

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### Something is rotten at SPP

*The planning minister adds to his staff the creator of Mexico's most feared terrorist gang.*

**T**he scene: an august gathering of international businessmen at Mexico's premier resort, Cancún, to hear about the wonders of Mexico under the thumb of the IMF. Sponsor: *Fortune* magazine. Speaker: German von Bertrab Edman, just appointed Coordinator of Special Programs for the Ministry of Planning and the Budget (SPP). Subject: how Mexico's low wages and cheap raw materials make Mexico an ideal laboratory for "an export model" of growth.

What SPP minister Salinas de Gortari knew but the businessmen did not is that they were listening to the creator of Mexico's bloodiest terrorist gang of the 1970s, the 23rd of September Communist League.

The connection highlights a recent phenomenon, the penetration of terrorist-tinged anti-industrial ideology into the highest echelons of government.

Von Bertrab comes out of the Society of Jesus. German in origin, he appeared in Monterrey in 1964 offering courses at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Advanced Studies (ITESM). Together with two other Jesuits, Fathers Obeso and Rabago, he organized brainwashing courses based on "theological reflection" and on the method of "action/reflection of the here and now," via the University Cultural Organization (OCU). It is not known if Salinas de Gortari, whose oligarchic family was established in a nearby town, first came into contact with von Bertrab at this early time.

At the OCU, von Bertrab's most

promising student was the "mystic" Ignacio Olivares, an ultra-rightwinger who later converted to ultra-leftism and to whom Hiraes Morán, an ex-member of the League, dedicated his book, entitled *The 23rd of September Communist League, Its Origins and its Breakup*.

Under von Bertrab's tutelage a still more radical faction emerged from the "Christian-Marxist dialog" the German Jesuit had underway—one calling for armed struggle. This group was headed by Ignacio Salas Obregón, who was to become one of the principal leaders of the League shortly thereafter.

Simultaneously, the Jesuits entered the economics department of the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, with the thesis of the "evil university factory." From this emerged two groups: the Committee of Revolutionary Students and the Committee of Revolutionary Workers, whose networks served as protection for the Liga 23rd terrorists.

Von Bertrab was expelled from the Autonomous University together with another group of Jesuits when Eugenio Garza Sada, head of the Monterrey group, decided that the Jesuit influence had become a "Frankenstein monster." A year later, in 1973, the real power of the Jesuits became evident when Garza Sada was assassinated by the 23rd of September, at the very moment when he was ready to ratify a labor-business alliance in response to the urgings of then-President Luís Echeverría.

After leaving Monterrey, von Bertrab gave up the cloth and got married, but did not abandon his "organizing" activities. In Mexico City he met up with the Sánchez Aguilar brothers, leaders of the moribund Social Democratic Party, who had been among his foremost students in Monterrey. He "advised" them to create the consulting company called Sintemex, a cover for maintaining links to the U.S. State Department.

Von Bertrab's next nest was the Mexican Institute of Public Opinion (IMOP), another joint venture with the Sánchez Aguilar brothers. Here he applied his Jesuitic experience in carrying out fraudulent surveys intended to psychologically manipulate the population.

One of the last times we heard of German von Bertrab, he was managing a branch of the private Banamex banking conglomerate in Mexico City. It is likely that with the bank nationalization of 1982, von Bertrab was out of a job and had to turn to his influential friends, or perhaps even to blackmail, to insinuate himself into the government.

The affinity between von Bertrab and Salinas de Gortari is deep. The activity of the original 23rd of September League was aimed at destroying Mexico's institutions, particularly the presidency, and at sabotaging Mexico's industrialization efforts. Salinas de Gortari, the highest ranking protégé in Mexico of Philadelphia's Wharton School, is carrying out Wharton blueprints today for undermining the presidency and for de-industrialization.

His chief advisers in the assault are a Club of Rome team headed by his undersecretary, Manuel Camacho. As in so many other countries, Club of Rome circles seem to be interlocked with terrorist ones.