

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Probe International and the Hank scandal

New evidence suggests that a Connecticut "risk analysis firm" does much more than predict Mexican instability.

People concerned about safeguarding American investments overseas from terrorism and political instability have long been alarmed by the activities of a Connecticut firm called Probe International, and its founder and president, Benjamin Weiner.

Weiner specializes in making predictions of terrorism and social upheaval. But the nature of his own activities, as well as those of his associates, places him at the center of Anglo-American intelligence operations designed to see such predictions come true.

Weiner was among the first to organize seminars predicting the triumph of Khomeini's hordes in Iran, years before the event and months before other British Intelligence-associated figures started overt operations to undermine support for the Shah.

Showing up repeatedly as lead speakers in Probe-sponsored seminars throughout the late 1970s were Britain's Lord Caradon, a veteran of British covert intelligence operations especially in the Balkans and the Middle East; former CIA chief William Colby; and J. Bowyer Bell, an "expert" on terrorism who insists to major corporations that terrorism is a "sociological phenomenon" which cannot be combated.

Now Weiner has turned his attention to Mexico, and with a vengeance. Says one risk analyst familiar with Weiner's work "Weiner's favorite theme is that Mexico is down the tubes."

At a recent Atlanta seminar for executives, Weiner distributed a checklist of what a newspaper account called "remarkable similarities between Iran in 1976 and Mexico in 1981."

A top Citibank official at the same seminar is quoted as saying that, "Mexico could be a very tricky place to operate."

My associates in New York have now caught Weiner red-handed in an outrageous manipulation of U.S. media in order to spark exactly the "lack of confidence" in Mexico which he purports to merely monitor.

On Feb. 2, the *Hartford Courant* ran an exposé of the fact that Mexico City mayor Hank González had purchased a home in New Canaan, Connecticut, worth close to \$1 million, and had installed his wife and family there. The home was bought via a Netherlands Antilles corporation called N. V. Milford; the *Courant* journalist noted that "using the corporation to buy property in the U.S. allows a foreign buyer to avoid paying capital gains taxes. . . ."

As this column has repeatedly informed its readers, Hank González is in fact one of the dirtiest political figures in Mexico. The trail of his close business associations and his work with a special branch of the Mexican Masons links him to the Italian flight-capital masterminds and terrorist controllers involved in Italy's famous P-2 Masonic Lodge.

But the article quotes Probe's

Benjamin Weiner with a very different lesson: "This is politically important. When you have the mayor of what may be the world's largest city raising his family in another nation, you wonder—is this some indication of serious political or social problems in the home country?" The article terms Hank "a close political ally of Mexican President José López Portillo."

Even any novice Mexican political observer knows that López Portillo and Hank González are bitter political enemies.

Weiner personally planted the article in the paper, my associates discovered. He issued two press releases on the matter, sent to a number of newspapers in the region, and then coordinated with *Courant* personnel to see that the article came out according to plan.

A source who knows Weiner says he was "jubilant" when the article appeared. Little reason to wonder why: the *Hartford Courant* is owned by the Times Mirror Corporation of Los Angeles, which put the whole story on its national wire. The next day it showed up front page in the *Miami Herald*, one of the U.S. newspapers most widely-read anywhere in Latin America, and several other prime locations.

Weiner is now apparently nursing a new wave of publicity. Local journalists report that Reuters and the *Wall Street Journal* have started looking around.

No one's talking yet to say who might be working with Weiner to artificially build concern over Mexico's "serious political and economic problems," and to implicate the President in corruption and scandal. But interested investigators both here and in the United States say a probe is underway.