

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Cota Meza

Concentration camps by another name

Salinas de Gortari's National Productivity Pact is nothing less than "fascism with a democratic face."

Mexico's recently signed National Productivity and Quality Pact is, according to sources at Pemex, the Mexican national oil company, based on the psychological profiling work of British psychiatrist John Rawlings Rees.

Rees evolved his theories based on studies of "battle fatigue" syndrome in war veterans. He later founded the Tavistock Institute, which became a center for the study of psychological intervention into the workplace, in particular, based on the work of two mad psychiatrists, Kurt Lewin and Eric Trist. They sought ways of speeding up labor, without provoking protests or objection from the victims.

From this experience, Rees and company drew up certain "norms" to be applied in the labor sphere. These have come to be known as "labor speedup" (which the Salinas government calls "productivity"), and "community control" (which the Salinas government calls Pronasol, the National Solidarity Program), the better to maintain entire populations in their status as imperial colonies. Today, these "norms," as defined by Rees and Lewin, are known as "fascism with a democratic face."

In Mexico, the "productivity pact" is most advanced in Petróleos Mexicanos, the state-owned oil company Pemex. In January 1989, a vast military-police operation was mounted to entrap and imprison oil workers' union leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia, who is known as "La Quina." With him out of the way, the giant state oil company proceeded to im-

pose a new collective labor contract in August 1991, which "simplified" the proceedings for early retirement of personnel, imposed a clause for "judging labor conduct in accordance with the interest and commitment of the worker to his responsibilities with the company," and established the right of the company to freely hire "the services of third parties."

Through the use of such "democratic" mechanisms, more than 100,000 oil workers have been laid off in the past three years, placing Pemex in a condition of such "efficiency" that many more horrors like the Guadalajara explosions are waiting to happen. Pemex's labor contract is monitored by Pemex's own Department of Labor Relations, a nest of psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, homosexuals, and lesbians.

With the new Productivity Pact signed on May 25, the labor situation at Pemex will now be extended to every Mexican worker. The pact is just a cover to justify mass layoffs on the one hand, and to force those who still have a job to work virtually without pay, as slave laborers.

According to the prescriptions made public thus far, the traditional forms of production "are yielding to a new and versatile model of organization, capable of rapidly adapting to technological advances, to the greater demands of the consumer, and to the relative price fluctuations of products."

In accordance with this "modernization" of the Mexican economy, the traditional, and constitutional, con-

cept of "wages" will also disappear. Previously, wages were defined as what is necessary to maintain an acceptable living standard for a worker and his family, including food, clothing, housing, health, education, and recreation. Under the new pact, wages are now called "remuneration," which will be defined as "an element of stimulus to the productive effort," and as "due recognition of the training, efficiency, initiative, responsibility, and effort carried out by each worker." A basic part of these "conditions of stimulus" to the worker, reads the pact, "should be developed on the job."

The syllogism is very simple. The national productivity pact seeks to extend the conditions of the *maquiladora* (sweat-shop assembly line) worker to all wage-earners in Mexico. In the *maquilas*, despite the miserable working conditions, the worker has a "better" situation than at home, where the family has no running water (much less potable water), no sewerage, no electricity, and no public transportation. The children have neither day-care nor schools, and so forth. Thus, the "conditions of stimulus" must lie in the factory.

If they want to be "modern," Mexico's trade union organizations must no longer try to defend the interests of their ranks. Now, according to the pact, they are the "legitimate co-participants in the development of the companies, and demand of them a shared responsibility in the search for quality and productivity."

The right to strike has suddenly disappeared. Now, the labor representatives inside the factories will be the foremen, who oversee the workers' "conduct." "Labor peace" will be enforced by the art of persuasion; "So, you don't want to be more productive? Just remember that for every employed Mexican, there are 1.5 other Mexicans waiting to take your job."