

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Labor movement under attack

The pro-IMF forces in Mexico are targeting the alliance between the government and labor.

Mexican trade union leaders on June 8 handed a "letter of intent" to Labor Minister Arsenio Farrell Cubillas, demanding salary increases to counter high inflation and warning that the country's economic crisis will worsen unless urgent measures are taken to fend off the pressures from foreign banks.

"The persistent capital flight, the fall in the international prices of our main export products, and the increase in interest rates by the financial community, have placed Mexico in a very vulnerable situation, because of the lack of decisive actions toward an independent, democratic, popular, and nationalist development," the declaration said. "This obliges Mexico to change our financial relations with the international financial community."

The document was signed by representatives of the Workers' Congress, formed by the powerful National Confederation of Workers (CTM), the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), the Revolutionary Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM), the Revolutionary Congress of Workers (CRT), and the Workers' Revolutionary Confederation (COR).

The letter was written at the height of a pitched battle in Mexico against the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) austerity conditionalities. Three weeks before, our bureau in Bogotá, Colombia, had reported that CTM leader Fidel Velázquez, the "grand old man" of Mexican labor, had sent a message to the Ibero-American re-

gional labor confederation ORIT calling for an urgent meeting to discuss the indebtedness of all Ibero-American countries. If ORIT does not do it, he said, "the CTM will."

After the unions' document was delivered to the authorities, a campaign of blackmail against the CTM began, with the aim of splintering the labor movement.

The target is not just organized labor itself, but also the government of President de la Madrid, which has begun to turn away from acceptance of the IMF's conditionalities and toward continental integration—the debtors' club. It is the traditional strong link between Mexican labor and the government which had allowed de la Madrid to survive the onslaught by the IMF. Now the IMF's agents are out to knock this pillar from under the government.

Here is how the battle unfolded: Alberto Juárez Blancas, a leader of the CROC, abruptly declared that his union did not agree with the content of the document which it had signed, and had not known of its full contents.

Then Juárez Blancas accused Velázquez of seeking to impose his own views on the rest of the labor movement and distorting the main point of the document—the need to counter the policies of the international banking mafia. Juárez Blancas receives his orders from Labor Minister Farrell Cubillas, an associate of Education Minister Jesús Reyes Heróles, the architect of Mexico's political opening to the Nazi-Communist alliance formed

to destroy the ruling PRI party.

The press immediately joined the fray, saturating public opinion with reports of the fracturing of the organized labor movement.

The reality is that all over the continent, labor leaders who are supporting the idea of a debtors' cartel are under fire. In Mexico, people like Farrell Cubillas and Reyes Heróles—who tried to destroy the labor movement at least three times in the last 18 months—are doing their best to boost their own political positions and force President de la Madrid to abandon his new policy orientation toward Ibero-American integration.

Countering these moves, Fidel Velázquez declared, first, that the CROC and any union organization affiliated to the Workers' Congress that starts a political rebellion should be brought before the Honor and Justice Commission of the Congress, and second, that "there are no conflicts within the hard core of the Workers' Congress, but rather an irresponsible little bunch that is lending its services to destabilize the workers' movement."

He added emphatically: "The CTM is not worried about the CROC; compared with us they have no importance. Some are saying that they are the second union federation in the country, but when an elephant and an ant walk together, it is of course the ant which is the smallest, isn't it?"

De la Madrid sought to counter speculation about a rupture between the government and the unions, and met publicly in Guadalajara, Jalisco, with representatives of both the CTM and CROC. The President issued a call for a reinforcement of the government-labor alliance: "We should communicate our points of view and present propositions, and be conscious of the difficult international and domestic reality which we face," he said.