

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

### The PCM and a new '68 uprising

*The government seems to have cooled out a threatened strike by a communist-led union.*

Never before this year's anniversary had so many ultraleftist groupings gathered to commemorate the Oct. 2, 1968 violent confrontation between Mexican students and the army. This year, as in 1968, the leaders of the large demonstration—some of the press reported there were over 40,000 protesters—were the Mexican Communist Party (PCM); their university trade union front, the National University Workers Union (SUNTU); and various Trotskyist and Jesuit groupings, as well as assorted homosexual and lesbian activists.

Mexican authorities were not particularly alarmed by the demonstration itself, but a set of developments around it have provoked serious—if quiet—concern at the highest levels of Mexico's political establishment. The cause of consternation was the growing indications that the PCM and SUNTU hope to use existing student and labor problems to unleash a '68-style wave of destabilizations across the country—just as the fight for the presidential succession is heating up.

The immediate focus of their activity is a SUNTU call for a Nov. 1 nationwide strike of university workers and students, built around the following demands: 1) the right to set up a single, national union of university workers, empowered to negotiate a global national contract; and 2) the right to strike.

These two points are both issues

because, until now, the university sector has been a gray no-man's land in the labor legislation, and no one quite knew if they fell into the category of state workers who are constitutionally forbidden to strike and form national unions.

It took direct presidential intervention and the drafting of an addendum to the Federal Labor Law to come up with a compromise solution to the crisis: the new law grants university workers the right to unionize and strike, but only on a local university-by-university basis. A national trade union was expressly forbidden.

President López Portillo personally met with the SUNTU leaders to seal the accord. A high government official told *EIR* that López Portillo candidly informed the communist trade unionists that a major labor showdown at this stage of the game would fundamentally alter the presidential succession fight, and that the most reactionary, antilabor layers in Mexico would be the ones to benefit.

The president's arguments were apparently convincing. The SUNTU leaders emerged from the meeting and told the press that it was "premature" to call for a Nov. 1 strike. Although there is still a lot of pressure from the worker base for a strike, it does appear that a serious labor confrontation will now be avoided. If things are settled peacefully in the final analysis, it will be an important feather in the cap of

the labor minister, Pedro Ojeda Paullada, viewed by many as the leading candidate to succeed President López Portillo.

Just how much is at stake in the PCM question was indicated by a statement made by former President Luis Echeverría Oct. 1. In a conversation with journalists on the topic of the 1968 destabilization, Echeverría dropped the following political bombshell: "involved [in 1968] were contributions and concerns reaching from the Communist Party to help from Sears Roebuck, involvement of very revolutionary groups as well as that of the Jesuits."

The remark provoked a predictable freakout. One of the leading student organizers of the 1968 movement, Luis González de Alba, now a leader of the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action, confessed to the press that "Echeverría was right to state that we had in our movement Sears employees . . . as well as Jesuits and Communists," and that this "is the best proof of the popular character of the movement."

Sears Roebuck officials were hardly pleased either by the charges or the confession. In response to a question put to him by *EIR*, one company executive in Mexico stated: "That's the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard."

Readers of this column are aware that we have closely monitored the activities, past and present, of the Jesuits and other foreign forces who are attempting to destabilize the Mexican government. We would like to take this occasion to add that Mr. Echeverría's charges are consistent with documentation otherwise developed independently by this magazine.