

'Mexico won on July 1'

EIR's Mexico City correspondent analyzes issues, results of recent election

On July 15, a new era in the history of the Mexican republic was opened with the announcement by the Federal Election Commission of the winners of 100 congressional seats allotted to Mexico's minority parties under the new political reform. Ironically, on the same day, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, a man identified with the era that Mexico is now putting behind itself and the president of Mexico during the Tlatelolco massacre at the 1968 Olympic Games, died. The July 1 elections were a major step forward in the strategy to ensure that the 1968 tragedy would not be repeated.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) created by the leaders of the Mexican revolution has ruled for 50 years as a majority party with such a small institutionalized opposition that President José Lopez Portillo ran unopposed in 1976. During the Luis Echeverría administration (1970-76), a "democratic opening" to opposition parties paved the way for the political reform begun under the present administration. The recent elections are a culmination of the process of political reform begun almost three years ago. The purpose has been to create more popular political consciousness and participation and to institutionalize the opposition so that debate in the Congress and the media can replace the destabilizing capability intrinsic to a fringe-like opposition pitted against not only the PRI, but the constitutional system itself.

In the period leading up to 1968, the inflexible political structure of the PRI and the arch-reactionary President Diaz Ordaz created an atmosphere in which the enemies of the Mexican constitutional system, the Anglo-American oligarchists, were able to use easily manipulated student dissidents, often run by the local Mexican oligarchy, to destabilize the nation and prepare a military coup. The economic crisis brought about by the Diaz Ordaz policy of "stabilizing development," namely, zero-growth—by contrast with the two succeeding administrations' emphasis on strong state-sector development through large industrial projects—had created major social tensions that only a military government could handle easily.

Diaz Ordaz, however, while thoroughly committed to the zero-growth principle, was not committed to the oligarchy's design for a military coup against his presidency. While they used the student left as cannon fodder, Diaz Ordaz set about to prove that he could be as bloody and brutal as any military dictatorship. The result was the Tlatelolco massacre, in which hundreds and possibly thousands died at Diaz's order. Diaz Ordaz refused to cede total power to the military, which had been invited by the Pentagon to carry out a coup with U.S. backing.

Mexico has little to thank Diaz Ordaz for. But in his refusal to give up his own presidential power, he, perhaps inadvertently, saved the presidential system so central to Mexico's constitutional structure. It was the presidential system itself that was the target of the Anglo-American destabilization.

As the Echeverría and Lopez Portillo administrations have since shown, a strong president dedicated to industrial development, invoking the nation-building goals of the Mexican revolution, has the power to thwart the Mexican oligarchy and the zero-growth, slave-labor, genocidal policies of their foreign sponsors. It is no surprise that even a president himself so dedicated to these principles as Diaz Ordaz was nearly overthrown. With the nationalization of Mexico's oil by Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s, a tradition had been created that could not be stamped out without the destruction of the presidency itself.

The incoming Mexican legislature will see the participation of a broad range of political opposition, including Communist and Socialist parties whose militants participated in the student dissent of 1968. This has been properly called "the maturation of Mexican democracy." Despite the relatively poor showing among voters, and campaigns that failed to mobilize the population around real issues, it can be said that "Mexico won" on July 1.

The president and the opposition

Contrary to the babblings of *New York Times* corre-

spondent Alan Riding that the presence of 100 opposition deputies will eat away the power of the president, the opposition's participation will strengthen the president to carry out the program of national development and defend national sovereignty. That is what the reform was designed to accomplish.

Six parties now make up the opposition; three of them received permanent status as parties only last week after gaining more than 1.5 percent of the vote in the July 1 elections. Their entry into the electoral process (and, soon, the legislature) creates a potent focus for change within the institutions of government. As the president of the Federal Election Commission, Minister of Government Olivares Santana, stated, the new electoral process, with all its deficiencies, can now be strengthened. "The respectability, the sovereignty, and the capacity for negotiation of our nation will be strengthened to the extent that our electoral processes purify and perfect themselves."

Eighteen million Mexicans voted. Nearly 50 percent of the eligible voters did not. Out of 400 congressional seats, 300 by majority vote and 100 allotted to minority parties according to the size of their overall vote, the ruling PRI received 296 seats, losing only four of the majority allotment to the right-wing action party, the PAN. While this fascist party remains the first opposition party within 49 seats, they received a smaller vote than in previous elections. The Mexican Communist Party, which ran with a coalition of left groups, won 17 seats, the Popular Socialist Party won 11, the Socialist Party of Workers (PST) won 9, the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution, 9, and the Mexican Democratic Party, a right-wing party, won 8.

A PST spokesman stated last week that "the real loser in the elections was the right." The spokesman added that "this puts the state in a great position to push forward the political and economic reform which the people demand, and puts the government in the best position to negotiate with the U.S. without internal pressures." The U.S. threat to militarily "protect" Mexico's oil supplies demonstrates the necessity for strong support for the president by all progressive forces.

Popular Socialist Party leader Jorge Cruickshank placed emphasis on the fact that the right-wing PAN and PDM won fewer votes than in previous elections. He called the political reform a step forward, but said that there must be broad voter education to consolidate the electoral process. Cruickshank criticized the PAN and the Communist Party for their campaign of attacks on the government. He also rejected the Communists' call for a larger coalition on the left in the next elections. "We must strengthen a democratic patriotic front against the power of the right," said Cruickshank.

The next step

Following the elections, a party that did not run candidates, the Mexican Labor Party (PLM), called for the

mobilization of a national anti-imperialist front in defense of the government. The PLM, which has completed requirements to become a national political association and has launched its campaign to achieve official party status for the next elections, criticized the campaigns of all parties in this month's elections for failing to focus the population on the fight for national sovereignty and a new world economic order. There was no real political education in these elections.

The statement, issued by the PLM's National Executive Committee, declared that the election results prove "the voters favored the parties which officially represent revolutionary nationalist or socialist options. This occurred despite the fact that some of these parties never translated this popular hope into concrete programs and despite the fact that the PRI carried out a frankly reactionary campaign.

"The right," continued the statement, "in spite of its costly campaign and the presence of a new right-wing party with a populist face, the PDM, did not succeed in gaining the support of the working population."

Of the ruling party: "The PRI did not offer its voters a concrete program to advance the Mexican revolution." In spite of the excellent economic programs of the "most distinguished member of the PRI, President Lopez Portillo," the PRI refused to rally the population around the fight for a new world economic order, which is crucial to Mexican development plans.

The right-wing parties carried out a vicious anticommunist campaign, with the help of the church, which ordered the faithful not to vote for the communists or any of the socialist parties. The PRI, sure of its peasant and worker bases, chose to vie with these parties for the middle class vote, running an anticommunist campaign of its own with the slogan. "to continue being free, vote PRI."

The PLM also harshly criticized the Mexican Communist Party for effectively allying with the fascist PAN in its antigovernment posture, and for refusing to support the government in its battle to maintain Mexico's sovereignty against the demands of the Carter administration, thereby opening the door to the destabilizers of Mexico, "enemies not only of socialism, but of any form of progress."

It is necessary, said the Mexican Labor Party statement, to push forward the political reform by "educating, organizing and mobilizing the millions of voters who gave their vote to parties they understood to represent the idea of progress, into a great national anti-imperialist front. The front must defend the right to economic and social progress as well as mobilize international solidarity for peoples fighting for those same rights, as in Nicaragua."

—Robyn Quijano