

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

A president a la italiana?

Mexico City's mayor wants to pave the way for his own aspirations in 1988.

Mexico's highest political circles are buzzing about Mexico City Mayor Carlos Hank González's increasingly open presidential bids.

The powerful mayor of the country's capital is what in the U.S. could be called the Aquarian candidate. He is the most vociferous spokesman for environmentalism, local control, and deindustrialization. As one-time governor of the State of Mexico, and now as mayor, Hank González has put together a powerful machine within the government, the PRI governing party, and the media, that has increasingly promoted the "back to the countryside" dismantling of Mexico's cities while building Hank's image as a populist strongman.

Nonetheless, the mayor has two very substantial obstacles on his way to the Los Pinos presidential residence: Article 82 of the Constitution, which prohibits sons of foreigners from being president (he is the son of a German national), and strong opposition in the government and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) to his Aquarian approach, opposition which could be neutralized only by a series of political destabilizations and chaotic events. Hank is moving rapidly to remove both obstacles.

In the first weeks of the new year, top politicians such as Carlos Sansores Pérez, former president of the PRI, and Ignacio Burgoa, the "lawyer of the landowners" and a top figure in the "right-wing" judi-

cial apparatus, took over the headlines to announce that it is time to change the "obsolete" Article 82 of the Constitution.

Similarly, January 1981 has witnessed a series of disturbing incidents that have threatened to unleash a wave of political chaos in the country. One of them was a still unexplained massive blackout Jan. 15 which left Mexico City and 60 percent of the country without electricity for five hours.

Only days before the blackout, the head of the electricity workers' union, Rodríguez Alcaine, had also publicly supported a change of Article 82.

On Jan. 18, a group of armed peasants took over and blocked the roads leading to the large petrochemical center of Cactus, on the border between the southeastern states of Chiapas and Tabasco, Mexico's richest oil region. The peasants accused Pemex of "polluting" the area. Although Pemex rapidly moved in and settled the dispute, the possibility that powerful political circles set the peasants into motion did not escape some press columnists. A government official interviewed by *EIR* asserted point-blank: "I cannot dismiss the hand of the mayor in these events."

True or not, the fact is that such thoughts are certainly on the minds of more than one official. These officials also wonder who is letting into the country, and even promoting, a variety of highly destabilizing

individuals, such as the schismatic French bishop Marcel Lefèbvre, who is now here agitating among extreme right-wingers and drug-connected cults such as the Hare Krishna. According to very reliable government sources, everything seems to point to a Hank-connected faction in the interior ministry.

Most analysts are convinced that Hank is out of the running for 1982. The mayor himself seems to agree; according to insiders, last November a distraught Hank wept openly in a luxurious New York bar over his inability to change Article 82. He was consoled by a group of close friends, including Mexican TV commentator Jacobo Zabudovsky, actor Mario Moreno "Cantinflas," the director of the magazine *Siempre*, José Pages Llergo, and cartoonist/industrialist Abel Quezada.

Despairing of victory in '82, the mayor is now apparently flexing his political muscles to shape next year's choice and guarantee himself the presidency in 1988. On Jan. 7, Manuel Buendía, a widely read political columnist for the daily *Excelsior*, said Hank wants the successor to President López Portillo to be a man the mayor trusts, who would be "a kind of president *a la italiana*, that is, somebody who allows the emergence of an unequaled figure in the cabinet, a real decision-maker. One of those decisions . . . would be the reform of Article 82."

According to Buendía, Hank added "it is necessary to finish off this political system and replace it with another one." Otherwise, "the perspective is for domestic unrest and even foreign intervention."

"Nobody can listen to Hank without feeling deeply shaken," reported Buendía.