

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Méndez

PAN party splits

The dissidents opposed the "infiltration" of their party by Project Democracy and neo-liberalism.

In early October, some of the most influential leaders of the National Action Party (PAN) of Mexico resigned because, under its present leadership, "the PAN is no longer the party of humanist leadership that used to defend human rights against the abuses of authority, that used to strive for a just distribution of wealth, that used to oppose with bravery and spirit its freedom and independence from the regime, and that used to move people's wills with ideas, inspiration, principles, and its own programs, inspired by its own doctrines. Today, the PAN is pro-Salinas, pro-liberal, and pragmatic."

Among those who left are those such as Pablo Emilio Madero (twice party president and twice candidate for President of Mexico), José González Torres, José Angel Conchello (PAN leader in the Federal District), Bernardo Bátiz, and Jesús González Schmal (leader of the Doctrinal and Democratic Forum, the group inside the PAN to which the dissidents all belonged).

Discontent with party president Luis H. Alvarez has been growing for some time, because of the alliance he established with Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. An example, dissidents say, is that the majority of the PAN deputies have voted in favor of Salinas's bills presented to the Congress.

The leaders who left the PAN maintain that the party has fallen into pragmatism, liberalism, and "Salinism" due, above all, to "infiltration" of the PAN by an organization belonging to the U.S. establishment known as

Project Democracy. This is the "secret government" apparatus in which Oliver North, among others, participated, and which represents the interests of Wall Street.

This infiltration could also explain why PAN ideologue Carlos Castillo Peraza, a collaborator of Alvarez, was one of 18 Mexicans who met on April 21, 1991 with the president of the genocidal Club of Rome, Ricardo Díez Hochleitner, to found a Mexican chapter. Notwithstanding the fact that the explicit objective of the Club of Rome is birth control and population reduction, which conflict totally with the principles of the PAN, the present leadership of the party has not disapproved of the affiliation of Castillo Peraza with this organization. Worse still, Castillo Peraza is a strong contender to succeed Alvarez as PAN president.

Alvarez and the dissidents are also split over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). José Angel Conchello has strongly criticized NAFTA and recently published a book against the treaty entitled *Mexico Can Say No. Is NAFTA a Dead-End Street?* in which he says: "Why should we facilitate the advent of an era in which Washington will be the gendarme of the universe?" By saying no to NAFTA, "we will be saying yes to something more precious: the dream that we have of realizing our destiny together with the rest of the countries of Latin America."

In the Aug. 20 *El Universal*, Conchello said that the Mexican government asserts, as if this were a great victory, that under NAFTA "Mexico will

reserve the right to withhold from international bidding a percentage of the purchase of government goods and services, etc. Do you know what this means? That 50% of government purchases, or of Pemex or the Federal Electricity Commission, have to be made from U.S. companies *a fortiori*. It does not matter if Mexican companies could have supplied the goods or services more cheaply, half of all purchases have to be made from the Americans."

Conchello added that "the fact that quotas for the export of textiles 'that fulfill the rules of origin specifications' is presented as 'one more step,' is a further affront. With textiles, the so-called 'from the thread on' rule is applied. Everything must be purchased from one of the three countries party to the treaty, and therefore we must stop buying thread from China and Taiwan, Germany or France, and must buy it only from the United States. Trade will now not be free, but Americanized."

Schmal says that the government seeks "an anchor, the force and immutability of an economic policy line inspired by the doctrine of free trade, by the individualist capitalist liberalism that inspires it, despite the fact that the government now seeks to camouflage itself with social liberalism."

The exit of the Doctrinal and Democratic Forum, observers believe, could be the start of a mass exodus of PAN rank and file. For example, in the state of Puebla, where elections for governor will take place shortly, the Salinist PAN members expelled a large group of PAN leaders because they opposed Alvarez.

The dissidents see three options: constitute themselves as a forum for analysis and criticism; found another political party, which according to some would be based on social-Christian thought; or become a civic movement.