

MEXICAN GOVERNMENT IN A QUANDARY OVER STUDENT CRISIS

An attempt to turn the student-government confrontation in Mexico into a dialogue appears to have broken down and there is still no clear indication of when or how the crisis will dissipate.

A brief standoff occurred when moderate student groups agreed to meet with government representatives offering joint investigation of charges against the authorities. Radical elements, however, buoyed by the government's defensive position since the huge, orderly student demonstration last week, have sabotaged conciliatory moves and worked to harden student positions. There is considerable incoherence on the student side, which lacks a recognized spokesman. The several presumptive spokesmen nevertheless appear unified on three basic demands: university autonomy, nonintervention of public forces in school matters, and repair of school buildings damaged during the riots. One student group claims that time is running against the government's side because of the approaching Olympic games, and is resisting all government overtures that are not direct and public.

There is no evidence that the government has in mind any major concessions to the students.

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The government's dilemma comes from its belief that giving in to the students could invite further demands, but that ignoring grievances would heighten the likelihood of further disruption of public order.

Diaz Ordaz plans to make a strong statement on students and youth in his state of the union address on 1 September. The President [REDACTED] considers that Mexican public opinion is more unsympathetic to the student causes than ever because of the riots. The government may "demonstrate" its own popular backing by staging a massive worker-peasant rally following Diaz Ordaz' address.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Local Communist

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youths are known to have been involved in the July riots that inaugurated the crisis.

The Mexican Government may be underestimating the students. In spite of the division in their ranks and the numerous limitations and pressures on

them, the students have made several spectacular, disciplined demonstrations of their strength and their willingness to confront the force of the government. The continuing impasse holds the possibility of further violent outbreaks. The next major demonstration is set for 27 August.

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