

Dateline Mexico by Héctor Apolinar

Oil workers denounce Beteta

Mexico's oil workers have put Salinas on notice through their challenge to the governor of Mexico state.

On Oct. 20, a group of federal congressmen from Mexico's Union of Oil Workers, stood up in the Chamber of Deputies to accuse the governor of the state of Mexico, Mario Ramón Beteta, of having committed fraud against the nation during his tenure as director of Mexico's oil company, Pemex. The oil workers demanded the immediate formation of a commission of inquiry in the Chamber. In that one stroke, the powerful oil workers' union put President-elect Carlos Salinas de Gortari on notice that they would no longer permit the country's wealth to be sold out by the oligarchy.

With the support of the opposition, these trade union congressmen in the ruling PRI party won majority approval to form a multipartisan investigating commission. Should their accusations be proved, Beteta could be impeached as governor.

Almost immediately, President Miguel de la Madrid launched into a defense of Beteta, saying, "I know Beteta well. . . . We have worked together for many years. He is a patriotic, effective, and honest public servant." The President's defense of Beteta is explained in part by the fact that the latter was one of De la Madrid's protectors during his passage through the Bank of Mexico. Later, when Beteta was named finance minister under Luis Echeverría, Miguel de la Madrid became Beteta's deputy minister.

De la Madrid's testimonial to Beteta is also an explicit defense of his own policy of delivering the country's oil wealth to the banks. It is no accident that there have been an unprece-

dent number of recent attacks in the media—domestic and international—against oil workers leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia (known as "La Quina"), who strongly opposes the privatization of sections of Pemex and the use of Mexico's oil to pay the foreign debt. In late September, the *Wall Street Journal* published two consecutive articles attacking La Quina and saying that he runs his union the way Jimmy Hoffa ran the Teamsters in the U.S. The message was clear: Hoffa was assassinated, and you could be next.

On Oct. 6, Mexican "intellectual" Lorenzo Meyer, with close links to President-elect Salinas de Gortari's strategists, wrote in the daily *Excelsior* that La Quina and opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas were the two major obstacles the government had to deal with if it wants to join the North American Common Market.

In presenting the accusations against Beteta, Congressman Adolfo Barrientos observed that the fraud was directly committed by the company Flota Petrolera Mexicana (FPM), owned by Isidoro Rodríguez, through its contract with Pemex, then under Beteta's direction. Beteta first granted Rodríguez's unguaranteed paper company a lucrative contract to transport oil, which enabled Rodríguez to then get bank credit to buy oil tankers at substantially overvalued prices. The overvaluation, and other glaring irregularities in the FPM/Pemex contract, brought Rodríguez a total of \$49 million in profits which increased fabulously with the currency devaluations

that followed, one on top of the next.

Denunciations of the irregularities at the time led to an investigation by the Comptroller, who confirmed the fraud, but Pemex officials accepted Rodríguez's side of the story and confirmed his contract for ten years.

Barrientos's accusations also were directed at various of Beteta's accomplices, among them: Isidoro Rodríguez, currently president of the National Chamber of Transport (CNA) and owner of FIASA, a parent company including various important companies; Sen. Jesús Alcántara Miranda, public relations director of the CNA; and former federal Congressman Oscar Aguirre López, general secretary of the CNA. All of them are members of a Freemasonic sect tied to the sinister Propaganda-2 lodge.

It turns out that those most alarmed by the charges against Beteta are not his friends and family, but rather a prominent group of businessmen who are some of Pemex's principal contract holders. These include: Carlos Hank González, former Mexico City mayor, businessman, and the PRI politician who is the real figure behind Isidoro Rodríguez; Alejo Peralta, contract holder for various state companies; Crescencio Ballesteros, construction magnate; Jorge Jiménez Cantú, former governor of the state of Mexico; and the Lebanese Anuar Name Yapur and his protector Emilio Checa Kuri, who has been charged with fraud himself and is currently a fugitive from Mexican justice.

While serving as Mexican finance minister, Beteta was involved in a huge scandal that broke when it was learned that several dozen important industrialists from the state of Mexico were involved in a tax evasion scheme. Beteta interceded with then-President Luis Echeverría so that they would not be penalized if they would cover their debts.