

## Bankers unleash Nazi assault against Mexican oil workers

by Robyn Quijano

Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari carried out a Nazi-style frame-up against the leadership of his nation's powerful oil workers union on Jan. 9, to eliminate opposition to the selling off of Pemex, the country's nationalized oil industry. The attack on the strongest and most militant union in Mexico was carried out on orders from the Anglo-American liberal Establishment, and the Satan-worshippers of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Destroying Mexico's union movement is crucial to their plan to eliminate all opposition to the International Monetary Fund's genocide policies in Ibero-America.

Mexican Army units and judicial police attacked the home of oil workers' leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia, blew down the door with a bazooka, and arrested leaders of the union. Over the next 24 hours, a dragnet pulled in 51 of the union's leaders, charging them with corruption and arms smuggling. On Jan. 13, local unions leaders were also arrested, to terrorize the entire union and leave them with no leadership. Hernández Galicia, who is nicknamed "La Quina," has been charged with the murder of a police agent allegedly killed in the shoot-out at his home. Conveniently, the police officer was cremated less than 24 hours after the incident. Witnesses say that they saw the Army plant 200 Uzi machine guns in Hernández's Galicia's home.

According to the government news service, Notimex, the action was taken because the oil workers planned a strike at Pemex installations, "in a very well-orchestrated plot that threatened the national security."

The action by Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, praised by President-elect George Bush as "bold and courageous," and loudly cheered by the Anglo-American Establishment's press, could be the biggest miscalculation of the 40-year-old, Harvard-trained politician's career.

Over 20,000 workers and supporters gathered on the eve-

ning of Jan. 12 in Mexico City's main plaza, the Zócalo, to support the oil workers and denounce the frame-up as part of a dirty deal with the international banks. Mexico's workers and nationalists, who voted last July to elect Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of Mexico's best-loved President, Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas, to the presidency, have not forgotten that Salinas stole the election. The brazen move now to wipe out the trade unions and any opposition to handing Pemex, which President Cárdenas nationalized in 1938, to the multinationals, could spark an uncontrollable rebellion.

As soon as the raid on the oil workers hit the news, workers walked out of almost every Pemex installation in the country. Thousands marched to the Zócalo. Later, the union leadership called on them to go back to work, since the government planned to use the walkout to rip up the union contract, which stands in the way of their plan to split Pemex into three companies and sell them to foreign interests. Weeks before the hit on the oil workers, the Soviet agent who owns Occidental Petroleum, Armand Hammer, was in Mexico to make deals on grabbing part of Pemex.

### A legal excuse

While Mexican Attorney General Enrique Alvarez del Castillo told a news conference that there were no political motives behind the arrest of Hernández Galicia, according to Reuters, one government official described the charges as "only a legal excuse" to break his grip on the union. "Government and private sector sources said Salinas planned to partially privatize state oil from Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) which, since 1938, has had a monopoly on the oil industry deemed a vital national interest. . . . They added, however, that no private investor would consider involvement in the industry if it meant dealing with a union controlled by Hernández Galicia." Reuters reported that "the

government source said . . . Salinas plans to privatize basic and secondary petrochemical production, and some Pemex marketing functions. . . . The government would have preferred to negotiate with the oil workers union, but . . . negotiations are impossible with leaders who use demagoguery and wrap themselves in the flag."

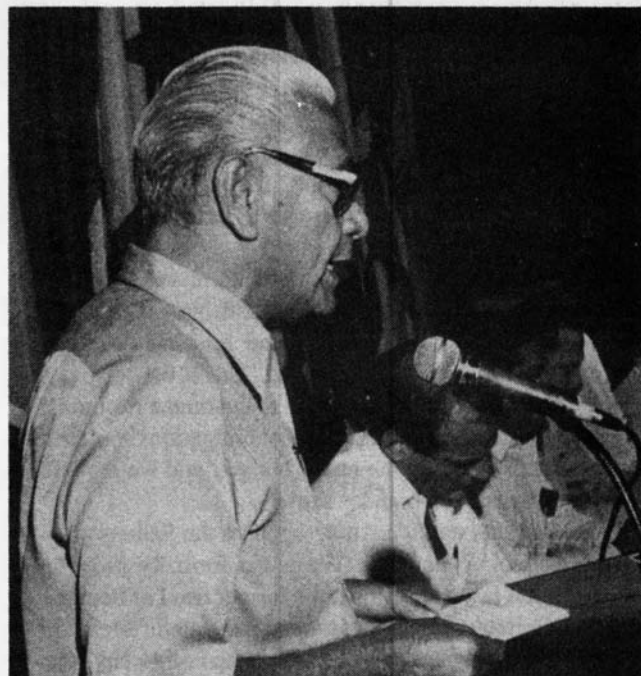
Sen. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, a leader of Cárdenas's movement, attacked the frame-up of Hernández, calling him the first political prisoner of the Salinas regime. Cárdenas himself told the press: "Drugs are frequently introduced into the belongings of many persecuted politicians. It is naive to think that La Quina is going to risk having weapons in his own home." Cárdenas said the frame-up was revenge for the union's denunciation of corruption by Pemex managers.

The CTM, Mexico's 5 million member labor federation, attacked the arrests, which "seriously damage the labor movement and the legal structure in which we Mexicans live . . . and could put at risk the civil peace that has cost us so much to construct and maintain." But the federation has not backed up its words with any actions commensurate to the danger to organized labor that the frame-up represents.

The oil workers took out an ad in the press the day after the raid, stating, "This cunning aggression forms part of the deal the government has made with the international banks to guarantee payment of interest on the new loans and, at the same time, to hand over the national oil industry to foreign capital." The ad continues: "Solidarity and the demand for immediate release of the oil worker leaders are demands of all the nationalist and democratic forces of our country, who oppose the dismantling of *Petróleos Mexicanos* and its delivery to the multinationals. To allow this sell-out measure by the government would be tantamount to putting our motherland up for sale."

The *Wall Street Journal* had delivered marching orders to President Salinas to smash Hernández, in front-page features last Sept. 27 and Oct. 5. It tagged him "Mexico's Jimmy Hoffa," and said, "Mr. Salinas . . . knows that the modern, internationally integrated economy he envisions for Mexico cannot develop so long as La Quina-style feudalism persists." On Jan. 10, the *Journal* lauded the frame-up as "a dramatic move to clean up the renegade union that has threatened government efforts to reform Mexico's state petroleum monopoly," and claimed that the action "should give his beleaguered government an economic and political boost."

Inside Mexico, the government's slander machine has been working overtime. *El Nacional*, daily, headlined its lead article Jan. 10, "The Criminal Economic and Political Empire Falls." The paper insisted that "the detention of these immoral leaders is an affirmation of the will of the government to . . . protect society and its institutions. . . . Mexico needs to modernize . . . and cancel once and for all the . . . feudal domains." *El Nacional's* editorial on Jan. 13 proclaimed, "What is now clear is that the actions taken against La Quina and his group by the federal government had as their essential purpose the protec-



Former secretary general of the Mexican oil workers union José Sosa, at an international conference in solidarity with Panama, Panama City, April 30, 1988. He was one of those arrested on Jan. 9.

tion of the national interest and the cutting off at the roots an attempted subversion against the state, outside of all legal and democratic channels. . . . A blow has been delivered against 'political crime.' "

But most Mexicans, including factions still within the ruling PRI party, see the move as a political vendetta that could backfire. *Siempre*, the most popular weekly magazine, called La Quina's arrest "an event that could be interpreted as a stupid confrontation between the federal government and an important sector of the workers such as the oil workers." The article went on, "The arrest of the major labor leader has caused concern, [and] it is obvious that the pretext of smuggled arms is nothing more than that, a pretext to try to defeat one of the most important leaders of recent times. . . . 'The week begins badly when there's a hanging on Monday,' runs a popular refrain, and it would be well applied to the present government administration on beginning this class of provocative actions." The article condemned the violent methods employed in the arrest of someone like Hernández Galicia, who has dedicated his life to bettering the workers' standard of living.

### **Demand debt moratorium**

On Jan. 1, Hernández Galicia had demanded a one-year moratorium on Mexico's \$104 billion foreign debt: a "crime" the international users will never forgive. "The debt problem has paralyzed investments in our country," he declared. "We will not be able to grow if we continue diverting our internal budget to meet foreign commitments. Mexico will

become a moribund nation that will soon die." The oil workers' congressmen persuaded the standing committee of the lower house, which is dominated by the ruling PRI party, to proclaim Jan. 4 that it would back a moratorium, since "the Mexican people have already exhausted their economic resources to comply with servicing the foreign debt."

In a New Year's press conference, Hernández Galicia urged that the \$15.9 billion to be saved by a one-year moratorium be productively invested in agriculture and small industry. It could also pay for finishing half-built highways, dams, hydroelectric power plants, and housing developments, and for renewed oil exploration. "That is the only way we could obtain the healthy structure to guarantee resuming payments. . . . Mexico is faithful to its obligations, but it is unjust when this takes up the entire budget, and we are left naked and exposed," Hernández said.

The oil workers union not only opposes the Salinas government's economic policies. They also formally brought charges of fraud last year against the former head of Pemex, Mario Ramón Beteta, now governor of the state of Mexico. Beteta and his family are part of the financial oligarchy, the key movers in Mexico of the vendetta against the union.

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## Documentation

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### 'I am innocent'

*Joaquín Hernández Galicia spoke for more than four hours before the Ninth District Court on Jan. 11; his statement was attended by more than 100 reporters, photographers, lawyers, and sympathizers who shouted, "We are with you, Joaquín."*

I am innocent. All this is a dirty trick prefabricated by Mario Ramón Beteta and some officials of the past and present government—Eduardo Pesqueira and Francisco Rojas—who are bothered by the criticisms of the government we have made, and because we are teaching other unions and social or political groups how to resolve the crisis, the foreign debt, and, above all, by declaring that the property and natural resources of the nation should be exclusively managed by the state to the benefit of the Mexican people. The property of the nation, as the Constitution determines, should always be administered by the state, to the benefit of the Mexican people.

This statement of my supposed declarations is not what I signed. The one I signed was not so compromising. But if I did sign it, it was because they threatened me. They told me that if I didn't confess, at least in part, they would make the oil workers work by force. They knew that the brothers were

### Why they fear 'La Quina'

The oil workers union, Revolutionary Union of Petroleum Workers of the Mexican Republic (SRTPRM), is unique not just in its wealth and power, but in the quality of life it has brought to its members and in its devotion to defending and developing the Mexican nation.

A foreign visitor to Ciudad Madero, the oil center on Mexico's Gulf coast where the union's headquarters are located, is struck by how different it is from other industrial centers. It is a tidy city. There is no sign of public drunkenness or of the rowdy bars that proliferate in Mexican towns and anywhere in the world where there are a lot of oil workers. When the visitor asks about it, he is told that the union chief Joaquín Hernández Galicia once berated the wives of his members for not keeping their husbands at home and out of trouble. The wives answered they had tried, but could not compete with the attractions of the red light district. Within a few months, the union had bought the district, bulldozed it, and built a church and a school. Today, it is hard to find a bar anywhere in the place.

On the streets and in the union-owned supermarkets and department stores, one sees whole families walking and shopping together. The union has invested heavily in services for its members and communities during the past 30 years. In its 36 supermarkets at work sites around the country, food costs 20-40% less than "market prices" for

stopping work.

They also told me that my family was kidnaped and that if I continued to refuse to authorize the prefabricated statement, I would never see them again. Those from the Attorney General's office treated me well, under the circumstances. They were even attentive, you might say. Not so my brothers. . . . I didn't want my union brothers to continue suffering. I heard them complaining, suffering. They told me that the inquiries were going to last many days. This didn't bother me. What bothered me was that they were going to kill my companions, male and female.

I signed . . . but this statement doesn't tell the truth. It is prefabricated.

I call on Don Fidel Velázquez [CTM union federation chief] not to stop helping us, because this is an action that wants to do away with the little autonomy that exists within the public sector unions. . . . This maneuver is not only an effort to disintegrate the oil workers union, but other unions.

members and the public in general. It has built numberless housing projects, health centers, and vacation centers for its members.

It is true that the union has built an "economic empire." Union leaders live modestly in houses comparable to those of the average permanently employed U. S. oil worker. The union makes far more productive use of its income than any Mexican capitalist or the government. It has used its money and its members' skills to build all sorts of industries in the oil zones, including factories making furniture, small appliances, and other products to supply its stores.

"La Quina," as Hernández Galicia is known, travels constantly to agricultural development projects the union sponsors and finances to improve the productive capacities of the peasants in the oil-producing states. One factory in Ciudad Madero specializes in farm implements for these peasant communities. Most of those working there are oil workers doing the voluntary labor, which is required in lieu of union dues. The members seem quite willing to do that for a union which has given them security, even in the midst of the depression foreign creditors have foisted on Mexico.

All over the oil zone, there are signs saying things like "Oil workers, You Are Responsible for the Country." The quotes come from the speech President Lázaro Cárdenas made in 1938 when he nationalized Mexico's oil. Cárdenas expropriated the industry because the British and U. S. oil companies were sucking out all its capital, destroying the wells, creating dangerous working conditions, and provoking strikes.

Cárdenas's courageous act was the most important assertion of national sovereignty in this hemisphere in this

century. The oil cartel thought it could collapse Mexico's output by pulling out all the foreign technicians. But the Mexican oil workers found in themselves the talents to keep the wells functioning, then to expand output, and later to develop a modern petrochemical industry.

Some of Cárdenas's aides suggested sending troops to the oil wells to protect them from the anticipated sabotage of the enraged former owners, but he wisely endowed the oil workers' union with stewardship over the national patrimony. It is out of that patriotic loyalty that the union asked its workers not to strike, even when its leader was framed and jailed. It is also why La Quina threatened Jan. 3 to strike if a "millimeter" of the oil industry were sold off by the government.

General Cárdenas, in appreciation for the union's attitude, made it the policy of the state oil monopoly, Pemex, that the union be given priority for any contract for which it could provide equal or better terms than other bidders. That, and not any alleged corruption, is the source of the union's wealth. La Quina has been ruthless against union officials who use their positions to enrich themselves. And, for the past few years, he has been at war with managers like Mario Ramón Beteta who line their pockets while eliminating work safety investments.

A union leader told the tens of thousands rallying in support of La Quina in Mexico City Jan. 11, "He used the union's money to build houses, stores, and hospitals. Do you think he robbed the oil workers' money?" The response was a resounding, "No," *La Jornada* reported.

While good management and strong motivation have made the union's enterprises flourish, Pemex has been decapitalized to pay Mexico's foreign debts.

—Mark Sonnenblick

[Unionists should] continue working as they always have, with patriotism and efficiency, not abandon their labors. . . . I also call on [my colleagues] not to leave the CTM, and in regard to myself, I repeat that I am innocent. We will legally defend our innocence. . . .

They want us permanently in jail, because we have always wanted a clean Pemex, not just an honest union, but also an honest Pemex. We have realized that our accusations of fraud regarding the ships belonging to Isidoro Rodríguez, the accusations against this great fraud committed in Somex by Mario Ramón Beteta in financially authorizing a company called Maizoro whose product did not exist on the market, hurt and affected them a great deal.

I see a maneuver against us for defending Pemex, the workers, and the people in general. For our policy of never forgetting—and we never will forget—the great Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas. We hope that the authorities do not lend themselves to continue this infamy adorned with prefabricated

legal trappings.

Of my friends who care for me, I ask that they care for my family who must be filled with worry, that they not abandon those who love me, that no matter what is said, I declare here and now that I, Joaquín Hernández Galicia, am innocent, as are Salvador Barragán Camacho and Pepe Sosa Martínez.

Let it be clear that we are not against the government, much less against the people. . . . This, in our opinion, is the fight of the true Mexicans who love Mexico, against those who do not love her. Against those who would continue selling her to the Mexican financial community which, tired of earning money through stock market deals, through the banks, the devaluations, the inflation, allied with the foreign financial leadership want to see the oil workers union and all of us who are friends of the truth, of the government, and of the people, on our knees or prisoners like myself. . . .

I will be a physical prisoner, but my conscience is free.

## Labor support calls flood into Mexico

*Less than 24 hours after the attack against the Mexican oil workers union SRTPRM, labor organizations throughout Ibero-America began to rally their support. Here are excerpts of some of the messages that poured in:*

### Argentina

The Argentine Federation of Unified State Oil Workers Unions joins in solidarity with its brothers, the Mexican oil workers.

—*Roberto Ferioli, Adjunct Secretary General*

On behalf of all our affiliates we demand . . . that the leaders of the SRTPRM be released, and we understand that this attack against them is because they are defending the nation's resources, and fighting against the usurious privatization being pushed by the IMF.

—*Ernesto Dovalos, Union of State Gas Workers*

### Bolivia

The only crime committed by our brothers, the leaders of the oil workers, is to have defended the national patrimony of Mexico, in this instance, Mexico's oil. This type of thing is not only happening in Mexico, but also in our country, Bolivia, where the government of Paz Estensoro plans to privatize the state oil company, YPF, on orders from the IMF and imperialism. The COB joins in solidarity with Brother Joaquín Hernández Galicia and the other leaders who have been incarcerated, and we demand . . . their immediate release.

—*Heriberto Mamani, Secretary General; Rufo Rivera, Secretary of Organization, Bolivian Labor Federation*

### Colombia

The arbitrary detention of Brother Joaquín Hernández Galicia and other leaders . . . should serve as a warning to us all . . . that the interests of the imperialists are ready to crush any manifestation of nationalism. From Colombia, workers are in a state of readiness to fight, to mobilize in defense of Mexico's working class and that of all of Latin America. Your fight is our fight.

—*Aurelio Ossa, Secretary General, Antioquia Workers Union*

### Panama

We . . . resolve: To condemn the criminal acts against

the Mexican oil workers union . . . and the privatization of Mexico's state sector companies.

—*Hector Alemán, Secretary General, National Federation of Public Employees Unions; Marcos T. Moscoso, Secretary General, Association of Unions of State Sector Companies*

### Peru

We . . . charge that such an act against the Mexican workers is a serious attempt to annihilate all the patriotic forces of that country and of the entire Latin American continent that are against the genocidal policies of the IMF. . . . The workers of Peru and Latin America have received with shock and indignation the news of the criminal attempt against the life of Hernández Galicia and the armed, Nazi-style attack against the union . . . in an act that represents a historical retrogression from the principles instituted by Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas."

—*Juan Bernaola Cueto, Secretary General, Confederation of Workers of the Peruvian Revolution*

### Trinidad and Tobago

The Oilfield Workers Trade Union of Trinidad and Tobago support the Mexican oil workers in their just struggle to ensure national ownership of Pemex and to prevent foreign and IMF intervention. . . . The struggle against the IMF is a struggle common to all Third World people.

—*David Abdullah, OWTU*

### Venezuela

I demand that the government presided over by Dr. Carlos Salinas de Gortari immediately release Brothers Joaquín Hernández Galicia, Salvador Barragan Camacho, and the other labor leaders. End the repression against the Mexican labor movement!

—*Congressman Casto Gil Rivera, Acting Secretary General, Venezuelan Labor Federation*

We repudiate the totalitarian and anti-democratic practices of the Mexican authorities. . . .

—*Juan Marcano, Autonomous Unions Federation, Federal District and State of Miranda, Venezuela*

As a Latin American patriot, I am ashamed by seeing how the sell-out governments of our continent more and more blindly obey that genocidal entity, that racist and satanic sect, the International Monetary Fund. I see how they remain indifferent in the face of the slanderous campaign against General Noriega . . . how they prefer to eat their own children—as Saturn—to pay the immoral foreign debt. . . . I demand the immediate freedom of Joaquín Hernández Galicia and the other oil leaders. . . .

—*Antonio José Guerra, Secretary General, Autonomous Unions Federation, State of Tachira*