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On July 25, workers at 14 maquiladora plants in Reynosa, which borders on the Texas city of McAllen, went on strike over a power struggle between two union leaders. Red and black strike banners were erected at the gates of 10 plants. Workers at the 10 plants were controlled by local union chief Abel Hernandez, who has contracts with management. The strike banners were put in place by a rival union boss, Rafael Morales de la Cruz, who is trying to win the contracts from Hernandez. Although it is unclear whether the 1,400 affected workers wanted to strike, union regulations prevented them from passing the red and black flags and obliged them to stay off the job. Both Hernandez and Morales belong to maquiladora unions under the umbrella of the Mexican Workers' Confederation (CTM). In solidarity with the 10 affected plants, the management of four others, who also have contracts with Hernandez but were not targeted by Morales, closed down. Workers at the 14 plants continued to draw full wages. Managers at some of the plants have threatened to pull out of Mexico. Morales argued that Hernandez had failed, among other things, to get union control over the transportation of raw and finished materials and the disposal of scrap. According to Don King, manager of Reynosa's West Bend plant, one of the affected companies, Morales also argues that Hernandez can no longer represent the workers because Hernandez recently withdrew from the CTM. King told AP on Aug. 13 that under Mexican labor law, "we don't have to have a union affiliated with the CTM." He added that the companies argue the strike is illegal since only workers, not a rival union, have the right to strike against a company. King said that although the state labor arbitration board had already ruled in favor of Morales, some of the companies say they will close down permanently unless higher authorities recognize Hernandez. According to an Aug. 14 report by Notimex, workers at 10 maquiladoras went back to work Monday after labor leaders reached an inter-union agreement. An unidentified CTM spokesperson said the agreement "establishes the bases for creating a single union for the maquiladora industry with coverage throughout the country." Strikes at 10 other maquiladora plants will continue, said the spokesperson, "until their contracts with CTM are finalized." The CTM spokesperson said a detailed investigation of the union leadership in the maquiladora industries indicated that many had become "overnight millionaires result of selling protection contracts." The strike ended Monday at the following plants: Voltrac, West Bend, Metales Robinson, Philling, Ductos de Reynosa, Alta Tecnologia el Olmito, Antespec, TRW-Direcciones, NOR Metales, and Citricos de Reynosa. According to Notimex, the strike continued in effect at Wells, Parker Uno, Parker Dos, Pantimedias del Norte, Nibco, Proyectos Alta Costura, Invamex, Magla de Mexico, Industria Fabricante de Aluminio, and Penachos El Aguil. As of Aug. 14, estimates of losses suffered by the 14 plants in Reynosa since July 25 ranged from $160,000 to $400,000 per day. The maquiladoras take advantage of cheap Mexican labor to assemble products in Mexico for export. (Basic data from Copley News Service, 08/12/89; AP, Notimex, 08/14/89)

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