

**OTHER NATIONS**

---

posts), probably to mollify local leaders.

Filled with hubris after their victory over the United States, Vietnam's rulers will probably continue their belligerent policies abroad. The Vietnamese people themselves seem too accustomed to "submitting to history" (in the words of government propagandists) to revolt. But a "blowup" at the top is, for the first time, possible, says Pike. Either way, he concludes, for the ordinary Vietnamese, "more suffering seems inevitable."

### *Labor Politics in Mexico*

"Porfirian Labor Politics: Working Class Organizations in Mexico City and Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1902" by David W. Walker, in *The Americas* (Jan. 1981), P.O. Box 34440, Washington, D.C. 20034.

Historians often depict Mexican President Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) as brutally antilabor. But for most of his 35-year rule, writes Walker, a historian at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, Díaz was the workingman's hero.

Long before Díaz overthrew President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in 1876, labor leaders had cultivated a symbiotic relationship with state and local politicians, delivering votes in exchange for donations to the unions. The new President moved quickly to destroy existing workers' organizations and replace them with groups loyal to himself. Soon, union chiefs such as Pedro Ordoñez and Carmen Huerta were echoing Díaz's dictum that "profits must be guaranteed to foreign capitalists in order to sustain national progress." In return, their organizations received government-financed night schools and printing presses, and access to such luxuries as running water for meeting halls. Díaz and his labor allies also promoted establishment of the *mutualistas*—blue-collar groups that sponsored medical care and pensions out of workers' dues, thereby avoiding claims on government or business.

Between 1877 and 1898, industrial wages in Mexico climbed 15 percent—due mainly to a spurt of foreign-financed railroad construction—while prices stabilized. As long as the economy remained robust, most workers appreciated Díaz's suppression of trouble-making dissidents. At the same time, prosperity allowed the President to tolerate sporadic labor unrest and even to mediate strikes to the workers' benefit. Then the economy soured. From 1901 to 1910, food prices jumped 100 percent and rents 500 percent, while wages stagnated. In 1907, pressured by foreign mill owners, Díaz imposed a strongly probusiness settlement of a nationwide textile dispute. After bloody clashes between federal troops and unarmed workers, his labor support vanished.

Mexican blue-collar workers overwhelmingly backed reformer Francisco Madero in his unsuccessful 1910 presidential campaign and joined his movement that toppled the Díaz regime in May 1911. But the strategy of paternalism and coercion that Díaz perfected, says Walker, has colored government-union relations in Mexico ever since.