

MEXICAN COMMUNISTS AND THE CARDENAS REGIME, 1934-1940

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I.

Nominated as presidential candidate of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) and backed by General Plutarco Calles, General Lázaro Cárdenas was assured of victory in Mexico's 1934 election. Nevertheless, the suppressed Partido Comunista de México (PCM) entered the presidential contest under the banner of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino; and on April 2 Hernán Laborde, General Secretary of the PCM, announced that he had been nominated as the Bloque candidate. At the same time he denounced the PNR platform as a crude copy of Hitlerism and Roosevelt's New Deal. Although Laborde declared that the election would be a farce, he justified his candidacy on the grounds that it would give the Bloque an opportunity to infiltrate its ideology into the minds of the masses.¹ During the course of the campaign he denounced Cárdenas and two other presidential contenders as candidates who were supported by the bourgeois and landlord classes and who sought the favor of the President of the United States.²

Following his overwhelming victory at the polls, Cárdenas took the oath of office on November 30, 1934. Almost immediately the country was subjected to a wave of industrial strikes. Businessmen were greatly alarmed by this development; but on January 25, 1935, Cárdenas told newspaper reporters that the labor unrest should be viewed "as a mere manifestation of the state of injustice in which some companies maintain the workers. . . ."3

From the beginning of his administration, Cárdenas sought to unite Mexico's several labor unions within a single confederation. His objective was to facilitate the implementation of his revolutionary program and to strengthen his regime; however, through their Conferación Sindical Unitaria de México (CSUM), Mexico's Communists attempted to obtain control of non-Communist proletarian organizations and to build the power of the PCM to the point where overthrow of the Cárdenas government might be attempted. Refusing to recognize any fundamental difference between Cárdenas and his Calles-controlled predecessors, the PCM continued to voice the slogan, "Neither with Calles nor with Cárdenas"; and when Cárdenas took action to legalize the existence of the PCM, the move was denounced as leftist demagogy.⁴

Finally, in mid-June, 1935, General Calles' criticism of continued strike activity raised the fear that the Cárdenas regime would be overthrown. Thus the CSUM joined non-Communist labor organizations to announce their support of Cárdenas and to sign a pact of solidarity. Under the terms of this agreement a National Committee of Proletarian Defense was established to deal with inter-union conflicts and to guarantee the protection of workers' rights through a general strike if conditions should warrant. Also, the committee was directed to convoke a National Congress of Laborers and Peasants for the purpose of creating a single proletarian organization.⁵

Late in June the PCM slogan "Neither with Calles nor with Cárdenas" was modified to "With Cárdenas, no; with the cardenista masses, yes";⁶ but this variation did not signify any change in the PCM's attitude toward the President. When on August 2, 1935, spokesmen for the Conferación General de Obreros y Campesinos de México (CGOCCM) and the railroad

workers issued statements endorsing policies of Cárdenas and the PNR, an editorial in the official newspaper of the PCM denounced the declarations as "reform viciousness" and pointed out that any relations with the government would tend to restrict the independence of the workers. Explaining that opposition to Calles did not imply the necessity of supporting Cárdenas, the editorial asserted: "Independence is necessary in order to increase the class consciousness of the proletariat, because while it continues to think that it is General Lázaro Cárdenas who can relieve the situation of the laboring masses,...the working class cannot understand its historic tasks that must be fulfilled; it can never organize and prepare its forces for the violent destruction of the capitalist regime...."⁷ At the time that this editorial was being published, however, a significant new line was being announced in Moscow at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.

II

Shocked by Hitler's destruction of the Communist movement in Germany and alarmed by the revival of German military power, Stalin decided that the mounting wave of fascism must be explained as the result of capitalism's efforts to save itself by despoiling the workers and by preparing for an imperialist assault against the Soviet Union. Thus on August 2, 1935. George Dimitrov delivered an address to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in which he called upon Communist parties throughout the world to organize popular fronts against fascism and imperialism. These fronts were to include labor unions, peasant leagues, youth groups, women's organizations, and political parties of the left and center.⁸

Indications that Mexican Communists would assume a new attitude toward the administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas were to be found in a speech made at the Seventh Congress in Moscow by Laborde.⁹

In this address Laborde dealt with the problem of "our position before national reformism, the PNR, and the Cárdenas government which has the support of the great majority of the workers and the petite bourgeoisie."¹⁰ He declared, "Without resolving this problem we shall not be able to apply the directive concerning the Popular Front which the Mexican delegation accepts totally and without reservation."¹¹ Referring to the line taken by the PCM regarding the recent clash between Cárdenas and former President Calles over the issue of widespread strikes by Mexican labor unions, Laborde admitted:

...we saw nothing more than a factional struggle involving rivalry of economic interests between two cliques for the purpose of ending the struggles of the masses and of tranquilizing the country for the benefit of foreign capital and its national allies. We placed Cárdenas on the same plane with Calles and limited ourselves to telling the masses; "Neither with Calles nor with Cárdenas" and affirming that both were against the proletariat. This position was wrong.¹²

If Laborde was quick to grasp the significance of the Comintern line, Communist leaders at home were slow in adapting themselves to the new situation. For several weeks after Dimitrov's speech, articles in El Machete, the PCM newspaper, continued to insist that the Cárdenas government differed little from callismo;¹³ and a clear call for unequivocal support of the Cárdenas regime was not sounded until November, 1935, when a letter from Mexican delegates who had attended the Moscow Congress was discussed at a meeting of the PCM's Central Committee. Explaining that the PCM would struggle for the achievement of Popular

Front objectives to the greatest extent possible under the Cárdenas regime and would press increasingly radical demands as the strength of the movement permitted, the letter stated:

...we know that the platform of the Popular Front will be realized fully only by a Popular Revolutionary government which, while not being a Worker and Peasant government, will be, however, an anti-reactionary, Anti-imperialist Popular Front government that will begin a serious struggle to undermine not only the political positions but also the economic positions of imperialism, will unfold even more the peasant struggle for land, and will create in this way the conditions for the implantation of the democratic revolutionary dictatorship of workers and peasants which in turn will plant the bases for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the construction of socialism.¹⁴

In other words, the PCM was to build up a front movement that would be Communist-controlled and was to use this organization to bring the Cárdenas government under Communist domination. Obviously, this was a most ambitious program for a Communist party that could claim only a few thousand members. However, the PCM was counting heavily on its ability in influence leftist labor leaders such as Vicente Lombardo Toledano.

Although he had battled with Mexican Communists for several years, in the summer of 1935 Lombardo Toledano, the CGOCM leader visited the Soviet Union. There he conferred with Dimitrov, Laborde, and other Comintern leaders; and even before Lombardo Toledano's return to Mexico, El Machete announced, "We are certain that his arrival in the country will influence in a perceptible manner the impulse of the struggles of the workers and the anti-imperialists for the political and organizational strengthening of the masses in combat against imperialism and reaction."¹⁵ With the support of President Cárdenas, Lombardo Toledano launched a drive to unify all Mexican labor unions, including the Communist CSUM. Although a few labor groups refused

to cooperate, in February, 1936, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) was formed and Lombardo Toledano became the secretary general of the new organization.¹⁶ In that same month a delegation representing the newly created CTM attended a Communist-sponsored National Constitutional Congress of the Anti-imperialist Front in Mexico City. Addressing the Congress, Laborde emphasized that the Popular Front movement did not seek to establish a Soviet regime in Mexico; rather, he explained that its objectives were to struggle against the callistas and their imperialist allies who were endeavoring to secure United States intervention for the overthrow of the Cárdenas government.¹⁷ On behalf of the CTM, Lombardo Toledano endorsed the Congress's eleven-point program; but he called for the convening of another national congress that would establish what he described as neither a political party nor a labor organization but a union of diverse sectors of society suffering from exploitation by the national bourgeoisie and foreign imperialists.¹⁸

During the closing session of the National Constitutional Congress of the Anti-imperialist Front, a permanent commission with a fourteen-member Executive Committee was named to direct the Popular Front movement.¹⁹ In the months that followed, however, a bitter conflict developed between PCM and CTM leaders concerning the nature and function of the Executive Committee. According to Laborde and his supporters, who formed a majority of the Executive Committee membership, that body constituted the leadership of an established Mexican Popular Front; but most CTM leaders contended that the Committee had been formed merely for the purpose of arranging another congress as had been recommended by Lombardo. On June 5, 1936, this conflict was brought before the first

meeting of the CTM'S National Council when Valentín Campa, representative of the Communist-controlled Camara Unitaria del Trabajo del Distrito Federal, declared that a Mexican Popular Front had been organized, was functioning, consisted of groups affiliated with the CTM, and merited CTM support. However, Fernando Amilpa, representative of the Federación Regional de Obreros y Campesinos del Distrito Federal, insisted that groups affiliated with the CTM should not recognize the so-called Mexican Popular Front and should not support its acts unless approved by the CTM's National Committee. Finally, Amilpa proposed that without delay the CTM should convoke a national congress to form a Popular Front; and his motion was approved.²⁰

The summer months of 1936 passed without the convening of a national congress, but relations between the PCM and the CTM did not improve. Indicative of the bitterness resulting from the Popular Front issue was a statement of September 11 signed by Amilpa and other leaders of the Federación Regional de Obreros y Campesinos del Distrito Federal. Protesting that the PCM was exploiting the Popular Front movement as a means of seizing control of non-Communist groups and organizing them into new federations serving the political interests of the Communists, Amilpa and his associates demanded that the CTM's National Committee should repudiate all acts of the so-called Mexican Popular Front.²¹ In response to this demand, the National Council referred the matter to a special study committee,²² later, on the basis of the committee's recommendation, the National Council voted to authorize the National Committee of the CTM to invite other social and political organizations to join in creating a Mexican Popular Front which would unite representatives of labor, peasant, and political sectors. While specifying that the proposed Front must be above

the sectarianism of party and ideology, support only those demands approved by all affiliated groups, and refrain from concerning itself with electoral politics, the National Council resolved that "The Mexican Popular Front shall struggle energetically against imperialism, fascism, and war."

In conclusion, it asserted that the existence of the Communist-dominated Organizing Committee of the Popular Front was unnecessary but that it would be invited to participate in the formation of the Mexican Front.²³

As might have been expected, Laborde and other officials of the Organizing Committee expressed resentment in regard to the assertion that their committee was no longer needed; however, in a letter dated October 27, they assured Lombardo Toledano of their willingness to cooperate.²⁴ On November 13 Lombardo Toledano addressed a letter to the PCM, the PNR, and the National Committee of Peasant Unification, inviting these organizations to join the CTM in forming a Mexican Popular Front and in adopting a platform that would provide public support for "all the acts, laws, and programs of the progressive government of General Lázaro Cárdenas that signify maintenance of institutions benefitting the working class or defending the material, political, or moral interests of the Mexican Nation."²⁵ Replying on behalf of the PNR and the National Committee of Peasant Unification, PNR President Silvano Barba González and Secretary General Esteban García de Alba informed Lombardo Toledano that they expected the proposal for formation of the Mexican Popular Front to be approved by the party's National Executive Committee in its next session. They praised the proposal as "a firm step in the important and transcendental work of revolutionary unification promoted with such enthusiasm by the President of the Republic, General Lázaro Cárdenas..."²⁶

In spite of these developments, the Mexican Popular Front did not materialize. Friction between the CTM and the PNR over the matter of unification of peasant leagues and of organization of federal government employees undoubtedly contributed to this failure. Cárdenas insisted that these two groups must not be organized by the CTM, no doubt because he feared that such a move would give Lombardo Toledano too much power; also, of equal importance was the justified apprehension on the part of CTM and PNR leaders concerning PCM tactics and objectives.

Although Communist spokesmen might announce their great desire to cooperate with non-Communist organizations in support of the Cárdenas government, their unceasing activity in raiding non-Communist unions, proselytizing PNR members, and pressuring non-Communist leaders to implement PCM policies continued to arouse suspicion and distrust. That these feelings were justified could easily be understood by any reader of PCM publications. For example, the same issue of El Machete wherein was published the text of the Party's acceptance of Lombardo Toledano's invitation to cooperate in the establishment of a Mexican Popular Front also carried an article by Jorge Fernández which boldly announced PCM aims to gain control over key labor groups as the first step toward dominating the Mexican Revolutionary movement. Fernández wrote:

Fundamentally, in order to be able to win hegemony for the proletariat in this revolution, our Party needs to expand itself within the decisive stratum of the proletariat which consists of miners and metallurgical workers, railroad workers, petroleum workers, general transport workers, port workers, textile workers, sugar mill workers, electrical workers, and agricultural wage earners as well as the peasants. Our Party must understand that without rooting itself in those sectors there will be no possibility of mobilizing all of the working class as the directing class in the economic, political, and theoretical struggle so as to permit the party to gain direction of the National Revolution.²⁷

At the fourth meeting of the National Council of the CTM, it was decided to take action against Communist-influenced organizations and their leaders. Expounding on the nature of the Popular Front policy as announced in Moscow, Lombardo Toledano charged that "the Communist comrades in Mexico have not understood, or do not wish to understand, the historic scope and the revolutionary transcendency of the Popular Front tactic; they wish to move too fast within the CTM; they desire to achieve control; they deny it, but this fact is certain because deeds cannot be hidden."²⁸ He asserted that for the first time in the history of the PCM, through the CTM the Communists had come into contact with the working class; and he remarked with sarcasm: "The Communist comrades, with the psychological attitude of the newly rich, have come to make assertions that are contrary to reality; for example, that they created the CTM and that the government of President Cárdenas is progressive because the Communist Party keeps close watch over it and pushes it toward the left."²⁹ Further, Lombardo Toledano charged that Communists within the CTM were "more obedient to the leadership of their Party than to the syndical discipline of the CTM...."³⁰ Subsequently, the National Council resolved to depose three Communist officials of the CTM if within twenty-four hours they had not given written notice of repudiation of a boycott of the Council meeting; also, organizations whose delegates had participated in the boycott were given fifteen days to express their solidarity with the CTM. Some of the organization complied with this demand, but the three rebellious Council members refused to recant and were removed.³¹

III.

At the same time that PCM activities were bringing internal discord to the CTM and promoting division rather than unity within the ranks of

organized labor, relations between the PCM and the PNR were deteriorating. Primarily, this development stemmed from the PCM's attempt to obtain PNR endorsement of Communist candidates in the congressional elections of 1937. On September 4, 1935, the National Executive Committee of the PNR had declared that workers and peasants should take an active part in political affairs; at the same time it was announced that mere membership in a "revolutionary union" or an ejido community would be considered as evidence of PNR membership. In mid-March of the following year a so-called Popular Electoral Front, organized by the PCM in the Federal District, announced that Hernán Laborde would seek nomination as candidate for the office of deputy representing the Fifth District within the national capital.³² This announcement prompted PNR President Silvano Barba González to declare that Communists were not eligible for nomination as PNR candidates even though they might be identified with labor or peasant organizations. When interviewed by an El Machete reporter and asked if he would continue his campaign in view of PNR opposition, Laborde replied:

I have accepted my call as resolved by the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party. This resolution is based on the recommendations of various important organizations of workers interested in having within Congress a representative in whom they have complete confidence; the Communist Party could not do less than respond to the desire of these workers....

Therefore, the acceptance of my candidacy was not a personal act on my part but the fulfillment of a resolution of my party, an act of discipline; and in spite of the well-known declarations of the President of the PNR, I shall continue in the struggle as long as I enjoy the backing of the labor organizations.³³

However, on the morning of April 11, the delegates of pro-Communist groups in the Fifth District were not allowed to participate in the district convention of the PNR because they were unable to show proper credentials. Under these circumstances Laborde's supporters held a convention of their own and announced the nomination of Laborde.³⁴ Subsequently, in a letter addressed to the Permanent Commission of the national Congress, the Popula

Electoral Front explained that credentials of 83 delegates representing 10,449 votes had been delivered by the Executive Committee of the Camara del Trabajo Unitaria del Distrito Federal to the Secretary General of the PNR on April 3 for the purpose of certification but that these credentials had not been returned. For this reason it was requested that the Fifth District PNR convention should be declared invalid, that the PNR should declare that it had no candidate for the office of deputy, and that the popular vote should be respected in the coming July election.³⁵ Similar results were reported in regard to Communist candidates Hernán Escalante in the Fourth District of Yucatán, Dionisio Encinas in Torreón, and Francisco García Carranza in Ciudad Juárez.³⁶

IV.

As a result of these election conflicts, bitter attacks were launched by the PCM against the PNR, and the prospects of creating a Mexican Popular Front that would include the two parties appeared to be very slim. However, after months of increasingly strong criticism of both the CTM and the PNR, on June 20, 1937, an article by Hernán Laborde signaled an abrupt change in PCM policy. Entitled "Unity at All Cost," the article declared that in view of the danger of an imperialist war and the menace of reactionary elements within Mexico, "all the truly patriotic, progressive, revolutionary elements--the lovers of liberty and progress, and the enemies of Fascist reaction--have the obligation to combine their efforts so that war will find us united."³⁷ Of special importance, according to Laborde, was the matter of CTM unity; thus he declared, "for us, the Communists, the problem of the CTM is stated in these terms: 'UNITY AT ALL COST.'³⁸ In explaining the full significance of this slogan, the PCM leader emphasized:

This formula imposes upon us as the first condition the suppression of all attacks and all public controversy concerning the causes of the division. The causes are multiple and there will be time to analyze them. Numerous errors and short-comings of the different ideological sectors of the CTM contributed to the creation of the situation in which we find ourselves. But for now our Party abstains from pointing out and criticizing the faults of others, particularly the faults of those who have sought to throw the blame for the division upon us.

Rather, we shall analyze our own conduct in order to discover and self-criticize the errors that we may have committed and which may have contributed to creating a situation that we neither wished for nor sought but were incapable of avoiding.

All the errors of our Party and of individual Communists will be corrected and all-out efforts will tend to make possible the reestablishment of the CTM. In the area of unity, we Communists shall make concessions and shall accept the necessary sacrifices.³⁹

Also on June 20 the PCM's Political Bureau resolved that Laborde should withdraw his candidacy for election as a federal deputy. At the same time it called upon all labor and popular organizations to back the PNR candidates and "to present a single front against the reaction and its 'Independent Parties' in the electoral field and in all other fields."⁴⁰

Six days later, under the close supervision of Comintern representatives Earl Browder and Alexander Trachtenberg from the United States and Gustavo Machado of Venezuela, the PCM's Central Committee began a meeting for the purpose of "correcting our errors in applying the line of the Communist International."⁴¹ These were the words of Rafael Carrillo as he delivered the opening address. Then the Central Committee considered a 48-page report from Secretary General Laborde.⁴² From June 26 to 30 there was much breast-beating within the Central Committee over the wretched failure of the PCM in its attempt to implement the Popular Front policy. As a result of these five days of soul-searching and self-criticism, the Central Committee adopted a "unity at all cost" resolution setting forth an explanation of the CTM division and its consequences, a listing of the causes of the CTM split and the tactical errors of the PCM, an analysis of the general deviation from the Comintern line, an outline of the new course to be followed in re-establishing

CTM unity and constructing the Mexican Popular Front, and a plan for strengthening the PCM through a program of rigorous indoctrination and discipline.⁴³ As an indication of the Party's determination to achieve the establishment of a Popular Front and to win the confidence of the CTM and the PNR, the resolution declared: "The Communists must work for the immediate creation of a complete Popular Front, including our Party; but if the Popular Front should be constituted without our Party, the Communists shall support this movement without prejudice to the continuing of its work for the incorporation of the Party."⁴⁴ Also, it declared that "In order to be consistent and to eliminate all motives for lack of confidence in the sincerity and good faith of the Party, it is necessary, in general terms, to support the candidates of the CTM and of the PNR, grouping the greatest amount of strength against the reactionary candidates."⁴⁵

In his final speech before the Central Committee, Laborde reviewed the past conduct of the Party and declared that the Communists must humble themselves before their former CTM opponents in order to achieve the objective of a unified CTM that would serve as the keystone in the proposed Mexican Popular Front. Concerning the CTM division he confessed:

We contributed in a large measure to this disaster. We were impatient, intolerant, inflexible; we did not understand why other leaders did not act as we should have wished; we did not understand that in any form the unified CTM by itself constituted a formidable revolutionary force. We recognize that a part of the responsibility in the division of the CTM falls upon the Communist Party inasmuch as we were obligated to make all types of sacrifices and concessions before permitting the CTM to be divided.⁴⁶

And with regard to future relations with CTM, he insisted:

We are disposed to accept unconditionally the resolutions of the fourth meeting of the CTM's National Council; we shall struggle for syndical democracy and respect for the Statutes within the framework of the CTM; and we shall renounce the struggle for positions of authority if this struggle places in danger the unity of the CTM! Now we know that they are going to say many things against us. It is not important to us! Let them say what they wish: that

we proceed in a blunbling manner, that we surrender to them!
Yes we surrender to them! We surrender before our brothers
of the CTM so that we shall not have to surrender later to
Fascism!⁴⁷

As a final peace offering, in July 28, 1937, the Communist-controlled Organizing Committee, which had provoked so much controversy regarding the establishment of a Popular Front, notified the National Council of the CTM that it had resolved to disband. Citing national and international conditions that indicated the necessity of creating a Popular Front, the Organizing Committee declared that it had decided on this course of action because it did not wish to be considered as an obstacle to the creation of the urgently needed Mexican Popular Front.⁴⁸

V.

On October 25, 1937, the Bloque Revolucionario in the Senate adopted a resolution proposed by Dr. Julian Garza Tijerina which called for the permanent integration of Mexico's revolutionary sectors in a Mexican Popular Front. By this time, calls for a Popular Front represented nothing new in Mexico since the PCM has been insisting on such a development for two years and CTM leaders had pressed for the formation of a Popular Front for almost that long. However, of particular significance in this case was Garza Tijerina's stated assumption that for electoral purposes the Mexican Popular Front was already in existence in the form of the PNR since both labor and peasant organizations had been allowed to select some candidates from their ranks to campaign under the PNR banner in the recent congressional elections. But for an effective struggle against "imperialism war, reaction, and Fascism," Garza Tijerina explained that a more formal union of labor, peasant, and popular groups--each of which would retain control over its internal affairs--was necessary. Thus, with the objective of officially organizing a Mexican Popular Front before the end of the year, a four-man

committee composed of Senators closely identified with the peasants and workers was named by the Bloque president, Lic. Francisco Castellanos.⁴⁹

Since there was no indication that the PCM would be tendered an invitation to join with the PNR in establishing a Popular Front, during its December 4 to 6 meeting the PCM's Central Committee resolved that all Communists should be prepared to join the PNR on an individual basis in order to be able to participate in the creation of a Popular Front.⁵⁰ But it was not until December 19 that Cárdenas officially launched the movement toward what was to amount to an official party with a Popular Front structure. In a manifesto directed to the nation, the President announced that while peasants, laborers, public employees, and members of the military establishment were all considered to be active members of the PNR, the party machinery did not provide for equal rights and equal obligations among these sectors. Specifically, he referred to the fact that public employees had been compelled to contribute seven days pay each year while other elements within the party were not required to assume any responsibility for the financial support of this political institution. Thus he announced that the practice of making obligatory deductions, amounting to the pay received by government workers for the last day of each month with thirty-one days, had been abolished.⁵¹

Then, without giving any additional details concerning future changes in the party's structure, Cárdenas, concluded the manifesto with the following explanation:

Interpreting the feeling of the leaders of the Party, I wish to state that the transformation that is indicated will have as its basic purpose that of invigorating the organism created for the defense of the Revolution, giving it new directions more in accord with the progress of our popular masses, and purifying it of certain characteristics in order to be able to impress into the conscience of the people the unquestionable truth that the Mexican proletariat follows a common course in its unalterable route and forms a single, close-knit group capable of contending against

the power of the reactionaries and standing up for revolutionary ideals and not for selfish interests.⁵²

In his message Cárdenas did not use the term "Popular Front," but the steps taken by cardenista Senators and the similarity between his proposal and those previously advanced by both the PCM and the CTM (except for the inclusion of the military) naturally led to the conclusion that the transformation called for by the President would be equivalent to creating a Popular Front within the official party.⁵³ Since the PCM's Central Committee had already resolved to support such a development,⁵⁴ it is not surprising that Laborde welcomed Cárdenas' statement by declaring: "The formation of the Popular Front within the PNR is the most transcendently revolutionary step of all the political and administrative actions taken by Cárdenas because it lays the basis for the final defeat of Fascism and reaction in Mexico and for an extraordinary and unprecedented development of the Mexican Revolution."⁵⁵ Later, while delivering the inaugural address at the Pedagogic Conference of the Communist Party on February 14, 1938, he asserted: "The educational and social work of teachers must contribute to the grouping of the masses, ... within the new Partido Nacional Revolucionario, that is to say, within the Popular Front that will be constituted in Mexico next month through the transformation of the present PNR."⁵⁶

In an effort to explain to Communists of other countries the Mexican situation, Laborde wrote in the February, 1938, issue of The Communist:

"... there exists in fact in Mexico a People's Front, in that all the people's organizations, particularly the CTM, and including the peasant, youth, and women's organizations, and naturally the Communist Party, support the government and the National Revolutionary Party (PNR). It is equally clear that the policy of Cárdenas is a highly advanced People's Front policy."⁵⁷

Cárdenas had not invited the PCM to participate in a Popular Front such as had been created in France and Spain, but this was explained by Laborde as follows:

In Mexico the National Revolutionary Party is the party of the revolution in power and has the support of all the people's organizations. Having leadership in national politics, this party does not consider it necessary to share its power with other organizations in a united front which would place upon it determinate obligations and restrictions.⁵⁸

As for Lombardo Toledano, in his January 15, 1938, address to a special session of the CTM's National Council, he endorsed Cárdenas' plan for reorganizing the PNR and assured his audience that "the proposal of the CTM for the creation of a Mexican Popular Front will be fulfilled at last...."⁵⁹ And again on February 22, in an address before the First Extraordinary Congress of the CTM, he promised: "We shall be the best soldiers in the new party, without ambitions and without preoccupations concerning positions or factions; we shall claim only the right to be always in the vanguard and the faculty of fulfilling our duty ahead of any other sector."⁶⁰ March 30 was the date set for the convening of the National Constitutional Assembly to reorganize the government's party.⁶¹

Composed of four sectors (labor, peasant, popular, and military) and named Partido Mexicano Revolucionario, the new party was designed to ensure a smooth transfer of presidential power in 1940. Speaking on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Laborde declared on November 8, 1938:

Once more the Communist Party exhorts the people to unite within and around the PRM, against its enemies within and without. We shall be invincible. United in the PRM, we shall elaborate and impose through the will of the majority a revolutionary program of government for 1940-1946, and we shall place in the presidency of the Republic a man who will develop and continue the revolutionary work of Cárdenas.⁶²

Shortly thereafter he announced that the Politburo of the PCM had decided not to nominate a Communist presidential candidate in 1940 but would support the PRM's candidate.⁶³ Later, in his report to the Seventh Congress of the PCM, the Secretary General proposed that the important question of endorsing a PRM candidate should be left to the Central Committee, which would be guided by the following line: "Unity of the PRM and of the popular organizations behind

a candidate who guarantees the continuation of the policy of General Cárdenas and who promises to struggle for the program that the PPM will elaborate."⁶⁴

Frequently Cárdenas was attacked by rightist politicians, businessmen, and newspaper editors who charged that his programs (especially socialist education, agrarian reform and nationalization of the railroads and the petroleum industry) were the result of Communist influence. These attacks were ignored or denied by the President, and he refused to heed demands that PCM members should be denied government employment. Thus, when a La Prensa reporter suggested that Communist railroad employees and educators might constitute a danger to the country, Cárdenas was quoted as having replied: "Any party that works for the welfare of the people is not prejudicial." These words were publicized with pride by the PCM organ,⁶⁵ but Cárdenas was frequently criticized by Mexican Communists on two counts: first, his failure to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR;⁶⁶ and, second, at the request of Diego Rivera, he had allowed Leon Trotsky to enter the country and establish residence in Mexico City in January, 1937.⁶⁷

With respect to his Spanish policy, Cárdenas received strong support from the PCM. During the Civil War period, the Mexican government extended moral support and material aid to the Loyalist cause; and following the Insurgent victory, Cárdenas withheld diplomatic recognition of the Franco regime while welcoming thousands of Republican refugees to Mexican soil.⁶⁸ With the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the subsequent outbreak of World War II, however, the PCM censured Cárdenas for his failure to condemn the conflict as an "imperialist war." Even greater PCM criticism was provoked in December, 1939, when Cárdenas denounced Soviet aggression against Finland.⁶⁹ In the field of Mexican national politics, the PCM endorsed General Manuel Avila Camacho, who was favored by Cárdenas as the

PRM's 1940 presidential candidate. At the same time the PCM emphasized the danger of armed rebellion by supporters of General Juan Andreu Almazán, who was branded as a "reactionary." Thus, pointing to the crises resulting from the war in Europe and the approaching presidential election in Mexico, Secretary General Laborde announced in October, 1939, that the PCM's National Committee had resolved to convoke an Extraordinary Party Congress.⁷⁰

VI.

In explaining the need for the Extraordinary Party Congress, Laborde declared that the PCM was suffering from many defects with regard to policy and organization. He stated that the Party had failed to establish itself in the vanguard of political and economic struggles; instead, he charged, "We move along more or less tranquilly at the tail of the revolutionary regime, applauding it, and at the tail of the organizations of the masses of the PRM, supporting them, cooperating with them, in a second-rank position."⁷¹ After at least three postponements, the Extraordinary Congress convened in Mexico City from March 19 to 24, 1940. Delays were due, no doubt, to the sweeping purge that was conducted prior to the meeting. Apparently acting on Comintern orders,⁷² a National Purge Commission was established. Designated as President of the Commission was Andrés García Salgado, who had served as a brigade political commissar in the Loyalist army during the Spanish Civil War. When Secretary General Laborde and his principal lieutenant, Valentín Campa, failed to demonstrate "an attitude of frank and loyal self-criticism," they were removed from the Party Secretariat; and direction of the PCM was assumed by the Purge Commission.⁷³

Dionisio Encino, who became the new PCM Secretary General, presented the principal report to the Extraordinary Congress. Much of his report was devoted to a defense of Soviet foreign policy, and he described as "truly incomprehensible" the attitude of the Cárdenas government toward Finland.⁷⁴ Also, he denounced

the "sectarian-opportunist" line followed by the former Party leadership in its relations with Cárdenas, and he deplored the failure of the PCM to establish a true Popular Front.⁷⁵

Reporting on the work of the Purge Commission, García Salgado informed the Extraordinary Congress concerning cases of corruption and treason within the Party; and he declared that some PCM positions had been given to Freemasons, reactionaries, and Trotskyites.⁷⁶ As has been pointed out by Professor Karl Schmitt, this official explanation of the need for the purge "does not ring true"; and he suggests that "the answer may lie in part in Laborde's and Campa's opposition to the known desire of Stalin to rid himself of Trotsky."⁷⁷ In fact, this is the interpretation given by Trotsky himself when the issue of "Trotskyism" was raised at the beginning of the purge:

What happened most probably is that the GPU encountered some opposition among the leaders of the Communist party who had become accustomed to a peaceful existence and might have feared very unpleasant political and police consequences from the assassination attempt. This is the source of the charge of "Trotskyism" against them. Whoever objects to an attempt on Trotsky's life is, obviously, a -- "Trotskyist."⁷⁸

On May 24, only two months after the Extraordinary Congress, a force of about twenty armed men attacked Trotsky's villa in Coyoacán. Despite the fact that his bedroom was riddled with bullets, Trotsky escaped injury. Robert Sheldon Harte, a young United States citizen who was serving as a guard, was abducted by the raiders. A month later Mexico City police discovered Harte's body; he had been shot twice. Several arrests were made and the leader of the assault was identified as David Alfaro Siqueiros, famous Mexican muralist, veteran of both the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, and a long-time Communist. Siqueiros was not apprehended until late in September. Meanwhile, on August 20 Trotsky was mortally wounded by Ramon Mercader, a Spanish Communist who had gained access to the Coyoacán villa through his mistress, Sylvia Ageloff. The assassin was seized at the scene of the crime, and Trotsky died on the following day.⁷⁹

Although Mercader's identity and his Soviet connections were not established immediately, Cárdenas issued a public denunciation of the assassination on August 30. After pointing out that the members of the Communist Party had been accorded liberty and respect by his administration, he declared, ". . . if they have decided that their interests are best served by abandoning the field of cooperation with the organized workers of Mexico for their progressive betterment and labor union defense, and if they have allied themselves with a foreign power that carries out acts of aggression against the sovereignty of this country, organizing armed attacks in union with Mexican and foreign elements and committing crimes that dishonor civilization and that place in doubt the capacity of the government and the people of Mexico to maintain in the capital of the Republic a state of security and tranquility for the citizens who reside therein, those elements have committed the crime of treason against the country, they have prostituted their doctrines of redemption and proletarian progress, they have obviously damaged their country, committing a crime that history will record as dishonorable for whomsoever may have inspired it and as nefarious for whomsoever consummated it and cooperated in carrying it out."⁸⁰

A few days later Cárdenas was asked by newsmen if his government intended to take any action against the Communist Party. His answer was that there was no plan to "attack any institution," but he emphasized that his government disapproved of "elements that place themselves outside the law."⁸¹ Nevertheless, during the remaining two months of the Cárdenas administration, anti-Communist sentiment increased in Mexico and was manifested by some labor union members and by some members of the national legislative body.⁸² In response to various newspaper reports that some Senators had resolved to launch an anti-Communist campaign, the editor of the official organ of the PRM was moved to publish an emphatic denial. Furthermore, he insisted that the incoming Avila Camacho administration would continue to follow the policies of Cárdenas with respect

to the Communist Party.⁸³ Nevertheless, police raids on the PCM headquarters, a branch office, and a private residence were carried out in Mexico City on November 29, only one day before Cárdenas ended his six-year term of office. In view of the assassination of Trotsky, Mexican authorities did not take lightly the rumor of a Communist plot to kill both Cárdenas and Avila Camacho, as well as visiting United States Vice President Henry Wallace and others. A total of eighty-nine persons were reported to have been arrested during the course of the raids; shooting took place; some persons were wounded; and Major Guillermo García Gallegos was killed.⁸⁴ Thus, at the end of the Cárdenas administration, relations between the PCM and the government had reached a critical point.

VII.

By way of summary, it can be pointed out that the tactics of the PCM underwent various changes during the 1934-1940 period. First attacked by the Communists, then tolerated by them, and finally hailed by the PCM as a "progressive" President, Cárdenas accorded Mexico's Communists political liberties when they opposed him and accepted their support when the interests of his administration seemed to coincide with those of the PCM. In view of the appeal which the Popular Front movement exercised over many non-Communists throughout the world during this period when international economic problems mounted and the tide of fascism threatened to engulf the globe, a less nationalistic and less sophisticated politician might have delivered himself, his political organization, and his government into the hands of militant Communists. Although Cárdenas had strong leftist inclinations, he was too strong a Mexican nationalist and too realistic in his analysis of national and international situations to be deceived by thinly veiled Communist tactics that were designed to advance the interests of the Comintern over those of Mexico and to strengthen the PCM while weakening his own power position.

In their attempts to organize a Mexican Popular Front as directed by the

the Seventh Comintern Congress, PCM leaders alienated both CTM and PNR leaders who refused to accept Communist direction. Thus the Popular Front movement failed even though the Communists eventually humbled themselves before their former opponents in a desperate attempt to win cooperation. If he were influenced by the Popular Front proposal, Cárdenas gave the PCM no part in the transformation of the PNR into the four-sector PRM; and possibilities of closer relations between the Communist Party and the government declined sharply during the last fifteen months of his administration.

NOTES

¹La Prensa, April 2, 1934.

²La Prensa, May 25, 1934.

³Partido Revolucionario Mexicano, Cárdenas habla (Mexico, D.F.: "La Impresora" S. Turanzas del Valle, 1940), p. 8.

⁴See Daily Worker (New York), March 15, 1935. For an example of a typical PCM attack against Cárdenas and the PNR, see the account of Laborde's speech of March 18, 1935, in La Prensa, March 19, 1935. See also José Revueltas, Joven trabajador: ¡Acá está el camino! (n.p.: Ediciones Espartaco, [1935?]); the cover of this pamphlet bears the following slogans: "Neither with the false socialist millionaires of the government and the P.N.R." "Nor with the Porfirian clerical reaction that attempts to enslave us." "With the Communist Party and youth for bread, land and liberty." Earlier government suppression of PCM activity is described in Julio Cuadros Caldas, El comunismo criollo (Puebla: S. Loyo, 1930), pp. 11-22, 52-85; Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, La lucha de clases a través de la historia de México: revolución democraticoburguesa (Mexico, D.F.: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1941), pp. 337-340, 397-399; Bernardo Claraval Cuando fui comunista (Mexico, D.F., Ediciones Polis, 1944), pp. 109ff. See also Emilio Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana (3rd ed.; Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1954), pp. 384-385; and Hernán Laborde, Portes Gil y su libro "Quince años de política mexicana" (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones "Noviembre," 1950), pp. 15-17.

⁵In militant terms the pact declared that signatory groups were "opposed to collaboration with the capitalist class" and would employ a tactic that was "eminently revolutionary and based on the principle of class struggle." For the text of the pact, see Marcelo N. Rodea, Historia del movimiento obrero ferrocarrilero (1890-1943) (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1944), pp. 571-574.

⁶Partido Comunista de Mexico, La nueva política del Partido Comunista de Mexico: con todo el pueblo mexicano en un amplio Frente Popular (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones Frente Cultural, 1936), p. 9.

⁷El Machete, August 3, 1935.

⁸See Georges Dimitroff, La unidad de la clase obrera en la lucha contra el fascismo, discurso pronunciado en el VII Congreso de la Internacional Comunista, el día 2 de agosto de 1935 (Barcelona: Ediciones Europa-America, n.d.); and Victor Alba, Historia del Frente Popular, análisis de una táctica política (México, D.F.: Libro-Mex, Editores, 1959), pp. 65-94.

⁹The text of this speech was printed in parts in the issues of El Machete published on September 14, 21, and 28, 1935.

¹⁰El Machete, September 14, 1935.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³See El Machete, August 17, 1935.

¹⁴The text of the letter is printed in La nueva política del Partido Comunista de México: con todo el pueblo mexicano en un amplio Frente Popular, p. 9.

¹⁵El Machete, October 19, 1935.

¹⁶On formation of the CTM, see Joe C. Ashby, Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), pp. 72-77; and Robert Paul Millon, Mexican Marxist: Viciente Lombardo Toledano (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 119-120.

¹⁷El Universal, February 28, 1936.

¹⁸See Excelsior and El Universal, February 29, 1936.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰See "Primer Consejo Nacional de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México, actas de las sesiones," in Confederación de Trabajadores de México, CTM, 1936-1941 (México, D.F.: Talleres Tipográficos Modelo, S.A., 1941), pp. 198-199.

²¹This document is printed in El Universal, September 12, 1936.

²²See CTM, 1936-1941, p. 215; and El Nacional, October 23, 1936.

²³The text of this resolution is printed in El Universal, October 24, 1936.

²⁴See El Machete, October 29, 1936, for the text of this letter.

²⁵The text of the proposed platform and the letter addressed to the PCM are printed in El Machete, January 23, 1937.

²⁶Their letter of January 20, 1937, is quoted in a communication from Lombardo Toledano to the editor of El Nacional. It was published in the January 24, 1937, issue of that newspaper.

²⁷In the same article Fernández pointed out the necessity of organizing Communist cells and fractions. Regarding the role of the latter, he explained: "Under the conditions of the Mexican Popular Front policy, the work of the fraction acquires a decisive importance. In all popular organizations where there may be at least two members of the party, the organization of fractions is necessary. The fractions must apply our party line for the mobilization of these popular organizations and for the struggle for the broad Popular Front.

"In order to facilitate the coordination of the popular struggles and to achieve unity of action of the masses, it is necessary that the popular organizations' fractions should be coordinated under the direction of Regional and Seccional Committees, to achieve the maximum unity of Communist action in Popular Front politics." [El Machete, January 23, 1937.]

According to Article 29 of the PCM Statutes in force at that time, "In all labor and peasant organizations, and in general in all organizations that have a mass character (unions, agrarian communities, cooperatives, and sports, cultural, and popular organizations, etc.) and in their assemblies,

conferences and congresses, as well as in municipal governments and in State and Federal legislative bodies, Communist fractions must be formed, although they may consist of only two Party members, with the objective of strengthening the influence of the Party and putting its policy into practice within said organizations." Also, according to Article 30, "Communist fractions in organizations of local character shall be subordinate to the Sectional Committee, those of a regional character to the Regional Committee, state organizations to State Committees, and those of national character to the Central Committee."

²⁸CTM, 1936-1941, p. 262.

²⁹Ibid.; also, Lombardo Toledano criticized the PCM for its intensified recruitment campaign designed to enlist workers through whom it could gain control over labor organizations. He complained, "In many parts of the country, in all the regions, and at any union assembly or meeting of workers, applications for membership in the Communist Party are offered in the same fashion that newspapers are sold...." [Ibid., p. 261.] At the January, 1937, meeting of the PCM's Central Committee, Laborde announced that Party membership had grown to over 12,000 and that it was expected to reach 30,000 or 40,000 by the end of the year. [El Machete, January 30, 1937.]

³⁰CTM, 1936-1941, p. 265.

³¹A description of the action taken by the National Council at its fourth meeting is given in "Informe del Comité Nacional de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México al V Consejo Nacional de la misma institución" printed in ibid., pp. 377-411. Examples of Communist criticism of this action are found in articles by Valentín Campa and Rafael Carrillo published in the May 9, 1937, issue of El Machete. Also see the text of Miguel A. Valasco's speech of May 1 entitled "Quiénes son los divisionistas" printed in the May 16 and May 22, 1937, issues of El Machete.

³²El Machete, March 13, 1937.

³³Quoted in El Machete, April 3, 1937.

³⁴El Machete, April 14, 1937.

³⁵The text of this letter dated April 13, 1937, is printed in El Machete, April 17, 1937.

³⁶See the editorial "Los fallos electorales del P.N.R." in El Machete, May 22, 1937.

³⁷El Machete, June 20, 1937.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰The text of the resolution is printed in El Machete, June 26, 1937.

⁴¹Quoted in El Machete, July 11, 1937. For an account of Browder's role, see Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), pp. 333-34.

⁴²See Hernán Laborde, Unidad a toda costa: informe al Pleno del Comité Central del Partido de México, celebrado del 26 al 30 de junio de 1937 (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Popular, 1937).

⁴³The text of this resolution is printed in El Machete, July 18, 1937.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Quoted in El Machete, July 11, 1937.

⁴⁷Quoted in ibid.

⁴⁸The text of the Organizing Committee's letter to the National Council is printed in El Nacional, August 1, 1937.

⁴⁹El Nacional, October 28, 1937. Typical of rightist criticism of the proposed organization is an editorial appearing in Excelsior, October 28, 1937. Appealing to nationalist and anti-Communist sentiments, the editorial stated in part: "This is not 'Mexican'; this is not original. It clashes with the realities of our situation; it is something artificial, inappropriate, and therefore unnecessary. Also, perhaps with the passing of time it will prove to be disastrous for the country. . . . Let us be original. Above all, let us not waste time on servile imitations if, as in the case of the Popular Front, they lead to lamentable exoticisms." Also, see Excelsior, November 8, 1937, for Senator Antonio Romero's statement concerning the formation of the Mexican Popular Front; and La Prensa's critical editorial published November 9, 1937.

⁵⁰See El Machete, January 22, 1938.

⁵¹Cárdenas habla, pp. 128-29. For the text of Cárdenas' order terminating this practice, see CTM, 1936-1941, pp. 541-542.

⁵²Cárdenas habla, p. 130.

⁵³Thus in February, 1938, the National Committee of the CTM reported:

"The experience gained in the last civic struggles (particularly in the electoral campaign to elect deputies of the National Congress, during which the CTM marched in agreement with the peasant organizations and the Partido Nacional Revolucionario) produced the idea of constituting the Popular Front in Mexico in a form more stable than a simple pact among diverse syndical, social, and political organisms--an idea which President Lázaro Cárdenas formulated and placed before the Mexican people, announcing the radical transformation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario. . . .

"The PNR was created by General Plutarco Elías Calles, when he ceased to be President of the Republic, in order to continue governing the country without responsibility. . . . The democratic methods of government of President Cárdenas did not fit within the P.N.R. Thus it was necessary for the present Party leaders to approach the productive masses, offering them

guarantees in regard to their civic struggles. These leaders themselves initiated the reform of the Party when they established a system of conventions composed of representatives of labor unions and peasant groups for the purpose of designating Party candidates for the popular election." ["Informe del Comité Nacional de la CTM al Primer Congreso Ordinario de la misma," in CTM, 1936-1941, pp. 483-484.]

⁵⁴El Machete, January 22, 1938.

⁵⁵See Laborde's article "Frente Popular dentro del PNR" in El Machete, January 1, 1938.

⁵⁶Partido Comunista de Mexico, Hacia una educación al servicio del pueblo: resoluciones y principales estudios presentados en la Conferencia Pedagógica del Partido Comunista (México, D.F.: Imprenta Mundial, 1938), p. 11.

⁵⁷Quoted in Alexander, Communism in Latin America, p. 337.

⁵⁸Quoted in ibid.

⁵⁹See the text of Lombardo Toledano's speech, "La CTM ante la transformación del PNR," published in El Machete, January 15, 1938.

⁶⁰See "La CTM ante la amenaza fascista" in CTM, 1936-1941, p. 499.

⁶¹Lombardo Toledano claimed that he came to see the need for dissolution of the PNR as the petroleum conflict developed and posed the danger of a golpe de estado against President Cárdenas. [See James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX: entrevistas de historia oral (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), p. 327.] Cárdenas expropriated the Mexican oil industry less than two weeks before the meeting of the National Constitutional Assembly.

⁶²La Voz de México, November 16, 1938.

⁶³La Voz de México, November 26, 1938.

⁶⁴La Voz de México, January 30, 1939.

⁶⁵See La Voz de México, November 14, 1938.

⁶⁶Concerning the rupture of Mexican-Soviet relations during the Portes Gil administration, see Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana, pp. 387-402, and idem, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), pp. 607-610. See also the oral history interview with Jesús Silva Herzog in Wilkie and Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX, pp. 648-656.

⁶⁷Even before Trotsky's arrival on Mexican soil, Stalin's rival had been the subject of bitter attack by the PCM. For example, see Hernán Laborde, La U.R.S.S. y Trotsky, published text of a speech given on October 19, 1936, with prologue by Gastón La Farga. Although a frequent critic of the PCM leadership, Lombardo Toledano joined in the campaign against Trotsky. See Trotsky's Que significa la lucha contra el "trotskismo"? (Mexico, D.F.: Sección Mexicana de la IV Internacional, 1938. For the text of Cardenas'

instructions to Secretary of Foreign Relations Eduardo Hay concerning asylum for Trotsky and dated December 1, 1936, see Cámara de Diputados, XLVI Legislatura del Congreso de la Unión, Los Presidentes de México ante la nación: informes, manifiestos y documentos de 1821 a 1966, compiled by Luis González y González et al. (5 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Imprenta de la Camara de Diputados, 1966), V, 790-791.

⁶⁸A detailed account of this subject is given in Lois Elwyn Smith, Mexico and the Spanish Republicans, University of California Publications in Political Science, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1955); and in chap. v, "Cardenas y la Republica Española," in Pere Foix, Cárdenas: su actuación, su país (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones Fronda, 1947), pp. 283-321.

⁶⁹For Cárdenas' defense of Finland, see Cárdenas habla, p. 228.

⁷⁰La Voz de México, October 28, 1939.

⁷¹Ibid. To prepare PCM members for the Extraordinary Congress, the National Council produced a pamphlet entitled La situación nacional e internacional y las tareas del Partido Comunista de México. Lengthy portions of the pamphlet were reprinted in the monthly organ of the Executive Committee of the Comintern; see "La situación de México y las tareas del Partido Comunista Mexicana," La Internacional, VIII (February, 1940), 55-72. The National Council's analysis of PCM problems concludes that "In spite of its contradictions, under pressure of the masses, the Cárdenas government has played and can continue playing a progressive role." [Quoted in ibid., p. 58.] Strong criticism is leveled against the PCM for its failure to struggle for admission into the PRM for the purpose of transforming the President's party into a true Popular Front. Also, "Another of the errors of the Party has been that of presenting the Cárdenas government, and Cárdenas himself, as the fulfillment of the objectives of the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution instead of teaching the people that the objectives of this revolution are still not realized in Mexico. Cárdenas, expression of the interests of the national bourgeois and of the petite bourgeois, has had and has many vacillations and contradictions in the fulfillment of his progressive policy. It [the Party] should have criticized in a friendly fashion his policy with the objective of helping him to correct his errors and his inconsistencies. It should have mobilized and organized the masses in order to protect and support the progressive policy of Cárdenas, but at the same time, in order to organize its independent struggles and to develop from below the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution." [Quoted in ibid., p. 65.]

⁷²Alexander, Communism in Latin America, p. 339.

⁷³La Voz de México, March 3, 1940. Subsequently, both Laborde and Campa were expelled from the PCM. See La Voz de México, March 31, 1940.

⁷⁴Dionisio Encina, ¡Fuera el imperialismo y sus agentes! ¡Unidos para hacer avanzar la Revolución! Informe rendido por el camarada Dionisio Encina en el Primer Congreso Extraordinario del Partido Comunista de México, realizado del día 19 al 24 de marzo de 1940 en la ciudad de México, D.F. (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Popular, 1940), p. 31.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 58-61. For a later analysis of these matters, see Cómite Central del Partido Comunista Mexicano, La lucha interna en el Partido durante los años de 1939 a 1948 (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones de la C.P. del C.C. del P.C.M., 1957), pp. 16-26. See also the work of a Soviet writer who has analyzed the policies of the PCM regarding the Cárdenas government: Anatol Shulgovski, México en la encrucijada de su historia, trans. by Armando Martínez Verdugo (Mexico, D.F. Fondo de Cultura Popular, 1968), pp. 137-146.

⁷⁶La Voz de México, March 24, 1940.

⁷⁷Karl M. Schmitt, Communism in Mexico: A Study in Political Frustration (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1965), p. 20.

⁷⁸Quoted in Isaac Don Levine, The Mind of an Assassin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), p. 79.

⁷⁹Detailed accounts of the attacks on Trotsky are found in Gral. Leandro A. Sánchez Salazar, Así asesinaron a Trotski, Popilibros "La Prensa" (Mexico, D.F. Editora de Periodicos, 1955); Isaac Don Levine, The Mind of an Assassin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959); and Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929-1940 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), chap. v.

⁸⁰Los Presidentes de México ante la nación, V, 793.

⁸¹New York Times, September 4, 1940.

⁸²See Excelsior, October 15, 1940; and El Universal, October 16, 1940.

⁸³El Nacional, October 23, 1940.

⁸⁴Excelsior, December 1, 1940.