

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### A drug-runner for Chihuahua?

*The official PRI gubernatorial candidate's very dirty connections make this election a national security threat.*

**A**lberto Baeza Meléndez, the gubernatorial candidate of the ruling PRI party in the state of Chihuahua, has just issued his first official declaration denying accusations that he is linked to the powerful drug mafia of that state. However, in the same breath, he also declared, "We should not flagellate ourselves because this activity exists in our country, which has a more than 3,000-kilometer border with the nation of greatest drug consumption."

The candidacy of Baeza Meléndez, already being referred to in nationalist political circles as "the Baeza case," has less to do with the electoral process in Mexico than with national security, given that his election as governor of Chihuahua state, should it occur, will give the drug mafia full control over a state critical to the success of their broader operations; at the same time, Baeza's governorship would open the door to similar situations in other states in which elections for governor are pending this year: Veracruz, Sinaloa, Durango, and Tamaulipas; all states where the drug trade has begun to spread its tentacles.

Chihuahua itself is not only Mexico's largest state; it borders on the United States. Both the Nazi-communist National Action Party (PAN) and the powerful economic group headed by Eloy S. Vallina have proposed its "independence" and annexation to the United States. The PAN has proposed the same for border states Sonora and Baja California Norte.

The PAN has close ties to the most notorious drug traffickers that operate

in these states.

In 1979, then-Attorney General of the Republic Oscar Flores Sánchez halted all investigations of Lorenzo Flores Arce, the general manager of the Tijuana, Baja California Norte branch of the Comermex Bank, which was charged with laundering drug money. At that time, Baeza Meléndez was a senior official in the Attorney General's office.

After the nationalization of 1982, many of the banks—who held onto the majority of their executive personnel—continued to launder dirty money, as proven by recent cases in Tijuana. One should not forget the statement of Vallina, former owner and president of Comermex, at the time of the nationalization: "They took the banks from us; we will take Chihuahua from them".

Vallina is also the visible head of the so-called Chihuahua Group, which represents both national and foreign interests, and which controls the PAN mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Francisco Barrio Terrazas, member of a charismatic sect, as well as the PAN mayor of Chihuahua City, Luis H. Alvarez. Both won their electoral posts with the financial support of Vallina.

The tentacles of the Chihuahua Group also extend into the PRI party in the state, whose leading figure is Flores Sánchez, former state governor, former Attorney General of the Republic, and stockholder in Comermex—before the nationalization.

Flores Sánchez is the mentor of Baeza Meléndez, his former secre-

tary. Flores Sánchez tried to make him Attorney General. The plan failed because of Baeza's personal history, although he did manage to get him elected federal deputy and now, has maneuvered him into the PRI candidacy for the governorship of the state.

The international connections of the Chihuahua Group go through Antonio Ortiz Mena, former Mexican finance minister and present director of the Inter-American Development Bank. Originally from Chihuahua, Ortiz Mena has promoted bank credit for cheap-labor assembly plants and tourism in Chihuahua.

The Group is also a stockholder in the El Paso National Bank and the First National Bank of El Paso, Texas. These banks have been named by U.S. authorities as involved in laundering of drug money.

The Group also represents the interests of such individuals as: Aníbal de Iturbide, the self-proclaimed heir of the "Mexican Empire" of Agustín de Iturbide; Andrés Marcelo Sada, of the Grupo Monterrey, member of the PAN and the cult of Adam Smith; and the Trouyet family, long-time servants of the organized crime-linked former President Miguel Alemán.

The Group's people inside the federal government include Tourism Minister Antonio Enríquez Savignac, a protégé of Ortiz Mena since serving as an official at the Inter-American Development Bank. He has actively promoted legalized gambling in Mexico. His brother, Manuel Enríquez Savignac, is the life-long honorary consul to the Belgian monarchy in Chihuahua, and currently functions as one of the key organizers of a project to establish Belgian assembly-plants in the state of Chihuahua, a project supported by the federal government, which considers the proliferation of slave-labor assembly plants a "national priority."