

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

De la Madrid cracks down on Dope, Inc.

The government is raiding marijuana and opium plantations, but it will also have to take on the PAN.

Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid has recently given orders to the Defense and Justice Ministries to relaunch the war against "narco-terrorism" on a new scale. The ministries immediately set out to burn and destroy marijuana and poppy fields in the south of Mexico.

De la Madrid then went to Mazatlán in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico's most infamous drug-producing region, and delivered a speech on July 25 calling for redoubled efforts in the war on drugs. "The drug trade threatens to undergo a resurgence," he said, "in the face of the devaluation of the peso and the patronage and support this trade is getting from abroad. . . . We shall be implacable in the face of this social plague, this cancer, and we shall not permit it to corrode the foundations of our society."

On July 29, the Mexican government announced that the Judicial Police had raided six opium plantations in the Sierra Madre mountains, on the border between the states of Chihuahua and Sinaloa.

If this war on drugs is to succeed, it will have to target the political protectors of the drug trade, especially the mafiosi of the National Action Party (PAN). As this writer has reported, the fascist PAN is at the heart of drug-running operations in Mexico. Areas of the PAN's greatest strength are also the centers of Mexico's drug production and transshipment.

Continental integration against the drug pushers will also be required if de la Madrid's war on drugs is to succeed. Colombian Justice Minister

Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was organizing for such a perspective when he was gunned down by professional assassins by the mafia on April 30. He had called for the formation of a "hemispheric anti-drug pact."

The Colombian fight is particularly key for Mexico, since Colombians have figured prominently in the recent return of drugs to Mexico's northwest.

Some political forces in Mexico have begun to move against the PANistas. While the President was in Sinaloa, the local newspaper *El Diario de Culiacán* published an article under the headline "PANista Opium," charging that "many PANistas are intermediaries and even direct buyers of marijuana and opium. Eight years ago, the police raided a warehouse full of green pot, belonging to Manuel Clouthier. The raid was conducted by Carlos Aguilar Goya, the coordinator of 'Operation Condor,' and by Commandant Elias Quezada. Just try to deny these charges."

Clouthier is a hacienda owner and the major power behind the PAN in Sinaloa, and former president of the Mexican Employers' Association. Clouthier and his cohorts had been a principal target of 'Operation Condor,' launched in 1974 by former President Luís Echeverría, which wiped out 80% of the drug production of the Sinaloa-Sonora-Baja "corridor."

Sinaloa is now the target for savage violence from the narco-terrorist gangs, and the local and state police do not have the money and manpower, nor even the weapons, to combat the

sophisticated arsenals that the narcos have at their disposal.

In neighboring Sonora, one of the top peasant leaders, Muñoz Espinoza, was shot to death on July 27. He was the leader of 15,000 peasants in a cooperative—a formation that challenged the power of the big latifundists, who support the PAN.

A number of suspicious escapes have also occurred from Mexican jails recently, including 30 people who had been imprisoned for drug- and terrorism-related crimes—among them three members of ETA, the Basque terrorist group.

Efforts have recently been launched to deal with the drug problem on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. On July 23, the annual conference of 10 U.S. and Mexican governors from border states took place in Tucson, Arizona. Sonora Governor Dr. Samuel Ocaña declared that the drug traffic is assuming "terrible dimensions," and hence "broader actions from every government" are required.

At the meeting, Arizona Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D) announced that, for the first time, the U.S. army will participate in the fight against the drug traffic, using F-15 fighter planes and helicopters. He praised Mexico for its effort, noting that Mexico spends more of its own money for the war on drugs than it receives from the United States for that purpose. DeConcini also recognized that there is a close relationship between the drug traffic and terrorism.

With congressional elections upcoming, 1984 will be a crucial year for the war on drugs. If the PAN gains more power in the Mexican states, a proliferation of narcotics can be expected throughout the country. Hence the importance of the new combined fight between Mexico and the United States.