

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Labor slams Federal District scheme

Behind the plan to reform the Constitution, the corrupt Alemán crowd is angling to elect the next President.

A new debate has sprung up in the capital's political life. The Interior Department, under Manuel Bartlett, put out a call to discuss changing the political structure of the Federal District so that instead of Mexico's President naming the regent of Mexico City, the post would be popularly elected, as in the other states.

The end point of this so-called citizens' debate would be the reform of the Mexican Constitution, which set up the Federal District as the center of the Powers of the Union, and its regent as a trusted man of the President, whose decisions come from the Executive and in no way are independent, like a governor's. In short, it would mean changing the strongly presidential republican system.

The demand has been raised for years by the think-tank El Colegio de Mexico, a front for the Trilateral Commission. The project surged forward with then-Interior Secretary Jesús Reyes Heróles's Political Reform of 1979, and picked up steam from U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms's (R-N.C.) allegations of lack of democracy in Mexico. Now, once again the Interior chief is picking it up.

Besides the registered political parties, Bartlett invited to the consultation-meetings many "leftist" intellectuals. A big splash was made by Mario Moya Palencia, the new ambassador to the U.N., a special guest of Manuel Bartlett, who was Moya's state secretary when he was interior secretary. Moya not only declared himself in favor of the initial proposal,

but proposed upping the number of congressmen to 500 (from 400), in the name of participatory democracy.

Most political analysts see these meetings as a trial balloon for Bartlett's presidential race.

But the leader of the giant Confederation of Workers of Mexico (CTM), Fidel Velázquez, released a statement to the press saying the Interior chief's call is out of line, because "the people of Mexico are called to engage in a battle they don't want, at a time when there is overt and brazen economic, political, and diplomatic pressure by conservative circles trying to condition financial aid to our country in exchange for renouncing its sovereign rights and subjecting its economy to international finance capital; that it change its political system, which they call anti-democratic and corrupt, that it favor the internal forces of reaction, that it establish a two-party system with the same purpose, and tolerate foreign interference into its electoral process on the pretext of making sure it is clean."

Velázquez stressed that energies must be channeled into solving the economic crisis, the foreign and domestic debt, unemployment, the recession, inflation, and food supplies. He rejected flat-out the idea of making the Federal District another state within the state (where the Executive is): "It would open the doors to the reactionary right-wing opposition, making the capital the prize to chase or conquer, bringing into it their policy of violence, aggression, and

systematic denigration of the government, inside and outside the country." Velázquez called the idea of increasing the number of congressmen practically absurd. What should be done he said, is for them to get to work—as the constitution mandates.

Velázquez said that all of his arguments are laid out in a document sent the day before by the CTM to Interior; although the ruling PRI party had not consulted its base on the matter, the CTM will fight such initiatives "even at the risk of remaining alone."

The labor leader's hard line against political futurism has to do with the fact that Manuel Bartlett is a presidential contender, backed by the Televisa consortium, stronghold of the late ex-President Miguel Alemán Véldez and his organized-crime cronies. The international bankers like him, too: Bartlett was invited to New York to get a population prize, and was lavishly feted by Citibank's William Rhodes, president of the advisory committee of Mexico's creditor banks.

The second bigwig in this group is Mario Moya Palencia, who is frantically trying to become foreign secretary before the current presidential term ends. Moya's career has just taken a dizzying upturn. After he lost the presidential nod to José López Portillo, Moya's wife left him and he was practically frozen out of political life; he owes his new U.N. post to none other than U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz. The rejuvenated Moya has a hectic social life. He came to the soccer finals in Mexico City with a convoy of friendly ambassadors invited by him. His name crops up in the social pages rubbing elbows with the Jet Set and "intellectuals." Lo and behold, the Televisa-linked daily *Novedades* has been running a campaign to oust the current foreign secretary, Bernardo Sepúlveda.