

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Where left and right opposition meets

The presidential campaign is fast getting under way here, with an unusual new entry: Solidarism.

The next eight months will see some of the most intense politicking in the recent history of the country. The Political Reform, which was put through in 1978, is for the first time operative in a presidential election. This means that in addition to the governing PRI party and its traditional rival, the PAN, there will be six other parties with legal registration in the lists, all with guaranteed access to the press and campaign financing in part subsidized by the government itself.

In 1976, current President López Portillo faced a very different situation. No legal party fielded a rival candidate. The only avowed opposition was a Mexican Communist Party (PCM) candidate who was not on the official ballot.

Each of the parties in this election's new ballgame will be scrambling to get enough votes to stay above a stipulated minimum for continued registration: the Political Reform giveth and taketh away. How are they going to carve a place for themselves?

The main thrust from the left is to attack the state oil company, Pemex, and the industrialization its revenues are financing. Redistributionism is the watchword, and the chief focus, the backward peasant and Indian areas of the country where much of the oil development is taking place.

The situation has an unusual twist for the PRI in dealing with its traditional challenger from the

right. This is the National Action Party (PAN), which is unveiling a long-gestating approach designed to unite warring internal factions: Solidarism. (That's right, as in Poland.)

Pablo Emilio Madero, the PAN presidential candidate, declared a few days ago that the party identifies itself with Solidarism in "the search for the common good," and that the party's principal theses are based on economic redistributionism and the abolition of state involvement in the economy.

Now the most interesting thing about this process of a right-wing party picking up a pseudo-leftist profile, is that it coincides completely with the campaign of the supposed "enemy," the ultra-left itself. The PRT (a Trotskyist grouplet with registration) has openly endorsed Solidarism as the "only alternative." Not to mention the PCM, which has been extravagantly promoting Polish Solidarism in the pages of its publications.

For those familiar with the history of the opposition, both left and right, it's not surprising to discover that both Efraim González Morfín (son of a founder of the PAN) and Porfirio Miranda, former Jesuit, defender of the Theology of Liberation, and one of the most important visible controllers of the PCM, were both prominent students of Oswald von Nell-Breuning, the leading ideologue of Solidarism in Europe today. What's more, González

Morfín was the first to introduce the ideas of Nell-Breuning to Mexico, translating the bulk of his writings.

The Coalition of the Left—an umbrella shielding four unregistered sectlets together with the PCM—is moving toward selecting Heberto Castillo of the Mexican Workers Party (PMT) as their stand-bearer. Castillo has been built up in the media as the "major opposition figure" to the industrialization effort. He is known here as "the Ayatollah."

The Socialist Workers Party (PST), formerly viewed as a left extension of the PRI, has factionalized completely and just launched an ultra-leftist candidate from one of the regions slated for major oil and agricultural development, the Huasteca. To obtain the required number of votes, the PST will have to concentrate on maximum confrontation between the party's declining peasant base and the state.

For its part the Trotskyist PRT is promoting the candidacy of a Mrs. Ibarra de Piedra, of renown for shielding terrorist networks under a "human rights" cloak. The Mexican Democratic Party (PDM), a right-wing party with links to the old Cristero apparatus of the center-west of the country, is also fielding a candidate.

The thing that worries some people here is that in this reshuffled electoral deck, the card every opposition party threatens to play, even if it doesn't say so, is violence. The Southeast and the Huasteca are the most prominent of several areas nurtured as laboratories of conflict with the state. Now, with "Solidarist" theses as the common denominator of all, "electoral balkanization" is the scenario in play.