

## Dateline Mexico by Carlos Cota Meza

### NAFTA opponents persecuted

*A new prosecutorial machine will be turned against critics of the Bush-Salinas free trade pact.*

Attorney General Ignacio Morales Lechuga and Finance Secretary Pedro Aspe Armella announced in mid-July the creation of a new Special Prosecutor's Office for Tax Crimes. "Every businessman who dares to open his mouth against NAFTA is going to be hit by the Treasury," a Mexican businessman told *EIR*, in reference to the North American Free Trade Agreement that is currently under negotiation among Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

"The new prosecutor's office is an import of tax laws from the United States," said another businessman. "Everyone is going to be suspected of being like Al Capone, until we prove otherwise."

The special prosecutor's office, together with a new U.S.-Mexico environmental border plan and NAFTA's "rules of origin," all form part of a formidable political and administrative persecution apparatus, to be deployed by the Salinas and Bush governments against opponents to NAFTA within the Mexican business sector.

In announcing the new prosecutor's office, Attorney General Morales Lechuga denied that the new agency meant that the federal government had begun "a policy of fiscal terrorism." Rather, according to Pedro Aspe, the office "will establish a mechanism to provide for greater flexibility of action against tax fraud, through both increased and improved intelligence."

However, it was Roberto Hoyo, the special prosecutor designated to the new post, who made clear the real

intention of his office, when he declared that "there will be no pardon for evaders," and that "the punitive structures, like the administrative," will be increasingly severe.

Thus, the first action of the special prosecutor's office was to train its personnel ("tax police") in "techniques used by swindlers," "company accounting measures," "detection of false documents," and other means used "to elude or simulate compliance with the law."

Not accidentally, the new tax police will go into operation just as the formal trilateral trade negotiations among Mexico, the U.S., and Canada get under way. The Salinas government is clearly determined to silence opposition to NAFTA among industrialists and farmers, by using the threat of fiscal scrutiny which might not merely send them into bankruptcy, but now to jail as well.

On Aug. 1, representatives of Mexico's Urban Development and Ecology Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency signed a cross-border environmental plan designed, among other things, to oversee border movements of "dangerous waste products," to control chemical emergencies, and to police the contaminating practices of companies on both sides of the border.

In announcing the new plan, Mexican Secretary Patricio Chirinos declared that "highly contaminating industries have been found" in the so-called *maquiladora* belt. Since this is hardly news to anyone who cares to enter the *maquiladora* zone, it should prove very interesting to note just

which companies have *suddenly* been found guilty of contaminating.

Mitsuhara Nakata, representative of the Japanese assembly plants along the northern border of Mexico, recently noted that "there is some uncertainty within the *maquiladora* industry," and expressed his concern that "my nation's capital not be affected by the signing of the treaty."

Regarding NAFTA's "rules of origin," the United States' position is that "no fourth nation shall benefit from the trilateral agreement." The president of Germany's Mercedes-Benz company, Andreas Sperl, has already warned Mexico that trade war has de facto been declared, and stated that "the ambitious investment programs [we] have for Mexico could be revised if the trilateral agreement establishes very strict rules of origin—that is, *if* Mexico remains interesting for European and Japanese investors once the treaty is signed." The \$2 billion Mercedes investment package was one of the few shining achievements of President Salinas's early July trip to Europe.

With Mexico's new fiscal and ecological policies and trade rules, the Mexican and U.S. governments have created an administrative structure through which all "undesirables" may be expelled from their "free trade" plans. The Japanese and Europeans fit the category of "undesirables" because they are very competitive. They might be dealt with through accusations of being "highly contaminating." Mexican businessmen, on the other hand, are considered "undesirables" because they are *not* competitive.

By sweeping the Mexican economy free of such "undesirables," the free trade fanatics on both sides of the border hope to clear the way for converting the entire nation into a slave-labor camp, *maquiladora*-style.