Mexican Government Shuts Down Opposition Newspaper

Tijuana, Mexico. The government closing of a liberal opposition newspaper here has unleashed a storm of struggle in this city on the Mexican-U.S. border.

Adolfo Baja California (ABC) was closed down recently by the Mexican government because of its consistent criticism of corruption and defiance of the government's policies. ABC is under the administration of Governor de la Madrid. ABC, for example, exposed the fact that Baja California officials under de la Madrid were cooperating with the U.S. immigration officials in brutalizing Mexican immigrants on their way from southern Mexico to the U.S., stealing their money and kicking back some of the proceeds to the governor. And the paper ripped into the governor's cooperation in what it called the “Americanization” of Baja California—the ripoff of peasants’ lands to build fancy U.S.-owned tourist hotels, and the spread of maquiladoras (U.S.-owned run-away sweatshops along the Mexican side of the border).

ABC's juiciest target was Governor de la Madrid, himself a ripe example of "Americanization." Born in the U.S., he attended high school in National City, a suburb of San Diego. He speaks English better than Spanish, and until he became governor he preferred to be called not Roberto, but Bob. The newspaper especially enraged de la Madrid by popularizing the custom of calling him, not the "Gobernador" (governor) but the "Bob-erno." A photo run in the paper de la Madrid jogging at Rosarito Beach near Tijuana carried the caption, "A flood of American tourists at Mexican beaches."

ABC was hosed in high places also because it gave coverage to a broad range of peoples’ struggles. For example, the paper publicized the recent speech of Chilean revolutionary Jorge Palacios across the border in San Diego; and it has given thorough coverage to factory strikes, peasant land takeovers, and a recent student strike. In its three years of existence, ABC had become the only independently read newspaper in Baja California with a circulation of over 50,000.

ABC was shut down by the powerful, government-controlled union of Cuperta, the Association of Mexican Workers (CTM). Playing the reactionary role for which it has become famous throughout Mexico, the CTM enlisted a handful of ABC staff members to join the CTM printers union, then used these few fools as a pretense to call a phony "strike." At one o'clock a.m. on Nov. 2, over 250 CTM goons marched into the ABC office, accompanied by Federal Security Police (the Mexican equivalent of the FBI) and State Troopers, and forced the editor and his staff to leave.

The shutting down of ABC has touched off a storm of protest in Baja, California and beyond. Over 1,000 people marched in the streets of Tijuana on Nov. 4, supporting the ABC newspaper staff. 1,500 turned out on Nov. 8, and on the 10th an evening rally on Nov. 9, and on the 10th another march of over 800 burned an effigy of Governor de la Madrid.

The powerful response of the Mexican people has caused the struggle to spread beyond Baja, California. In San Diego, the American Society of Professional Journalists passed a resolution condemning the ABC’s shuttering. "The shutting down was placed in the Nov. 12 issue of Excelsior of Mexico City (the government-controlled newspaper daily), signed by 26 newspaper publishers from throughout Mexico, including even the publisher of Excelsior itself.

Even the San Diego Union, with its tradition of ultra-conservative Republican policies, has had to editorialize against the ABC shutdown as a violation of freedom of the press.

In the situation against the ABC, the facts are these, there is widespread speculation in Mexico that Governor de la Madrid himself may be under investigation. It is at least probable, because his puppet strings to U.S. imperialism have been so clearly exposed.

Palestinians Protest Arrest on West Bank

No matter how much the U.S. imperialists, through their watchdog dog Israel, try to manipulate the Middle East into a "stable" situation (translate: U.S.-controlled, opposition crushed) situation, the Palestinian people's struggle always messes up their plans. Basam Shakka, mayor of Nablus in the West Bank, was arrested recently by the Israeli military authorities, jailed in a maximum security prison near Tel Aviv, and then tried with 2,000 other Palestinians on a "conspiracy to delay the outbreak of war" charge. But Shakka is not just an official expressing an opinion; he is a leader in the virtually unanimous West Bank and Gaza opposition to the Camp David plan for Palestinian autonomy. "(Chris
times Science Monitor) He is one of a group of prominent Palestinians connected to the PLO and leading many protests, including a general strike in the occupied areas, March 26, 1979, the day that the U.S.-Israel-Israel peace treaty was signed. Israeli authorities are desperate to smash this group and anyone opposing the "autonomy" plan.

Their attack on Shakka has blown up in their faces. "Rarely dur­ing 12 years of occupation have the West Bank and Gaza seemed so united, so angered by a single issue." Other Palestinian mayors have decided to resign in protest. Merchants closed all shops. Classes were boycotted. Students and townpeople demonstrated. In addition, the Israeli Black Panthers, an organization that emerged from the Eastern Jews, demonstrated in front of the Gush Emunim settlement, against the government's cooperation with the settlers. And more and more pitched battles between Israeli settlers and PLO soldiers have taken place. Even the efforts of the PLO to cool down the situation were ignored. When students predicted violence in the weeks to come, they were asked just how unarmed Palestinians could go up against armed Israeli troops, "Just look at Iran," they replied. "The Shah had guns too."