

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

No man is an island

An expropriation in Sonora has set back the insurrection plans of the neo-fascist PAN party.

The possibility of a total political takeover of the northern tier of states by the opposition National Action Party (PAN) ran into a setback on Feb. 12, when Governor Samuel Ocaña of the state of Sonora expropriated the privately-owned island of the PAN's financial angel in the state, Javier Castelo Parada.

Castelo had built a private road to the island, called Huivulai, situated some 30 miles south of Ciudad Obrégon. The road cut off a series of marshes from ocean current necessary to keep the local shrimp fishing industry alive. According to Ocaña's expropriation order, some 7,000 fishermen stood to lose their livelihoods, if the area were not re-opened to fishing. The action and its happy reception among workers and peasants proved that the nationalist spirit of the last months of the López Portillo administration is far from forgotten.

The event was of national importance. Not only is Castelo the moneybags behind the PAN party's extraordinary strength in Sonora, but he is vice-president of the national Mexican Employers Confederation (Coparmex), and figured prominently in the series of proto-fascist rallies held throughout the country last autumn, dubbed "Mexico in Liberty." He represents a subgroup of business interests which wants to see advanced industry relegated to the dreams of past administrations, and confine the economy to assembly-plant operations, luxury tourism, and casino gambling. According to reliable reports, Castelo

intended to turn Huivulai into the base for a casino complex.

PRI deputy José Carreno Carlón, writing in the semi-official daily *El Nacional*, noted that Sonora had been the place where business forces of Castelo's type had first become entrenched, during the post-World War II presidency of Miguel Alemán. "Sonora is the tip of the iceberg," Carreno stated. "It brings to the fore of national discussion the fact that it, with other border states, is being used as a political laboratory, to incubate a show of force against the government. What goes on there can determine the institutional future of the country."

The PAN is known as a conservative, Catholic-oriented party, but it is something else altogether: an offshoot of the European solidarist circles who helped put Hitler in power. The party is working today with an overtly neo-Nazi network in the country in an attempt to combine backward rural forces with an economically threatened urban middle class. The result is to be a national movement that would smash the ruling PRI apparatus of the past 60 years.

Sonora is the state where the PAN has their best chance over the next several years of taking a governorship away from the PRI. In its many decades of rule, the PRI has never permitted an opposition governor to take power, although it has gradually opened up the Congress to substantial opposition representation. Wherever elections have gone against the PRI, as in Baja California in the early 1960s,

the balloting has simply been annulled, and new elections scheduled.

The PAN has a strong candidate in Adalberto Rosas, who was mayor of Ciudad Obrégon in 1979-82, who is married to a daughter of one of the most powerful local oligarchical families.

The state PAN director, Carlos Amaya Rivera, immediately termed the expropriation "simply an occasion for him [Governor Ocaña] to throw a smokescreen over his inability to govern and resolve the problems of the state with justice." The party also began to threaten that scandals would quickly erupt and "make Ocaña's head roll."

So far that has not been the outcome. Quite the contrary, Ocaña is getting backup from the highest levels. Five days after the expropriation, Ocaña had a long meeting with President Miguel de la Madrid in Mexico City, after which the President's press secretary called in the press and said "Gentlemen, the governor of Sonora has just had a very important interview with the President and has a very important report to give to you." Ocaña's statements describing the development plans of the state and defending the Huivulai takeover were given prominent coverage on the front pages of the papers the next day.

Well-informed sources report that de la Madrid was in on the expropriation move from the beginning. The sources recalled that during de la Madrid's election campaign last year, Castelo had stood up in a meeting and delivered an unrestrained attack on the state and its "despoiling of the private sector." De la Madrid struck the table with his fist, putting an end to Castelo's outburst. These are the kinds of interventions "that can destroy the country," he is said to have angrily declared.