

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

The risk of militarization

Charges by the former personal secretary of President José López Portillo sent shock waves through the country.

If the inflationary spiral is not brought under control, the government runs the risk of "falling into authoritarianism and perhaps the establishment of a military regime," stated Sen. Roberto Casillas, of the ruling PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party) on Dec. 22, speaking before a full session of the Senate of the Republic of Mexico.

The accusation of Casillas provoked a huge political uproar in official circles, and is said to have deeply upset President Miguel de la Madrid, since the senator was the personal secretary of President José López Portillo (1976-82), who nationalized Mexico's banks and tried to form a debtors' club.

Casillas's charges were so disturbing, that the editors of Senate record censored out the key sentences of the speech, deleting them from the minutes of the Senate session, in violation of the Constitution.

Casillas leveled his charges a few days after the announcement of the Economic Solidarity Pact, which sinks the country into savage austerity, depressing wages further, cutting public spending and investment, and choking all productive economic activity. The measures were imposed without further ado on Dec. 15, when President de la Madrid refused to seek support from the labor base of his party, which was threatening a general strike. The upheaval which the pact has provoked threatens to wipe out the basis for Mexico's social stability.

On Jan. 1, the Catholic archbishop

of Guadalajara, José de Jesús Posadas, echoed the Casillas speech, by stating in his New Year's message that the country's situation "is alarming . . . to the degree of fearing a violent social explosion, or an unfortunate and perhaps brutal repression by those in power, with grave implications for the country."

The possibility of such an explosion, and its brutal repression, has set off an intense factional battle inside and outside the government as well as the ruling party. Rumors are rampant in the country that Carlos Salinas de Gortari is about to pull out as the PRI's presidential candidate. The pressures on Salinas could culminate in a "rearrangement" of the ruling political groups, especially in the PRI leadership, where the nationalists might find a chance to influence the presidential campaign of Salinas; but it remains to be seen whether they will be able to impose a radical change in economic policy on the current government.

At the same time, the tremendous discredit into which President de la Madrid has fallen together with his protégé, Salinas de Gortari, has also made room for the dangerous resurgence of the political-financial group most closely tied to U.S. Republican presidential hopeful George Bush, and the "Project Democracy" illegal government made notorious by Oliver North. The Bushmen in Mexico are led by Carlos Hank González, a crony of Juan Sánchez Navarro, descendant of one of the oldest Spanish oligarch-

ical families in Mexico and current chairman of the Mexican Council of Businessmen. This group, which supported the presidential candidacy of Interior Minister Manuel Bartlett, wants to fish in troubled waters.

All of its members are rabid malthusians, and flaunt themselves as "charismatic" leaders, who could impose programs for reducing the population by "democratic methods."

In its Dec. 23 issue, the magazine *¡Siempre!*—which Hank González uses as his mouthpiece—accused Salinas of being the prototype of the "Mediocre Man," who owes everything to "Señor de la Madrid." Relying on the real fact that there are major splits in the PRI, with factions announcing that they will vote "for the opposition," and considering that many of Salinas's campaign events have ended up totally deserted, *¡Siempre!* steps on the sore corns. On Jan. 6, another editorial charged that President de la Madrid, "for the sake of keeping his image as a good payer . . . has been ruining the Mexican people for five years, degrading to unimaginable levels the value of our currency, and turning simple survival into a harsh and problematic adventure."

Concern for the well-being of the majority, the editorial continues, "does not apply to the present administration, as any worker, peasant, or housewife knows." On Jan. 13, *¡Siempre!* reports that Hank González broke his political silence of five years, when he told candidate Salinas, during a tour around the State of Mexico, that the Mexican political system is weakened and that we have to accept that "we made a mistake."

Beyond any doubt, Mexico urgently needs a total moratorium on its debt and to get back on the track of economic growth. This will not be enacted by Hank González and his mafia of drug speculators.