

Mexico approaches constitutional crisis

by Hugo López Ochoa

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the presidential candidate of the National Democratic Front (FDN), warned Aug. 4 that the July 6 Mexican "elections will have to be annulled and new ones held," if President Miguel de la Madrid's government does not show signs of "repairing the irregularities committed," and "because it is impossible to clearly establish the results."

He wrote this in a document co-signed with National Action Party (PAN) candidate Manuel J. Clouthier and Revolutionary Party of the Workers (PRT) candidate Rosario Ibarra de Piedra.

The government declared ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari "President-elect." But, new evidence of vote fraud presented in early August by Cárdenas himself, threatens to unleash an unprecedented constitutional crisis.

On Aug. 4, Cárdenas revealed in a meeting of his supporters in Ciudad Obregón, Sonora, that in a count of the 29,000 voting booths for which the Federal Electoral Commission had announced detailed vote breakdowns, his presidential triumph was indicated. In those booths, which contained 54% of the national vote, Cárdenas received 40%, while Salinas only achieved 34%. The monetarist PAN got 22%.

Such results are due basically to Cárdenas basing his presidential campaign on a nationalist economic recovery program, focused around a debt moratorium to force creditors to negotiate better terms.

In Ciudad Obregón, Cárdenas accused Government Secretary Manuel Bartlett of having abruptly suspended the count of the 25,000 booths which had not been tallied and holding them to "alter" returns.

The Federal Electoral Commission "officially" granted 50.3% of the vote to Salinas, 31% to Cárdenas, and 17% to the PAN. To preserve these figures, Cárdenas explained, in the 25,000 remaining booths, Salinas "would have to obtain 67%, Cárdenas 20%, and the PAN 11%." That is to say, a total reversal of the tendencies shown in the previous recount! Moreover, it is known that Salinas does not enjoy a 67% level of support anywhere in the country. As the Planning and

Budget Minister who designed De la Madrid's austerity program, he was, if anything, most unpopular everywhere in the country.

Will the PRI fragment?

At the end of his 15-state tour, Cárdenas brought out 30,000 supporters in Sonora and Baja California Norte. As he made his whistle-stop "in defense of the vote," more signs appeared of the PRI fragmenting over "Cárdenism."

Starting Sept. 1, the newly elected Congress should make its sovereign decision on the presidential elections. It is now estimated that the PRI will have only a 10-delegate advantage over the opposition. On Aug. 2, the PRI warned it would take reprisals against any of its deputies who absented themselves from the congressional sessions, "because any absence will be taken advantage of by the opposition, which at any moment could become the majority."

The PRI's fear is well founded. A few days later, a PRI candidate for federal deputy in the state of Tabasco, renounced the PRI and went over to Cárdenas's FDN the moment he had in his hands the papers certifying his victory.

Despite all, President de la Madrid showed his total disdain for the will of Mexico's majority Aug. 4 by assuring Mexico's creditors that "I understand" moratorium on the foreign debt "as an opposition party electoral tactical argument, not one by responsible persons."

Well-informed sources have informed *EIR* that PRI candidate Salinas began a frenetic series of meetings with various factions of his party to ward off mass desertions. In backroom meetings with these sectors, Salinas confessed that he knew Cárdenas had won much popularity and undeniable electoral triumphs. "I want to negotiate," he said. At the same time, however, he warned, "I will not take power in a debilitated position."

On Aug. 10, the PRI's national directorate expressed its "most energetic rejection" of the three opposition parties' document about annulling the elections. It accused them of "political adventurism," of trying to "override the juridical order," of "provocation and lust to disturb the public order."

A few days earlier, PRI President Jorge de la Vega Domínguez crudely charged that Cárdenas would be to blame should violence erupt. "Those were fighting words," *Diario de Mexico* columnist Arturo Blancas wrote.

"We are not going into flight forward with actions which serve as a pretext for the government to repress or destroy what we are creating," Cárdenas told his partisans in Navojoa, Sonora Aug. 6. In the town of Empalme, he said, "We are not in a battle for numbers, but for policies, until Mexico has a legitimate government."

On Aug. 10, all opposition party delegates walked out of a Federal Electoral Commission session after the PRI and government delegates rejected most challenges. They warned they would not return "until there are serious, honest, and responsible people to work with."