
Profile: Adalberto Rosas

PAN's narco-candidate for governor of Sonora

Adalberto Rosas López is the PAN's showcase gubernatorial candidate in the PAN's showcase state of Sonora. No PAN candidate in any race, including at the presidential level, has received such adoring write-ups in the *New York Times*. Rosas is portrayed as an energetic, even charismatic, businessman and farmer, who is gaining increasing support among disaffected constituencies of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), as well as the PAN's established middle-class base in the state.

Rosas is at the center of the drug circles of Sonora. And it doesn't take a sleuth checking out Swiss bank accounts to discover it.

On March 9, 1984, the graduating class of the Sonora University Law School, in Hermosillo, paid tribute to the man they had selected to be the "sponsor" of their class, Agustín Antúnez Estrada, known by his nickname of "Chato." To Chato Antúnez's right stood the PAN mayor of Hermosillo, Casimiro Navarro, and a few seats to his left, the PAN candidate for governor, Rosas. The Communist-leaning coordinator of the Law School, Miguel Cárdenas Valdés, completed the group of four at the center of the head table.

The picture of these luminaries (page 23) shows them looking a little unhappy. Perhaps it was because Chato Antúnez is one of Sonora's most notorious drugrunners. He had spent five years in the jails of Sinaloa state for his activities, and had been forced to acknowledge this in a published interview the preceding month.

But the man congratulated by Adalberto Rosas that night was more than just a confessed drugrunner. He was that kind of perverse drugrunner who states his burning desire to see the United States humbled by having its youth destroyed. In an interview in the April 1984, issue of *Realidades* magazine, Antúnez was asked what he thought of drugpushers. His answer: "The drugpusher must be sure to export, in order to poison other countries, and not to keep [the drugs] in Mexico. . . . Look, you aren't going to change the world. So we have to take care of our brothers; let the neighbors take care of themselves."

It's just a short step from there to the savage anti-Americanism of José Rojo Coronado, the leftist lawyer now defending drug kingpin and presumed assassin of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena, Caro Quintero. Rojo Coronado told the press April 8, "U.S. society is decadent, degenerate, corrupt. . . . I think that if Mex-

ico is able to stupefy that society with drugs, that's great."

If Rosas's personal estimation of Chato Antúnez is evident in his appearance at an event boycotted by all other politicians in the state, Chato was not bashful in his appreciation of Rosas. In an interview to the periodical *Observador* in March 1984, Antúnez gushed: "Adalberto Rosas López is going to fight the good fight against the system; for his audaciousness, for the pureness of his ideals, he is the best politician of the PAN and the PRI."

The Rosas file

Rosas's career is an uninterrupted sequence of favors and deals involving the biggest drug interests of Mexico's biggest drug district.

- As an aspiring latifundist (owner of large, illegal, land-holdings) in the south of Sonora, he married into the oligarchical **Mazón family** of Sonora's north. The origin of Bettina Mazón de Rosas's family fortune: the takeover of Chinese opium interests in the late 1920s.

- In 1975-76, the ambitious Adalberto led other land-owner interests in the Ciudad Obregón area into an insurrectionary alliance with the largest landowner of neighboring Sinaloa, **Manuel Clouthier**. Reliable sources report that Clouthier's large-scale vegetable and fruit export business exported more than vegetables and fruit. In 1969, Clouthier's station wagon was reportedly intercepted with a cargo of marijuana.

- From 1975 to 1977, one of the world's most successful antidrug campaigns, Operation Condor, launched by President Luis Echeverría and maintained by José López Portillo, wiped out 80% of the drug traffic pouring through the northwest corridor. The regional oligarchy decided that its clout in the PRI was not sufficient to ensure its own interests; it was time to make the PAN a serious alternative. In 1979, Rosas suddenly left the PRI and joined the PAN, and in the same year, in a deal consummated with pro-PAN elements which remained behind in the PRI, he was elected mayor of Ciudad Obregón.

- Rosas promptly named **Pablo Castellón**, a well-known homosexual and former member of a marijuana-trafficking rock 'n' roll group, The Apson Boys, as his municipal police chief.

- Upon finishing his term in July 1982, Rosas attempted to throw local government into chaos by locking up the city voting records and refusing to turn them over to state authorities. Threatened with jail by the state congress, he was protected in court by a corrupt judge named **Pedro Reyes Colín**, who directs a nest of lawyers involved in defending drugtraffickers and protecting Hermosillo's drug and prostitution district.

- On June 20, 1983, Rosas met with 15 of the economic barons of the Arizona/Sonora region. The list of participants read like a *Who's Who* of drugrunning in that region. Topic of discussion: how to extend PAN-protected "free enterprise zones" for the drugrunners along the border.