

Mexico moves to stop narcoterror coup

by Héctor Apolinar

The naming of Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios as the gubernatorial candidate of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) for the state of Veracruz on April 22 marks the consolidation of the group inside the government of President Miguel de la Madrid which wants an all-out war against international drug trafficking.

Gutiérrez Barrios is highly respected by the majority of political groups in Mexico. His achievements as director of the Federal Security Administration (the Mexican CIA) and as two-term Undersecretary of the Interior in charge of national security affairs, are recognized inside Mexico and abroad. His nomination routed the "Alemán crowd," named for the late ex-President of Mexico, Miguel Alemán Valdes, who built up a corrupt, immoral and criminal political-economic empire based on drug trafficking and international intrigue.

His son, Miguel Alemán Velasco, intimate and protector of Cuban DGI agent Gabriel García Márquez, tried everything in his power to stop the choice of Gutiérrez Barrios and impose a politician of his stable to perpetuate his family's control over the state, the richest and one of the most populous in Mexico.

Ex-President Alemán was governor of Veracruz in the early 1930s and from then on, all the governors were imposed by his group's interests. Current governor Agustín Acosta Lagunes is such an Alemán clone that his private secretary is ex-President Alemán's sister. The Acosta Lagunes government let dope trafficking thrive throughout the state. Marijuana crops destined for the United States blanketed the south; cocaine traffic from South America reached levels unheard of in recent Mexican history. The heroin traffic from Lebanon also picked up briskly, through Syrian-Lebanese families. The top family in the drug trade is that of Arturo y Graciela Izquierdo Ebrard, whose power dates from his role in the "French Connection" which moved into Mexico via Veracruz at the end of World War II. Arturo and his brother Hugo started their careers as Miguel Alemán's bodyguards.

The rise in dope trafficking unleashed a wave of terrorism in the state. On Nov. 25, 1984, Congressman Roque Espinosa Foglia—a friend of Gutiérrez Barrios—was murdered in an ambush by the Izquierdos' gunmen. On May 12, 70 state judicial policemen kidnaped and killed Felipe Lagunes,

the governor's cousin, because he knew who was behind the Espinosa Foglia murder. Last November, marijuana growers from southern Veracruz ambushed and killed 22 police, a deed unprecedented in Mexican history. Recently, federal highway troopers killed four ranchers in cold blood—one a son of former state governor Fernando López Arias—because they got information from the state government that the four were carrying a cocaine shipment.

The situation became intolerable, because it threatened to turn Veracruz into a state controlled by narco-terrorism. A mass outcry arose for Governor Acosta to step down, and if possible, be arrested for complicity in drug trafficking. But his ouster never happened—the Alemán crowd saw to that.

The Alemán group's clout derives particularly from control of Televisa, a powerful television network, and ownership of an extensive radio network. The National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and RCA Victor were prominent in helping Televisa get started in the 1930s. Televisa makes "public opinion" and often wields it against the government, to make and unmake policies.

In short, the naming of Gutiérrez Barrios culminates an effort by the nationalist sectors inside the ruling PRI to fight the takeover of Mexico by narco-terrorism. Just one week before, the PRI named Francisco Labastida Ochoa candidate for governor of Sinaloa, notoriously the main producer state of marijuana and heroin in Mexico. Labastida Ochoa had used his post as Secretary of Energy, Mining and Semi-Public Industry to stimulate industrial development, against the pressures of a faction which claimed that economic growth has to be sacrificed to pay debts. Similar nationalist criteria were used in choosing the candidates for governor of Oaxaca and Durango, also key marijuana and heroin producing states.

Labastida stated in April that "although it will not be easy," his first task will be to fight drug trafficking and the violence in Sinaloa.

Labastida was named shortly after the defense secretary announced "Operation Mangosta 86" against drug trafficking, with participation of 50,000 troops of the national army, the largest number ever involved in the anti-drug war. Simultaneously, the Attorney General's office launched a joint operation with the army to patrol and increase security measures in the state of Sinaloa, in particular the capital Culiacán.

The federal government's measures were a direct, devastating blow against the current governor, Antonio Toledo Corro, who has been accused of protecting the main dope pushers of the country, among them, Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, one of the masterminds behind the murder of U.S. drug enforcement agent, Enrique Camarena Salazar. In fact, both Toledo Corro and Felix Gallardo are run by Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, governor of the state at the end of the 1960s, when the drug traffic reached its apogee. In turn, Sánchez Celis is a protégé of Carlos Hank González, former governor of the Federal District (Mexican capital), who frequently hosts David Rockefeller at his ranch.