

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Cota Meza

Mexican march backs Iraq

The Salinas government's effort to whitewash its own servile image backfired in the National March for Peace.

On Jan. 25, a National March for Peace was held in Mexico City, starting at the famous Monument to the Revolution and ending at the Zócalo, or Plaza of the Constitution, where the presidential palace is located. Estimates of numbers participating range from 20-30,000.

The strangest aspect of the event, as opposed to the dozens of anti-war demonstrations that have already been held both in the capital and other cities throughout Mexico, is that this "multi-party" event was in fact surreptitiously convoked by the ruling PRI party, and was conceived as "an event that would be observed internationally," that is, by Washington, D.C.

The PRI's Organizational Secretary made a flood of telephone calls and held numerous lightning meetings to get the party ranks to move with a campaign of statements "for peace and against war." Later came the calls and meetings with the opposition parties, to try to get them behind the PRI campaign.

The result of this flurry of PRI activity was the publication of an ad on Jan. 23 calling for a National March for Peace. The ad, edited by PRI officials at the highest levels, presented the sad spectacle of trying to reconcile the anti-war Mexican population with the degrading and servile position of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government toward Bush's war. For example, the ad reads: "Solutions based on force endanger the very principles that inspire them. . . . Solutions based on force do not guarantee in and of themselves an

effective solution to the conflict's underlying problems."

Translated into plain language, the ad states that the use of force by the U.S., in "defense of international law and democracy" (and backed by the Salinas government), would have worked just fine, but for some missing ingredient that could have justified the employment of war in pursuit of peace.

In this paragraph as elsewhere, one can clearly see the hand of Mexican officialdom defending the one-world philosophy that has inspired all of the Salinas government's policies to date. For example, the ad urges all Mexicans to commit themselves to "jointly restate the concepts and contents of international security based on a new collective morality . . . through a renewal of international norms and institutions in the terms demanded by new geopolitical and technological realities, as well as the corresponding new risks of world predominance."

"New collective morality," "new geopolitical realities," "new risks" and other such Newspeak only serves to avoid defending Mexico's sovereignty, so clearly under attack, and to "send a message" that the Mexican government is indeed in favor of peace—a *Pax Bushiana*.

Also on Jan. 23, national leader of the Democratic Party of the Revolution (PRD), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, publicly denounced the National March for Peace, in which many members of his own party were participating, as a cover for "popularly

supporting Bush's "peace." In an insightful assessment of the PRI-sponsored march, Cárdenas charged that it was just a maneuver to whitewash the servile image of the Mexican government: "We cannot believe that those who launched this initiative from the official side . . . are acting on their own initiative and with independent criteria. . . . We cannot believe that such deep splits are occurring within ruling circles . . . regarding the decision to increase oil production to supply the North Americans . . . or regarding the servile offer to send Mexican troops to the Arabian Peninsula."

The Jan. 25 event took place without Cárdenas's presence, and thus without the only political leader who has been able to fill the Zócalo since Mexicans turned out en masse to back President José López Portillo's 1982 bank nationalization. Traditionally, filling the Zócalo has been considered the barometer of popular support for one or another policy or political leader. The Plaza of the Constitution can hold 1 million.

So, the National March for Peace was held with a visible nervousness and disorganization on the part of its organizers, headed by PRI national head Luis Donaldo Colosio, and by Miguel Alemán Jr., plenipotentiary ambassador for special international affairs.

The disorganized thousands in the Zócalo began to organize, however, around precisely those points which the PRI rallying call had so carefully left off the agenda: Mexican nationalism and condemnation of U.S. imperialism. In the end, the march began to take shape around such specific slogans as "Long Live Saddam Hussein, Long Live Iraq!" and "We Will Kick Satan Out of the Middle East!" But, most prominently of all, "No Mexican Oil for the U.S. War Effort!"