

Mexico's Pronasol: Nazi-communists dance to Wall Street's tune

by Carlos Cota Meza

Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's National Solidarity Program (Pronasol, or Solidarity) has achieved worldwide notoriety. Its most radical advocates maintain that with Pronasol, Salinas could aspire to some Nobel Prize in the future. Pronasol has been praised and supported by George Bush and Bill Clinton. It has received the backing of numerous European governments, the Vatican's State Department, and the Vatican's ambassador to Mexico. A variety of regional governments, including Chile, Brazil, and Costa Rica, have sent delegations to Mexico to learn the "secret" of Pronasol. Anti-poverty "experts" from China and India have been sent to Mexico to study its unique success.

Above all, the bankers of Wall Street are euphoric. The *Wall Street Journal* of Jan. 8 wrote: "The Solidarity Program is the fulcrum of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's effort to ensure that the benefits from Mexico's free market economic renaissance reach the very poor. . . . And the do-it-yourself anti-poverty plan has been such a success that hardware stores can scarcely keep picks and shovels in stock."

The Mexican government's own public explanations about its program do not suffer from modesty either. With President Salinas in the lead, officials say that with Solidarity, "we have done in 30 months what for other nations has taken their entire history." They say that the program is intended "to construct a social state with full respect for citizens' rights," or that it offers "a space for the exercise of direct democracy," and so on.

The truth is that Pronasol emerged from the recommendations of the World Bank, that the Mexican government allocate budget resources to a program for "combatting extreme poverty" which would, at the same time, serve to create a base of political support among the impoverished layers of the population for the government's neo-liberal economic policies (payment of the foreign debt, budget cuts, wage freezes, privatization, elimination of traditional social aid institutions). It is the creation of a new corporatist, Nazi-communist entity, which rejects any form of traditional management of the national economy.

The source of Pronasol's financing is no secret. Each time that Salinas de Gortari refers to it, he insists that its projects be financed with money from the privatization of

state companies. But this is a simplistic explanation. Through the privatization of state companies, money is obtained for paying off the foreign debt. Those payments in turn produce some "relief" on payment of future interest costs. A portion of that "relief" is allocated to Pronasol. This is why, while the Salinas government's amortization and interest payments on the foreign debt (through June 1992) has been more than \$44 billion, the National Solidarity Program has received nearly \$9 billion over five years (including 1993 allocations). Pronasol's resources have grown from year to year: \$547 million in 1989; \$1.222 billion in 1990; \$1.729 billion in 1991; \$2.267 billion in 1992; and \$2.582 billion in 1993.

A brainwashing program

Beyond all the propaganda, Pronasol is a brainwashing program not unlike the Maoists' Cultural Revolution, which seeks the reform of the Mexican state, the restructuring of the ruling PRI party elites, to win votes for the government, and to coopt independent and leftist political organizations. All of this is intended to establish a new political base of support under the corporatist control of the presidency, as a means of giving continuity to neo-liberal economic policies with the backing of the poor.

Every social program of previous governments is now accused of being "ruinous populism by a paternalistic state." Analysts of the speeches of the President and of other government officials about Pronasol have encountered a strange mixture of ideologies. The Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci is sometimes cited; Gramsci postulated that power would be given to civil society through the process of "social autogestion" and suppression of the bourgeois state, much like the Count Saint Simon who, together with other "utopian socialists" like Pierre Joseph Proudhon (of the "Philosophy of Misery") urged a "new entrepreneurial ethic." In practice, Pronasol translates into the re-creation of Adolf Hitler's "voluntary work armies."

To carry out this "cultural revolution" (reform of the state), the Salinas government is relying on an impressive political apparatus. From the very beginning of the program, suspicions were aroused by the fact that its facilitators were in the majority "former" leftist militants. On every level of

the Pronasol hierarchy, one finds "ex"-communists, "ex"-Trotskyists, "ex"-Maoists, "ex"-guerrillas from Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, and Argentina. Many of them have done jail time for acts of terrorism. All work on an intellectual level as the heads of promotion teams, as field organizers (all are self-dubbed "employees at the service of the people"). According to information put out by Pronasol, there are some 700,000 Solidarity "militants." Arturo Martínez Nateras, former communist and current coordinator of Pronasol's regional programs, says that the National Solidarity Program does everything. "If it's a matter of settling accounts with a mayor, a Pronasol official appears to purge him; if one seeks to promote such and such a person, he is identified as a prominent member of the Pronasol family. Absolutely everything is decorated with the tricolor bow," which is Solidarity's emblem.

On June 10, 1992, the creation of a National Solidarity Institute was announced, whose purpose is to prepare "labor cadre who will be able to organize, represent, lead, and act under the Solidarity philosophy." Documents of the institute complain that "labor organizations have been generally incapable of superseding the traditional forms of labor intervention and action." Sources have revealed that the institute is offering courses propagandizing against the Mexican Labor Federation (CTM) and its leader Fidel Velázquez, the oldest and most established labor organization on the Mexican political scene. The "fourth historic reform" or "re-founding" of the ruling PRI party that has been announced, has as one of its primary objectives the incorporation of "Solidarity Committees" into the structure of the ruling party such that these become the party's new base of support.

For the communists of the Pronasol family, the political line is: "With Solidarity, the balance of power in Mexico has been changed. There has been a transfer of power from the bureaucracy to the organized communities." At the same time, these official communists are completely interlinked with the opposition communists organized around the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), who have proclaimed that their fight against the International Monetary Fund and its policies is now over.

Adolfo Gilly, a national executive committee member of the PRD and a longstanding Trotskyist leader in Mexico, proposes the creation of new political organizations against those which "wasted the decade of the eighties with illusory slogans such as non-payment of the foreign debt. . . . The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have built-in and unavoidable guarantees so that no government in its right mind could, on its own, take the risk of that kind of measure. . . . The restructuring of Latin American capitalism [has done away with] the outmoded national-populist pacts for all time." As Pronasol's regional coordinator Martínez Nateras has indicated, Pronasol has become a parallel government at the local level, and in many states at the level of governorships, where Solidarity delegates have more political and

budgetary power than governors themselves.

New budgetary structure

In May 1992, the national congress approved a presidential initiative to create a new cabinet post: Secretary of Social Development. The Pronasol structure has been integrated into that new department, which has not only replaced the Department of Ecology and Urban Development, but establishes a new ministerial hierarchy and new budget. The Secretary of Social Development coordinates the operations of the Departments of Education, Labor, Social Security; the State Workers Institute; Family Development; the National Housing Institute; Popular Housing Development; and the National Development Bank.

One of the main objectives of this reorganization is to reduce the costs of various public works projects, by using the semi-slave labor power provided by Pronasol. As the *Wall Street Journal* wrote on Jan. 8, "Because citizen participation minimizes labor costs and reduces waste, the program's \$9 billion price tag is far less than what the government would have paid to do the work itself. . . . Solidarity road-building projects . . . cost just 70% of what the government used to pay to do the jobs."

A Pronasol census revealed that there are 40 million officially poor in Mexico, of whom 17 million subsist under conditions of "extreme poverty." It is among this sector of the population that Pronasol operates, not to combat the structural causes of poverty but rather to organize and convert it into a political force.

According to Salinas's Fourth State of the Nation, address given Nov. 1, 1992, there are 100,000 "Solidarity Committees" spread throughout Mexico and organized by official communists. The people they serve have no place in the government's neo-liberal economic model, since they are not even considered a reserve army of labor power. Instead, they are viewed as a potential organized battering ram against other Mexicans who have had access to "modern Mexico," namely, the exploited *maquiladora* workers, those who still have a bit of land, those who are making starvation wages but are still organized in unions, etc.

According to the Salinistas, who hope to perpetuate their stay in power beyond the year 2000, it is the targeted victims of Solidarity who will demand that the dismantling of the state and of the national economy continue, that payment of the foreign debt be maintained, and that the International Monetary Fund and World Bank continue to govern Mexico. Herein lies the "success" of Pronasol, touted worldwide.

Salinas de Gortari has brought together Nazis and communists to work for the imposition of the policy of the international financial institutions. And for these supranational oligarchic institutions, the deal has come cheap: a mere \$9 billion spent so that in 1994 there will be a new government in Mexico controlled by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Wall Street's man.