

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Changes in the PRI

The ruling party is finally preparing to take on the fascist opposition: the National Action Party.

This month, Mexican politics are dominated by the end of the era of appeasement within the ruling PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party), which has permeated the policies of this party.

The changes were announced in a gargantuan demonstration of the PRI (more than 150,000) outside the Monument to the Mexican Revolution and before Miguel de la Madrid and his entire cabinet, governors, deputies, senators, PRI state party chairmen, peasants, labor, and popular leaders, which represent the constituency of the PRI.

For foreigners, mostly the so-called observers of Mexican affairs at the U.S. embassy as well as executives of U.S. firms, this ceremony and the announcements made here of "drastic changes" inside the PRI, are part of the Mexican ritual of "doing the same thing with different words," as a U.S. executive told me.

But the announcements made by PRI head Adolfo Lugo Verduzco, a well known "man of the President," mark the end of the hegemony of the political faction identified with former PRI head Jesús Reyes Heróles, now education minister, whose anti-constituency policies during the past year had sent the PRI to its lowest level of popularity in decades. The Reyes Heróles policy was carried on by Mario Vargas Saldana, secretary general of the PRI, and second in command in the hierarchy of the government's electoral machine. As secretary general, Vargas Saldana was in charge of

choosing candidates for local, state, and national elections. As a result, the PRI suffered heavy losses last year to the National Action Party (PAN)—a Nazi-inspired party, as *EIR* has shown—in the states of Chihuahua and Durango, and almost lost the states of Baja California North, Sinaloa, and Tamaulipas.

During last year's elections, the PRI faced a growing PAN opposition that was the beneficiary of hundreds of millions of pesos from the former private bankers who were enraged at the "nationalization" of the private banking system decreed by former President José López Portillo. Since then, the former bankers have exerted tremendous pressure on the government in order to get political power. And some of them are still trying to promote a national revolt.

The second aspect of the PRI losses was the result of the massive popular rejection of the governmental economic austerity policies that sent unemployment up to nearly 2 million. Reyes Heróles's group stated that the PRI has to be "decoupled" from the mass, farm, and labor sectors of the party and oriented into the hands of the *caciques* (local bosses), economic bigwigs, so-called "intellectuals," and corrupt officials. This provoked an insurrection within the party.

Lugo Verduzco described this phenomenon during his speech on the 55th anniversary of the founding of the party, when he said, "We do not hide the mistakes and deviations that [the PRI] has sometimes in-

curred. . . . The failures are not to be imputed to the revolution or its party. . . . They are the failures of people who have made mistakes or betrayed our principles. . . . We will no longer tolerate that because of a few corrupt or irresponsible people, the profound work of transformation of the Mexican revolution shall be enjoined." He also said that the PRI will be overhauled and there will be a "big mobilization" throughout the country to revive the power of the party.

The changes inside the PRI came as an answer to the demands of the labor and peasant sectors of the party, but especially of the powerful CTM, the national labor confederation, which was openly fighting the undemocratic methods of Vargas Saldana and his crowd. The CTM is the best organized, most experienced, and most disciplined social group in Mexico besides the army. Several times the CTM demanded that the party confront the growing Nazi opposition in the country. This demand was put forward during the PRI convention on March 6, where CTM speaker Juan Millán denounced the participation of certain PRI members in support of the PAN, as well as the collaboration of the PAN with the PSUM (formerly the Communist Party of Mexico) against the PRI. He also said that some governors and officials of the PRI were creating obstacles to veteran militants of the party and provoking apathy and desertion by party members.

Lugo Verduzco announced the resignation of Vargas Saldana and his replacement with Francisco Luna Kan, whose long party career is linked to the peasant sector. But CTM leaders, including its head Fidel Velázquez, are not fully satisfied with the selection of other party officials, especially the position of secretary of the organization, a key spot for mass organizing.