

Editorial

The horror of Baker's 'Mexico model'

The Bush administration has made itself ludicrous by its refusal to admit the truth that the Soviet Union, and the evil which it represented, is a thing of the past. Now Secretary of State Baker has compounded the foreign policy disaster by advising the republics of the former U.S.S.R. to take Mexico as a model for economic reforms: He is trying to force them to accept the same kind of slave labor camps which have turned the U.S.-Mexican border into a replica of Auschwitz.

On Sept. 10, Baker, on a trip to Mexico, effusively praised that country's so-called economic reforms. Before the press, Baker praised the Mexican government for having "courageously adopted some free market economic reforms—the kinds of reforms quite frankly we hope we see in the Soviet Union and elsewhere—and because of this, we see strong real growth now in Mexico." Later, at a meeting of the U.S.-Mexican Binational Commission, he added that Mexico's reform program should be a "model for countries both in this hemisphere and other countries around the world, and don't think we're not going to make mention of it as we talk to developing nations and reforming nations undergoing revolutions."

The model which Baker was praising so unctuously is epitomized in the cheap labor zones located on the U.S.-Mexican border. Here, assembly plants (called *maquiladoras*) have already become centers for the spread of cholera and other epidemics, because of the open-sewer sanitary conditions, poor food, and generally barbaric living and working conditions.

Under the austerity regime which has been imposed in Mexico—the economic reforms so admired by Baker—many Mexican workers have few options other than working in these subhuman conditions. Mexico, like Poland, has become a victim of Harvard University economic managers such as Jeffrey Sachs, who have imposed a vicious bankers' dictatorship over these economies. Like Poland, Mexico's economy has been vacuumed of all available cash—which finds its way into the coffers of the otherwise bankrupt U.S. banks.

The slave labor regime being forced upon Mexico is the model which Baker now wishes to impose upon Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic republics, and so on. Thus,

he would like to bring back the slave labor camps of Nazi and Soviet memory, in the name of free market economics. But this is not just an ideology for export purposes.

Bush is trying to force his North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) down the throats of the American people as well, so that he can break the U.S. trade unions with the threat (and reality) that U.S. industry will run away and set up in the border *maquilas*, where typical pay is less than \$1 per hour. Essentially this would be to impose a supranational, bankers' dictatorship upon the people of the United States, equivalent to the kind of stranglehold which the International Monetary Fund has over the Polish economy, and wishes to impose over the peoples of the former Soviet Union.

A candidate for Congress in the recent Mexican elections, Cecilia Soto González, worked in one of these *maquiladoras* "undercover" for a week. While she did not win the election, her revelations of the slave labor conditions were explosive. She described one incident where a young man was thrown into jail, because he asked for a wage increase. This then became the occasion for a ten-day, 1,000-person work stoppage. Mrs. Soto found people sick and hungry, but she also marveled at their fighting spirit, organizing a trade union even in the face of police-state brutality, and beginning to force a slight improvement in their conditions.

The peoples of the former Soviet Union have rejected 74 years of tyranny, and in Mexico there is growing opposition to the barbarous policies being imposed by George Bush and James Baker. The message should be clear to the American people: No to slave labor. NAFTA must be defeated. The IMF and the World Bank must be stripped of their power.

While it is true that fast-track legislation for GATT and NAFTA was passed by Congress, this does not mean that this trade war, slave labor legislation can simply walk through the Congress. It can be voted down as a package, and there is still room for amendment. Now is the time to begin organizing a serious opposition to this fascist economics.