

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

Cárdenas defends sovereignty

Opposition presidential candidate blasts the superpowers' "New Yalta" deals behind threats to Central America.

Nearly 150,000 followers of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the presidential candidate of Mexico's opposition National Democratic Front (FDN), gathered March 18 in the Constitution Plaza of Mexico City, facing the national palace, to hear his message in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Mexico's oil nationalization. That historic act, carried out by Cuauhtémoc's father, Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas, in 1938, gave Mexico long-overdue economic and political sovereignty, and simultaneously guaranteed the position of the ruling PRI party for the next 50 years.

That sovereignty is now being surrendered to the very international oligarchy General Cárdenas once defeated. Lawfully, his son Cuauhtémoc—who was a PRI governor of the state of Michoacán for six years—left the PRI in September of 1987 in disgust at the party's divorce from national interests. He went on to be chosen the presidential candidate of a group of dissident political forces of center-left persuasion who, nevertheless, have in the past endorsed the PRI choice for President.

But now, for the first time, the name of PRI candidate Salinas de Gortari will appear on but one line of the national ballot, while Cárdenas will appear as the candidate of several political parties.

The 150,000-person mobilization for Cuauhtémoc rapidly turned into a protest against U.S. military intervention in Central America, and a statement in defense of Panama. In his speech, Cárdenas said, "We are living through years which will be decisive

not only for Mexico, but for all of Latin America, and for the world balance of power. . . . In the aftermath of the disarmament agreements, the superpowers are seeking a new definition of spheres of influence, and thus the economic and political pressures on the developing nations worsen."

Cárdenas's followers broke into enthusiastic shouts and applause when the candidate demanded "the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from the continental Isthmus, and, in particular, from Honduras; that the deployment of arms and troops to the Nicaraguan counterrevolution cease, and that pressures against the Panamanian people, intended to violate the surrender of the Canal, end." Panama's people, he insisted, have the right to self-determination.

Two enormous banners of the Mexican Labor Party (PLM), bearing the slogans, "A United Ibero-America in Defense of Panama," and "We won't give up Pemex [Mexico's state oil company] nor the Panama Canal," set the tone for what afterward turned into a mass march to the famous Monument of the Revolution, which contains the tomb of General Cárdenas, where a floral offering to his memory was made.

"We won't give up Pemex nor the Panama Canal," also became the war cry of thousands of marching Mexicans, and was summed up in Cárdenas's speech. Today, he said, the foreign debt is used as a means for "imposing control over natural resources. . . . They would establish a new era of economic colonialism, against which all free people must reb-

el." After denouncing the efforts of the creditors to seize Mexico's oil, which is currently exploited solely "to fulfill financial commitments," Cárdenas accused the De la Madrid government of "having ceded the authority of government to oligarchic forces and to foreign powers," compromising "economic independence and giving away the very sovereignty of the nation."

Cárdenas concluded with a proposal to "suspend payment on the foreign debt under current terms. It is Mexico's right to establish priorities and conditions."

The *Cardenista* demonstration, which surpassed the massive peasant mobilization of one month ago in the agricultural region of La Comarca Lagunera (see *EIR* Vol. 15, No. 9, Feb. 26, 1988), stood in sharp contrast to the efforts of the PRI party, which carried out a bland official commemoration of the oil nationalization and which, for the first time, could not count on the presence of Cárdenas's own family. The official event once again revealed the widespread discontent of the PRI rank-and-file with the creditor-dictated austerity program of the De la Madrid regime. At least 2,000 oil workers in attendance broke away from the group to listen to the nationalist appeals of a group of Cuauhtémoc followers.

At the end of the official PRI event, the oil workers pulled down a gigantic PRI banner and raised in its place another bearing the name of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, while announcing through loudspeakers, "The true Mexicans will arrive this afternoon. Viva Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas!" More than 100,000 PRI demonstrators who had not abandoned the commemoration site, responded by chanting the candidate's name, until dispersed by the President's military guard.