

door-to-door declaring that 1982 is the year of “bankruptcy and salvation.”

The Mexican Unified Socialist Party (PSUM) is the the strange offspring of negotiations between the Mexican Communist Party and five smaller left sectlets during the summer of 1981. The already-registered PCM changed its name to incorporate the new elements, and nominated its Secretary-General, Arnaldo Martínez Verdugo, as its presidential candidate.

Ironically, having little worker base, the PSUM is appealing to the same middle class layers as the PAN, as well as church, military, and university circles—and on a similar program. The basic planks are curtailing the exploitation of oil, “redistributing” what wealth is left, and building up Indian and peasant communities as separatist entities free of central government control.

The PSUM also shares the PAN’s equanimity when it comes to violence: its allied COCEI group in the Tehuantepec Isthmus town of Juchitán stormed its way to local power last year on the basis of threats and thuggery. Some high-level “godfathers” seem to be watching over the experiment. The house newspaper of the City of London bankers, the *Financial Times*, chose to highlight the Juchitán situation in a late January feature,—with a very convenient inset map of the new “land-bridge” rail link across the isthmus which the COCEI has threatened to sabotage.

The PSD

The Social Democrat Party serves as the higher-level interface for the other wrecking operations against the PRI. Coming originally from Monterrey right-wing Christian Democrat circles linked to the PAN, it made the short trip to a Jesuit-style “left” profile in the early 1970s. One of its current leaders is Arturo Martínez Nateras, until recently a central committee member of the PCM. In the 1976 presidential elections the PSD, under its previous name of Acción Comunitaria, was in charge of PCM propaganda, using a front called the Mexican Public Opinion Institute (IMOP).

A party without any discernable base, the grouping nevertheless got its registration from the Federal Election Commission last June—on the insistence of Carlos Hank González, according to reliable sources. Its current role as circus ringmaster of the many-sided assault on the PRI took on a new, grotesque form in a list of 13 “prospective candidates” for the PSD presidential nomination, released Jan. 25 by party leader Luis Sánchez Aguilar. Hardly a single name of this motley group came from within the party itself. At the top the list: terrorist-linked “labor leader” Ortega Arenas; former PRI head García Paniagua, being primed to head up a possible split operation against the PRI; Moreno Sánchez, a political crony of Hank González; and the PSUM’s candidate, Martínez Verdugo.

POLITICS

A strategy for wrecking the PRI

by Timothy Rush

“Iran had one of the most modern armies and only two million people in Teheran. Nevertheless, the masses overthrew the monarchy. Just think about Mexico. Here we have a small army of 80,000 while Mexico City has 12 million people. Just imagine what could happen.”

This is how Juan Ortega Arenas described to a reporter in late January what his “independent” union movement is designed to accomplish.

Who is Ortega Arenas? Already being described as the “Lech Walesa” of Mexico by eager scribblers in the Jesuit-controlled left press of Mexico City, he is a man of terrorist pedigree. After graduating from a series of Jesuit schools, according to a Sonora newspaper account, he worked directly with Herman von Bertrand, S. J., the creator of Mexico’s most dangerous terrorist band of the early 1970s, the 23rd of September League. Today he combines a close relationship with Israeli intelligence agents in Mexico, with editorial work for the semi-clandestine magazine, *Otro Por Qué* which traces directly into the Red Brigades network of Italy.

Through thuggery and intimidation, Ortega Arenas gradually worked his way into control of several industrial and professional unions, which he split away from the hegemonic government-allied Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM). The most important among these are several large auto unions, the airport workers, and most recently, a section of the Mexico City bus drivers.

He demonstrated his hold on this latter group Jan. 27 with a several-hours’ shutdown of Mexico City’s principal bus route, the “100 Line”.

This wildcat strike was a challenge to the CTM, which controls the rest of the bus drivers. With speculation rampant over what will happen when age forces the retirement of octogenarian labor leader Fidel Velázquez, a variety of anti-government forces inside and outside Mexico are looking to Ortega Arenas as a battering ram who can break the power of the CTM. Their thinking is that if the CTM splinters, the ruling Institutional Revo-

lutionary Party (PRI) will lose its strongest constituent force, and collapse. It could then be challenged for political hegemony by an amalgam of disenchanted middle class forces. Anti-PRI propagandists like the *New York Times'* Alan Riding have profiled this layer repeatedly over recent weeks, explaining hopefully that "with the emergence of a new middle class . . . the political balance could change" in Mexico.

Alamazán, Henríquez, Madrazo

The PRI is seen—and targeted—by the theoreticians of the Council on Foreign Relations and similar elite planning institutions, who deploy the likes of Riding, as the institutional pillar maintaining stability and growth in the Mexican System.

Despite deep policy differences between its several factions, it has tended to be a vehicle for successful mobilization of the Mexican masses behind nationalist, pro-development policies.

Vivid in the minds of the Rockefeller and Buckley interests to this day is President Lázaro Cárdenas' nationalization of Mexican oil in 1938, effected through the grass-roots organization of the PRI predecessor party of the time. Operating on a six-year cycle of presidential terms, no one president allowed to return to the top office, the PRI and its predecessor formations have maintained a tight hold on all of the top elected and appointed officials since the late 1920s.

Three major efforts to split the party have occurred since the period of Cárdenas. In 1940, Juan Andrew Almazán ran an independent candidacy against official nominee Manuel Avila Camacho. In 1952 it was Gen. Miguel Henríquez Guzmán against Adolf Ruiz Cortines. And in the late 1960s, PRI President Carlos Madrazo was grooming his own independent political machine when he died in a light plane crash.

All three previous split attempts have been reviewed in the major Mexico City press in recent weeks, as recognition spreads that this year's "smash the PRI" maneuverings are cut in the same mold.

The man directly or indirectly behind virtually every threat to the PRI is Carlos Hank González, the powerful mayor of Mexico City. The principal heir of the faction of former President Miguel Alemán among politicians active within the PRI at this moment, Hank is widely known as Mexico's would-be Mussolini.

Hank was pinpointed in the Mexican press as the behind-the-scenes backer of Ortega Arenas' wildcat work stoppages on Mexican bus lines the last week of January. Since last September, when Carlos Hank put the municipal bus lines under his personal control, and since December, when he suddenly re-drew every bus line in the city, the transport network has been in almost daily chaos. This has been the fertile field for Hank's under-the-table deals with Ortega.

At the same time, Hank has made Mexico City almost off-limits to the campaign of PRI presidential candidate Miguel de la Madrid. De la Madrid is finding his Mexico City crowds shrunk to almost nothing on Hank's orders—while Hank himself turns out the multitudes for his own big affairs, such as the opening of the newest branch of the Mexico City subway in early January.

Hank himself is constitutionally prevented from gaining the presidency, however, since his father is not Mexican. The chief candidate to formally head up a split in the PRI is Javier García Paniagua. García Paniagua enjoyed a meteoric career in the past five years, reaching a succession of top posts: Agrarian Reform Minister, President of the PRI, and Labor Minister. But when he failed to get the top prize last fall—the presidential nomination that went to De la Madrid—he turned against the party hierarchy and left the government.

García Paniagua has close ties to sections of Mexico's security police and army, in part the "family inheritance" of his father, a leading general of the 1950s and 1960s who supported the Henríquez Guzmán split attempt of 1952, and in part the result of his own position as head of security matters for the Interior Ministry in the early years of the López Portillo administration. Although he himself has made no firm declarations of his intentions, he recently spoke up from his home base of Jalisco to say that he had "always been a politician" and was not about to quit now.

Political reform

The scope for the PRI-wreckers is amplified in this year's early July elections by the provisions of Mexico's 1978 Political Reform law, which legalized a plethora of small political parties and guaranteed them extensive access to press and radio as well as seats in the lower chamber of the Congress. The brain-child of then-Interior Minister Jesús Reyes Heróles, the reform has been sold to PRI party regulars as an innocent way to let dissident forces let off steam. In fact its provisions build in a drift toward a "pluralist" and ultimately parliamentary system, in which the PRI would collapse to be just one of many squabbling parties amidst the wreckage of the Mexican System as it is known today.

The Alemán-Hank crowd is now attempting to push the political reform process ahead another no direction. Mario Moya Palencia, Alemán's unsuccessful candidate for the presidency in 1976 against López Portillo, publicly called in late January for the opposition parties to be brought into the upper chamber of Congress, the Senate. Moya was echoing an earlier proposal of the communist candidate of the PSUM coalition party, Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo.