

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Moscow, not the Church, runs the PAN

While Catholic leaders urge Mexicans to rally around their government, Moscow backs today's "Villas and Zapatas."

While Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze hailed the new insurgent "Villas and Zapatas" of the National Action Party (PAN) during his visit to Mexico at the beginning of October, leaders of the Catholic Church have moved to strip the PAN of its claim to be Mexico's "Catholic conservative" party.

"The PAN is the PAN and the Church is the Church. The Church does not identify itself with the PAN," the Papal Nuncio to Mexico, Geronimo Prigioni, stated Oct. 21. "We are above parties and politics" and "cannot be an instrument of division or pressure."

The Nuncio's instructions were delivered during the Second International Congress on Christian Philosophy, held in Monterrey. Three days before, Mexico's cardinal, Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, emphasized the same point following a meeting with Pope John Paul II in Rome.

"Mexicans must unite around President Miguel de La Madrid," the cardinal stated, "The Catholic Church does not get involved in politics, and its evangelical mission as a defender of liberty and human rights, is above simple electoral or partisan political questions; rather, it must seek the common good, with the government."

Economic recovery must be the focus of our energies, the cardinal urged. "We must take the example of Japan or the Federal Republic of Germany, which were destroyed during World War II, and only with the work and efforts of everybody were able to rise up again and become the industrial and economic powers of our time. That is what we must imitate."

For the PANSUM—the alliance of the pro-Nazi PAN with the Communist Party-led Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM)—overthrowing "the system" is the only item on the agenda. The objective of the "democratic convergence" of the PSUM and PAN is to end presidential omnipotence in Mexico, PSUM Secretary-General Pablo Gómez told *El Universal* Oct. 18. The only revelant task, he said, is that of modifying the political regime.

The same platform was adopted by the PAN at its 35th National Convention, held in San Luis Potosi Oct. 18 and 19. The only question debated there was whether or not the time had come to end electoral participation, and go directly to insurrection.

The radical northern faction of the PAN demanded that the party decry any participation in "the system." Led by PAN gubernatorial candidates Francisco Barrios and Ferdinand Canales Clarion (hailed by the communists as "the Friedrich Engels of Mexico"), this group argued that the party should take no decision now on running candidate in the 1987 presidential elections.

The only thing the government needs to know, they argued, is that we intend to take power; our plans should never be given away in advance. "Engels" Clarion urged that a "third way" to "mobilize people to take power" be adopted.

The party must reorient its activity to take advantage of the new possibilities opened by the alliance with the PSUM, this faction pressed. PAN long-term objectives and ideals must

be put aside as secondary—including the party's traditional Catholic image.

The convention finally voted that the PAN will go ahead and pick a presidential candidate in July 1987, but only by the margin of 139 of the 1,051 delegates. To win even that, the party leadership had to change the voting rules—after they lost the first round by direct voting! (So much for the PAN's alleged election "cleanliness.")

The issue between the PAN factions was one of tactics, not strategy. In his address to the convention, Madero compared Mexico's government to Chile, Cuba, Paraguay, Panama, and Nicaragua, and promised that the party will not stop until "we reach our goal . . . the ordered and generous fatherland, of which Gómez Morín used to speak." PAN founder Gómez Morín was fanatically pro-Soviet, serving as lawyer for the Soviet embassy in Mexico, before founding the PAN.

"We are in a civil war, and he who does not tire, will win," Madero had declared Oct. 1, in an interview to *La Jornada*. PSUM leader Arnaldo Martínez Verdugo says the same. "We're now seeing the beginnings of civic insurgency," the communist told the *New York Times* Oct. 22.

"Mexico is now in the final stage of achieving its emancipation," PAN leader Manuel Clouthier announced Oct. 1, signaled by "the emergence of regional *caudillos* who are the Villas and the Zapatas of our time." Clouthier cited PAN leaders Barrios, Canales Clarion, and Adalberto Rosas as the Villas and Zapatas of today.

Moscow agreed. "Villa and Zapata speak to others with their example. In difficult times, people must unite and act," Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze declared, at an Oct. 3 dinner in Mexico.