

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Violence in Puebla

The PAN party revealed its colors in the Puebla elections: yet the financial press says the party must have a larger role.

The voting Nov. 27 in local elections in the state of Puebla marked a major shift in the tenor of Mexican political life. The National Action Party (PAN), which has been threatening violence if what it claims are victories on the local level are not recognized, took a page from Mussolini's book and sent squadristi into the streets of Puebla in an attempt to take by force what it had not won at the ballot box.

Alejandro Cañedo, head of the PAN party in the city of Puebla, acknowledged Nov. 28 that armed thugs had been deployed. Asked about reports that PANistas had been seen on election day carrying high-powered weapons, Cañedo replied calmly: "This just means that in our country there are lots of arms."

These gangs seized and burned ballot boxes throughout the day. By nightfall, according to some observers, fully 40 percent of the ballots had been destroyed. Only the presence of the army in some polling places prevented more serious disorders.

The PAN nevertheless lost to the governing PRI party.

One of the reasons Puebla—unlike the sites of previous PAN defeats in Baja California Norte and Sinaloa—was the scene of this rampage is that it has served for decades as a breeding ground for both the extreme left and the extreme right, with powerful Jesuit-directed institutions linking the two.

It is especially a center of neo-Nazi

movements, going back to the formation in the 1950s of the MURO shock-troops. One of the founders of the fascist MURO, Luis Felipe Coello, warned in the newspaper *Acción* the day after the Puebla elections, "It is very probable that before the end of the year, the first bloody tragedy will occur, in one of the cities where municipal elections have been or will be held."

The PAN candidate, Oxford-trained Ricardo Villa Escalera (whose brother is an official of Chase Manhattan Bank) did not even come from the PAN itself. His candidacy was purchased for him from outside the PAN by a neo-Nazi command center called "Integral Human Development, A.C." (DHIAC). The leading lights of DHIAC include Salvador Borrego, another founder of the MURO gang and Mexico's most vehement anti-Semite, and Enrique Farlie Fuentes, an avowed friend of Klaus Barbie in the days when Barbie was the Nazi cocaine king of Bolivia.

Villa Escalera told a campaign crowd just before the voting: "We must not permit them to take the mayoralty away from us. If it is necessary, we will defend our triumph with arms." On the day of the voting, he entered his polling place with a troop of young people, and when the election authorities refused to allow him to open all the ballot boxes on the spot, he gave his followers the signal to tear the boxes apart. All votes at the site had to be annulled.

Some Mexicans are beginning to note the parallels between Germany in the early 1930s under the Versailles debt regimen and Mexico today under the International Monetary Fund. Just as in Germany of that period, in Mexico outside financial forces are making the rise to power of a mass fascist movement a condition for debt renegotiation.

In the Mexican case, one has the word of the PAN itself that this is the case. On Nov. 18, the defeated PAN candidate for mayor of Mazatlán, Humberto Rice García, stated: "The IMF pressured the [Mexican] system to create a democratic opening in Chihuahua and Durango [states which were handed to the PAN in voting at the beginning of July], as well as in the rest of the country, as a condition for negotiating the foreign debt."

The *Financial Times* of London of Nov. 24 gave the game away with a piece entitled "Mexicans cry foul at the stuffed ballot box." Author William Chislett summed up: "Opposition parties, Western diplomats, and Mexican political scientists believe that the government is playing with fire by not allowing freer elections at a time when people are fed up with the ruling party and the country needs an escape valve."

This "escape valve" theory is now coursing through the whisper circuits of the Mexican bureaucracy, thanks to the efforts of Mexico's Henry Kissinger, Education Minister Jesús Reyes Heróles. Reyes Heróles's protégé Carlos Salinas de Gortari, head of the Planning and Budget Ministry, dutifully informed the nation Nov. 20, on the anniversary of the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, that "Democracy must be broadened, particularly when the crisis deepens, since pluralism is the only way to ventilate divergent opinions."