

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### Who is really sinking Pemex?

*The oil union had the audacity to tell the President that the World Bank mafia controls the oil industry.*

In an episode which has caused more consternation than serious analysis, the secretary-general of the Oil Workers Union, José Sosa, told President Miguel de la Madrid on Jan. 8 that the national oil company, the country's major source of foreign-exchange earnings, has been mismanaged into a state of disaster. "There is still time to stop the crisis, spending less on paperwork and offices and spending more on food production and employment sources. If Pemex sinks, the President will sink, we will all sink, [including] the country. We are not pessimists, but it is the only thing that still defends us from foreign and internal pressures."

Flabbergasted, the Mexican President answered that the oil union should not fall into catastrophic alarmisms which lead nowhere. "I don't agree with what Mr. José Sosa said about *Petróleos Mexicanos* being weak and in danger of a catastrophe." He insisted that Mexico's difficulties are caused by "deficiencies in its economic political and social structures."

But the next day, the secretary-general of the powerful Mexican Confederation of Workers (CTM) defended the charges of the oil union leader. Speaking to 40 leaders of the Oil Workers Union, Fidel Velázquez said: "To tell the truth is to try to help the one who has in his hands the destiny of the country. . . . The CTM uses the same vocabulary."

At this historic meeting, the 20 speakers, one by one, reiterated So-

sa's charges, all targeting the mismanagement of Pemex. Federal Deputy Alfredo López Ramos, from Oaxaca, refuted Guillermo Prieto Fortun, the treasury undersecretary, who two weeks earlier said that all Mexicans are to blame for the crisis. "We deny this fallacy. The only ones responsible for the crisis are the inept, the speculators, the looters, and those who do not know how to administrate the nation adequately."

Most political commentators here in the capital have considered this petroleum conclave as an overt provocation "to the system." There were even some who called Joaquín Hernández Galicia "the strongman" of the Oil Workers Union, and a "counter-revolutionary and traitor," for having been the intellectual author of such temerity. And since Sosa referred to the lack of investment in maintaining plants, the cited scribblers say that this problem does not come from the crisis, but is the result of the monumental projects and drillings which Pemex has been carrying out.

What these well-paid scribblers are trying to hide, is that the oil workers' charges were not made to create a head-on clash with the President, but to try to put an end, once and for all, to the monetarist mafia, which, in the hands of Pemex director Mario Ramón Beteta, is destroying Pemex—and with it, the country.

The story is simple. Mario Ramon Beteta, ex-treasury secretary under Presidents Luis Echeverría and Joé

López Portillo, was the "spoiled child" of the international financial oligarchy. His political godfather, Antonio Ortiz Mena, director of the Interamerican Development Bank (AIDB), has been organizing financial warfare against the country which kept him from becoming President.

Ortiz Mena has his tentacles all over the national finance companies and Pemex. His political godfather, in turn, is Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the present planning and budget secretary, who is tied to him by marriage. It turns out that Ortiz Mena's wife is the aunt of Salinas de Gortari, the man whose job it is to cut the budget and everything that comes into his grasp, whenever the International Monetary Fund barks.

Salinas de Gortari has been recently accused of bankrolling a new book signed by the politician Hectór Aguilar Camín, which insinuates that oil unionist Joaquín Hernández Galicia ordered the assassination of journalist Manuel Buendía. In Mexico, it's no secret that the main anti-labor mouthpiece, particularly against the oil union, was the recently deceased Jesús Reyes Heróles, protector and ideological mentor of Salinas de Gortari.

That's not all. Two years back, Ortiz Mena ordered Pemex to set up an office in Washington. He put in charge of it none other than his son-in-law, Mr. Gutiérrez Kirshner, who was first secretary of the Mexican embassy in Washington during the days of the close friend of Ortiz Mena, then-Senator Hugo B. Margáin (also an ex-treasury secretary and failed presidential aspirant). This Pemex office has nothing to do with trade. Rather, its chief function seems to be that of keeping up ties with the State Department, to undermine and denationalize this critical industry—just as the oil union has charged.