

Mexico's Center Broadens Its Base

By William Edward Zeuch

After months of discussion among the leaders of the National Revolutionary Party—the political group that rules Mexico—their unanimous decision to overhaul the political organization and to reform it on a broader base under the name of the National Party of Workers and Soldiers was made public by President Cardenas on Dec. 15.

This new alignment is not a united front in the European sense. It is not a coalition of formerly separate political groups. The Conservatives are still to the Right and the Communists are still to the Left, and both are outside the new party. Neither is it a People's Front encompassing all classes. The privilege-seeking business class and the parasitic clerical group are not included.

From the time of its formation by former President Plutarco Calles, the National Revolutionary Party has been composed of organized peasants, organized workers, the army, and the civil service employees. Although the party included all these groups the money to run the political organization came solely from the public employees who, since 1930, by Presidential Order have had seven days' pay annually deducted from their salaries to finance the party. The peasants, the workers and the army enjoyed all the benefits of party membership without contributing to its treasury. This situation has been a source of irritation and protest for years.

The reorganized party, in addition to the four basic groups, will include organized womens' societies, youth organizations, and associations of intellectuals. This broadened base will bring into the National Party of Workers and Soldiers all groups committed to the Revolution and benefiting from the Revolution.

It should be kept in mind that the word Revolution has a somewhat different meaning in Mexico than in Russia, for example. The main objectives of the twenty-five year old Revolution in Mexico have been (1) land for the landless peasants, (2) a decent standard of living for the

industrial workers, and (3) the return of the natural resources to the nation. The groups included in the reorganized organization are the logical defenders of the accomplishments of the Party of the Revolution to date and the logical custodians of unaccomplished purposes.

The reform includes the discontinuation of the levy on the salaries of the public employees and puts the burden of financing the new party on the shoulders of all included groups and on a voluntary basis. From now on all the integrated elements must recognize and assume the responsibility of financial support to the Party that has brought them so much and which promises to bring them much more before the Revolution is fully achieved. It is not probable that the income from public employees will be less because of the change. The chances are that with contributions from all constituent groups the new National Party of Workers and Soldiers will have a much stronger treasury than the National Revolutionary Party ever had.

It would be a great mistake, however, to assume that the question of financial support, while important, was in any real sense the paramount consideration in determining the decision to reorganize the party. Developments of deeper significance and greater concern brought that about. During the past two years there has been a growing openness and militancy on the part of a minority fascist faction in Mexico, a faction composed largely of foreign business elements and the Church hierarchy and encouraged by events abroad, that has made necessary the consolidation of all groups favorable to and benefitting from the Revolution into a national party.

For the past three years President Cardenas as Executive of the nation

and as head of the National Revolutionary Party has been vigorously furthering the aims of the Revolution. Since he came to office in 1934 he has, under ordinary and special powers granted him by the National Congress, broken up more large estates and distributed more land to the landless peasants for farming communes than all his predecessors in the presidency since the beginning of the Revolution a quarter century ago.

In addition he has sponsored a stricter administration of the laws protecting labor. The Labor Board of Arbitration and Conciliation has handed down a decree granting the claims of the workers in the oil industry against the various oil companies operating in Mexico, mostly foreign, in an amount in excess of 26,000,000 pesos. This decision, if we are to believe the attorneys for the oil companies, not only gives the oil workers the above sum in back pay but will mean in future an additional annual labor charge against the costs of the industry of over 40,000,000 pesos.

In view of this aggressive policy of President Cardenas and his administration the recent intense and insidious campaign of the foreign business groups is to be understood. As these resentful privilege-seeking elements consolidate the opposition to the Cardenas regime under fascist auspices it is to be expected that the chiefs of the National Revolutionary Party would seek to consolidate all groups sympathetic to its aims in a National Party of Workers and Soldiers. This sharpening of political divisions along economic lines will continue in Mexico as in all other nations during this transitional era. The fascist minority is influential because it represents concentrated wealth but in view of the fact that the reorganized National Party of Workers and Soldiers will include at least ninety percent of the organized adults of Mexico the outcome cannot be in doubt unless the fascist elements on some pretext or other induce foreign intervention. The re-



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alists who rule Mexico know that Mexico is an economic colony of the United States. The Cardenas Admin-

istration, nevertheless, is depending on the "good neighbor" policy of President Roosevelt for protection

from such intervention while the objectives of the Revolution are being furthered.