

## A Farmer-Labor Alliance

One of the most crucial dynamics of the conference, was the exchange among union members, who are largely urban, and members of the CEC, most of whom are from the rural sector. The Australian establishment has long promoted bitter antagonism between unions and farmers, as in the charge led in 1997 by the radical pro-free trade, blueblood-controlled National Farmers Federation, which attempted to destroy the Maritime Union of Australia, by providing money and other aid to replace striking dockworkers.

One union member, reflecting on this long-standing enmity, asked, "Why do we need these bloody farmers, anyway? They are always attacking us." During the discussion, one CEC member passionately recounted all the inventions which Australians had made, and stressed the enormous potential of the country, if only farmers and workers would unite. "I have been a farmer for almost 50 years, and all my life I have been brainwashed against unionists," he said, with evident emotion. Many union members went up to him afterwards, and shook his hand and thanked him. Both farmers and union members were acutely aware, as several said explicitly, how important—and how extremely unusual—it was, that they were agreeing on policy matters, and on political action to achieve those policies.

## Will Wall Street Pick Mexico's President?

by Carlos Cota Meza

On April 25, the first widely advertised debate among the six candidates for the Mexican Presidency was nationally broadcast on radio and television, under the ridiculous title "Ninety Minutes of Democracy." The elections are slated to be held on July 2 of this year. As expected, not one of the candidates bothered to address reality in the slightest. The result of such a rhetorical exercise was that each one of the candidates concluded that he had bested his rivals, and had emerged victorious before the Mexican electorate.

However, the reality was otherwise. For example, the debate occurred just 15 days after the international financial system's most recent eruption, with the ruinous collapse of stock exchanges across the globe, and especially in the United States, where \$2.1 trillion in speculative paper values disappeared in a matter of hours. Five days before the debate, the Mexican government had been forced to declare 12 of the country's states "disaster zones," victims of a drought that has gone on for eight consecutive years. In these states, the devastation is now affecting water supplies for human consumption, after already ravaging supplies for agriculture and livestock.

And on the very day of the debate, President Bill Clinton put his signature to a non-binding resolution of the U.S. Congress, which reaffirmed the State Department's policy of intervention into the internal affairs of Peru. The resolution warned President Alberto Fujimori that the United States reserves the right to recognize or reject the "constitutionality" and "validity" of that Andean country's election process.

We mention these three developments because, in the final phase of the Mexican Presidential campaign and its sequel, they will make themselves felt like a freight train running head-on into the country's national political life.

### A Glimpse of Reality

As a result of the ongoing stock market crisis, a "recessive attack" is already being forecast for the United States—collapse of the real estate market, mass layoffs, and an evaporation of the paper profits to which a select sector of Americans have grown accustomed. This "recession" will directly affect the Mexican economy, especially since the so-called recovery from "the December 1994 error" was purportedly achieved "thanks to the sustained economic expansion of the United States," as the Mexican government officially insists. None

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of the Presidential candidates referred to this, and worse still, haven't the slightest idea what to do about it.

Regarding the human, economic, and ecological disaster going on in the 12 afflicted Mexican states, the only viable alternative is to undertake construction of major water infrastructure projects, as have been detailed in the document "How To Create More Than a Million Jobs a Year," published by the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA). These projects had been referred to by PRI Presidential candidate Francisco Labastida Ochoa, before the debate, in two separate televised interviews. In response, the ruling party candidate was treated to an irate speech by leftist ecologist Julia Caravias, who heads the government's Environment Ministry, on how the disaster was due to "global warming," and that nothing can be done, except for Mexicans to prepare themselves with government aid programs for the even more difficult times ahead. If nothing else, this incident confirms that candidate Labastida also has political enemies inside the Ernesto Zedillo government.

The blatant interference of the U.S. government in Peru's internal affairs, must be seen as a foretaste of what could occur in Mexico as well. Indeed, the Vicente Fox candidacy of the National Action Party (PAN) and its Alliance for Change, is a key element in this interventionist strategy, which seeks to impose docile governments in the region, in the context of a policy of oligarchic financial reorganization. The same non-government organizations (NGOs) linked to the "Project Democracy" apparatus of George Bush and Oliver North, which are today trying to overthrow Fujimori in Peru and replace him with former World Bank employee Alejandro Toledo, are already moving to impose Fox in Mexico—whether Mexican voters like it or not.

### The 'Minor' Candidates

In analyzing the origin and political history of the six Mexican Presidential candidates, we find ourselves faced not with a variety of serious political options, but rather by representatives of a profound crisis afflicting the whole Mexican political system.

Of the three minor candidates, one is Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who together with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, led a split in the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) during the 1988 Presidential campaign, when George Bush imposed Carlos Salinas de Gortari as President of Mexico. Now a rival to Cárdenas, candidate Muñoz Ledo proposes to create a new republic, in which "Mexican Presidentialism" will disappear—precisely what the oligarchy has in mind, anyway.

Another of the "minor" candidates is the ignorant and perverse politician Manuel Camacho Solís, a creature of Carlos Salinas and capable of the most abominable treason. Camacho's participation in the creation of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), as well as the dangerous instability which followed the 1994 assassination of PRI Presidential



*The front-runner in the Mexican Presidential elections, PRI candidate Francisco Labastida Ochoa.*

candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, has never been adequately clarified, and still lends itself to a great deal of speculation. He has already been denounced by the PRI's Labastida as one of Fox's "employees."

The third minor candidate is Gilberto Rincón Gallardo. A former leader of the Mexican Communist Party, he took part in the dissolution of that party—and two others as well, the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM)—to create the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), together with others, including Cárdenas and Muñoz Ledo. He split from them, and now heads the Social Democratic Party (PDM), which, he claims, seeks a "minority but dignified" position.

The three combined do not add up to one viable candidate.

### The 'Major' Contenders

The other three, so-called "major" candidates, are Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Vicente Fox, and Francisco Labastida. Cárdenas is trying for the Presidency for a third time, after having won the governorship of the Federal District in 1997, as a PRD candidate. Cárdenas split from the PRI in 1988 when, he claims, he won the Presidential elections but lacked the political strength to defend his victory against Salinas

de Gortari.

Strangely enough, Cárdenas has now become a potential tie-breaker of sorts in the polarization that can be seen between the PAN's Vicente Fox, a shameless interventionist tool of powerful foreign political and economic interests, and PRI candidate Labastida Ochoa, universally recognized as the candidate to beat, both by forces abroad and at home, including within the Zedillo government. For Fox, despite all his triumphalist propaganda about how he has "already won," the only way he will take the Presidency against Labastida, is if Cárdenas decides to throw his support to him—just as occurred in Peru, when all the opposition candidates proclaimed their support for Toledo. Thus, Fox's insistent and humiliating wooing of the PRD candidate.

It would be a useless exercise to discuss here the majority of the "issues" that were raised by the candidates at their debate, except to note that the moments in which reality intervened were few and far between.

### **Dirty Laundry**

Of interest is the fact that, contrary to expectation, Labastida went after Fox, indicating that "part of his family business is tied up in the Fobaproa affair." As is well known in Mexico, Fobaproa is the hugely corrupt government machinery that was set into motion as a salvage operation for bankrupt commercial banks and associated businesses, carried out by the Zedillo government at the expense of the national treasury. This operation was then sanctified as law, through a PRI-PAN alliance in the Chamber of Deputies.

Weeks before the debate, the PRI candidate had attacked Fox for the same thing, and incredibly enough, it was the Zedillo government which answered by issuing a "respectful" call to the candidates not to politicize the economic programs "which have provided us with macroeconomic stability," according to Finance Secretary Miguel Angel Gurría.

Apparently, candidate Labastida was making an effort to distance himself from the International Monetary Fund economic policy pursued by President Zedillo, and here is where lie the major points of dispute between the President and the ruling party candidate.

Another atypical moment of the debate occurred when Labastida scolded Fox for the vulgar insults he has used against him. "Everyone has to assume responsibility for what he does and says. That is why I tell you today, . . . now that we are face to face, that if you don't have the character to face this, how are you going to deal with the country's problems, how are you going to deal with the problems of the drug trade, how are you going to combat the problems of organized crime, and how are you going to defend our country from the interests of the United States?"

What is important here, is not the fact that Fox was left with nothing to say in response, but that for the first time in the 18 years of the last three Mexican administrations, an important politician such as the PRI candidate for the Presi-

dency, recognized that Mexico needs to be defended "from the interests of the United States."

Labastida also conducted a direct polemic with Fox during the period of the debate allotted to presenting the candidates' economic proposals. Without giving it undue political weight, note should nonetheless be taken of the fact that Labastida at no point referred to "globalism," or to the existing free trade agreements, or to those that the Zedillo administration would like to sign with every nation of the world.

In any case, if Labastida is going to attack Fox directly, he is going to need to use the information in the document "Fox-ism, the Terminal Phase of Salinas," published by the MSIA. The MSIA pamphlet has already been distributed by the thousands throughout Mexico, and its charges have yet to be denied by the PAN candidate.

### **The Peru Blueprint**

The other important aspect of the debate is what has been called the "debate of the debate," that is, the commentaries by the "political analysts" and "experts" following the candidates' exchange. Particularly striking were the adamant defenders of Fox, who argued that he had "won the debate," and was therefore going to win the July 12 elections, because that's what all the polls indicate. The polls were similarly manipulated in Peru, to give the illusion of a Toledo victory, when in fact he had lost.

Of particular significance are the commentaries of Jorge Castañeda, Jr., a dissident member of a longtime PRI family whose father, of the same name, reached the peak of his political career as Foreign Minister in the José López Portillo government. Castañeda, Jr. specializes in weaving a network of relations with narco-terrorist groups in Ibero-America, while simultaneously forging a mysterious friendship with various American think-tanks. Castañeda followed Cárdenas out of the PRI in 1988, and was allied with him until just the past few months, when he appeared as an adviser to the Fox campaign.

Another of Castañeda, Jr.'s ilk is Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, known previously as the "spoiled pet" of former President Luis Echeverría Alvarez. Aguilar also followed Cárdenas out of the PRI, became both a senator and federal deputy, and now operates very much like Castañeda, Jr.

Both have undertaken to promote the line that if Labastida expects to have an "internationally believable" electoral victory in July, he will have to best Fox by a margin of 10% or more of the vote, while Fox need only win by 5% or less. If this does not happen, they insist, Mexico will end up facing a Peru-style scenario, in which the "international community" will have to punish the victor.

In compliance with this interventionist scenario, Fox is doing his best to present himself as another Alejandro Toledo. Two days before the debate, Fox told Reuters that "it will not be enough to win in the polls," but rather "to wrench power" from the party that has ruled for the past 71 years.