

# Mexico's nationalist opposition blasts De la Madrid's economic lies

by D.E. Pettingell

Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid delivered his sixth and last State of the Union message Sept. 1 in the midst of Mexico's most serious economic and political crisis since the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) set up its political monopoly in 1929. In an unprecedented act of protest over the economic crisis and the massive vote fraud in Mexico's July 6 national elections, 139 opposition congressmen and four senators, all followers of nationalist presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, staged a walk-out of the Legislative Palace hall during the last part of De la Madrid's message.

The monologue was broken. The solemn ceremony where the President would deliver, uninterrupted, a lengthy speech before a passive and humble audience, belongs to the past. The farewell turned into an act of embarrassment for De la Madrid and his hand-picked successor, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who did not dare to show up, breaking a historic tradition where the upcoming President always attends the last State of the Union message of his to-be-predecessor.

The daring show of repudiation for De la Madrid's policies of looting Mexico's standard of living by 65% in the past six years to pay the foreign debt, put an end to the embedded idea that the Mexican President is an all-powerful and sacrosanct individual whose rule can go on unchallenged even though he follows foreign imposed policies against the well-being of the people and the interests of the Republic of Mexico.

Almost three hours after De la Madrid had begun reading his speech, around 1:55 p.m. Sen. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who had won Mexico City's senatorial seat by a landslide, stood up and said: "Mr. President . . . Mr. President." De la Madrid turned his head to the first row where Muñoz Ledo was sitting and after identifying his interlocutor, pounded his fist once on the rostrum. Muñoz Ledo, Cárdenas's campaign strategist, had resigned from the PRI over the party's dictatorial tactics. He had been PRI chairman and had occupied several cabinet posts during the two previous administrations and was De la Madrid's ambassador to the U.N. until 1985.

The head of the Lower House, Miguel Montes, a PRI congressman, threatened Muñoz Ledo with expulsion from the hall if he insisted on talking. "He is a senator, he has the right to question the President," Cárdenas supporters shouted. The PRI majority shouted back: "Mexico-Mexico-Mex-

ico!" a common chant at soccer games. "Fraud-Fraud-Fraud!" answered the opposition. De la Madrid, who had remained emotionless through other interruptions, could not hide his anger this time.

"With due respect . . . with due respect," said Muñoz Ledo addressing the President. "Traitor, Judas, Exhibitionist, Clown," the PRI representatives yelled at him. "Let him speak," the opposition demanded.

"We have the constitutional right to speak . . . we have our own popular mandate. . . . If the President does not allow us to speak, we will have to leave in sign of protest," Muñoz Ledo said. He walked out, followed by all the opposition except the anti-nationalist National Action Party (PAN). Shouts of "traitor, traitor" and "son of a bitch" were heard from all corners. The opposition's chant of "the people voted and Cárdenas won" dominated the room as they walked out. Turning to De la Madrid, who was forced to stop reading for 10 minutes, some opposition congressmen said: "Look at the country you are leaving us, you have destroyed the Nation. You are the traitor."

Several PRI state governors went out of control. The governor from Aguascalientes took a swing at Muñoz Ledo, but missed and instead punched a reporter. The expression of hatred in many PRI-men led an observer to comment: "They would lynch him if they could get away with it." Once outside the hall, Muñoz Ledo commented, "What is happening here wears the face of fascism."

## The debt, paid several times

The State of the Union message began at 11:05 a.m. Cabinet members, governors, the Armed Forces high ranks, the diplomatic corps, and many PRI former public servants as well as an army of domestic and foreign correspondents, attended the unusually packed Legislative Hall amid rumors that the opposition would break the rules of the game.

De la Madrid had hardly started to speak when Congressman Jesús Luján from the Popular Socialist Party (PPS), got up and said: "I have a question for you Mr. President." But Luján was prevented from talking by Chairman Montes. It was learned later that Luján just wanted to ask the President why none of the opposition legislators were given a prepared text, when it was widely distributed in Spanish to everyone else and in English to the foreign media.

The second interruption came at 11:45 when De la Madrid praised himself for "clean elections" and called the July vote "historic." Congressman Jorge Martínez interrupted: "The people will not let themselves be represented by electoral fraud." De la Madrid stopped. Montes begged, "Let us not break a republican protocol." "Total repudiation to the electoral fraud!" the opposition chanted loudly. PAN legislators stood up, waving PRI-printed fraudulent electoral ballots in a sign of protest. The interruption lasted five minutes.

At 12:08, when De la Madrid praised his government's debt payment policies, he was told, "The foreign debt has been paid several times, Mr. President." At 12:25, when the President praised the selling of some of Mexico's most strategic state-owned companies to foreign companies and foreign-controlled Mexican businessmen, he was told, "That is treason to the Fatherland." But De la Madrid persisted: "Of 1,115 public companies that we had in 1983, 765 were sold." "Cananea, Cananea, Cananea!" chanted the opposition, referring to the copper mine of Cananea (Sonora), the biggest in Ibero-America, recently sold by the government to Morgan Bank-linked private interests.

When he praised his wife, Paloma, for distributing free meals to starving children, he was asked "Why don't you refer to infant malnutrition!" Infant mortality and malnutrition have risen since the administration began using 60% of the budget to pay debt to Wall Street banks.

After the opposition left the hall, De la Madrid was able to finish reading his speech. He took the opportunity to attack the Cardenist movement as "adventurist" and "populist" and Cárdenas as a "messianic leader."

The whole nation, watching the State of the Union message on TV at home, was kept in the dark. Both the pro-PRI Televisa private network and the government-owned Imevision, had trained technicians for a month ahead to black out the opposition's rebellion. The screen would show images relating to issues in the address during the intervals the President was forced to stop reading. The networks' microphones were turned off when the chanting was too loud.

### **'Buying' the opposition**

Since the elections, Cárdenas has successfully mobilized Mexicans in "defense of the vote." One day before the State of the Union message, Cárdenas and the leaders of his three-party National Democratic Front coalition, carried out a 200,000 person rally at the Monument of the Revolution, largely ignored by the media. Cárdenas pledged to defend the "popular will." He called on the government to take a sample of 1,000 electoral polls and re-count them, in order to prove that massive fraud has taken place.

The regime has answered with police-state tactics. Six Cárdenas workers have been murdered. Cárdenas followers are under constant threats and harassment. The government is offering, according to reliable sources, 100-500 million pesos (at an exchange rate of 2,300 to the U.S. dollar) to any

congressman willing to split from Cárdenas and join the PRI. Three have already accepted the deal: one from the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM) and two from the Moscow-controlled Mexican Socialist Party (PMS).

A campaign of psychological warfare is being waged to discredit the real Cardenistas as "communists." Although the pro-communist PMS is the smallest and least influential group among Cárdenas's followers, and is not part of the FDN coalition, under Interior Ministry orders the Mexican media grant preferential coverage to the PMS and present PMS Congressman Pablo Gómez (who headed Mexico's Communist Party before it adopted a different identity) as the authoritative voice of the "opposition."

In truth, the PMS was the last party to endorse Cárdenas in an opportunistic move three weeks before the elections, when, according to opposition sources, Moscow gave the green light to infiltrate and try to discredit the Cardenista movement. PPS head Jorge Cruickshank says the PMS is the only party that has so far accepted the offer to "talk" with the PRI and government representatives. The Interior Ministry is using the "reds" to "satanize" the movement, an opposition leader explained.

The next step in the government's agenda is to try to impose Salinas, ramming through his fraudulent victory in the 500-member Congress, where the PRI has now increased to 263. Already Congress, constituted in an Electoral College since Aug. 15, abdicated and proceeded to certify the elections of 500 congressmen during sessions that dragged on for over 24 hours, and were marked by PRI intransigency, irrationality, and illegality. On the pretext of needing to complete the process before Sept. 1 so that De la Madrid could carry out his yearly show, the PRI majority forced the Electoral College to ignore 583 resolutions and many other fraud complaints introduced by the opposition. Some of those resolutions included recommendations by the National Elections Commission to annul elections in districts where fraud was huge.

Mexico and her republican institutions have already been deeply hurt by the De la Madrid government's arbitrary and illegal acts. The government has the last chance to clean up its act and accept Cárdenas's offer for a re-count.

Salinas intends to continue the same genocidal policies which provoked the PRI defeat in the polls, of debt payment, "privatization," and looting. Washington, so say Henry Kissinger and the State Department's Elliott Abrams, wants Salinas in power. But in pleasing Washington, the PRI is playing with fire. To impose Salinas against the will of the people who elected Cárdenas for his debt payment repudiation and nationalist policies, could unleash a process of social unrest that would be very hard to control. The type of anonymous violence that has already taken place, could escalate to levels much worse than during the 1910-17 Mexican Revolution, when 1 million Mexicans died. Only Moscow would profit from it.