promoting terrorism in all of Latin America, with special emphasis on Mexico and Central America.

Other groups will be taking lessons from the events. Labor boss and PRI leading figure Fidel Velázquez told the press Aug. 1 that "any party which aids the destabilization of the country should lose its registration," a warning to the PSUM leftist alliance (which includes the former Mexican Communist Party) which has been acting as the COCEI's political "big brother." It was also a warning to the PAN party in the north, which is run-

ning a right-wing version of the kind of actions COCEI has launched in Oaxaca.

But the battle is not over and the risks of a terrorist activation remain high. The secretary-general of the PSUM, Pablo Gómez Alvarez, has told the press the PRI and the government "will see the people's response" to the crackdown on the COCEI. Other defenders of the COCEI, especially the Jesuit-run Theology of Liberation apparatus which has played a central role in building up the COCEI, is planning to raise an international human rights campaign around the crackdown. Bishop Arturo Lona of Tehuantepec, a leading light of the "liberationist" movement, is one of the strongest protectors of the Pol Pot-style "experiment."

A thorough investigation of the COCEI case could well lead to other, even more important, financial and "intellectual" godfathers. Hippie painter Francisco Toledo, whose existentialist paintings sell for exorbitant prices in European markets, is identified by several sources as the group's financial backer.

Another Oaxaqueño painter, Rufino Tamayo, may also be implicated. Tamayo's close connections to the Televisa TV network, associated to the Azcárraga-Alemán business empires, is the point to watch.

An investigation could even touch certain factions in the PRI. The PRI senator for Oaxaca, Andrés Henestrosa, is the chief political protector of COCEI moneybags Toledo. Henestrosa is part of the corrupt political machine of former Mexico City mayor Carlos Hank González, and like Tamayo, is a favorite of the Televisa crowd. Former Agriculture Minister Victor Bravo Ahuja and his anthropologist wife are also reported to be implicated.