

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Cota Meza

A conspiracy against Pemex

Are the 'Seven Sisters' behind the ongoing efforts to break up Mexico's giant state oil company?

It is clear that there has been an ongoing plot for several years to dismember Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex), and to place the nation's hydrocarbons under the control of the multinational oil companies.

If you are to believe the wealth of propaganda that has been pouring out recently, Mexico's flagship state company is nothing more than a legal tangle, a nest of corruption, an island of inefficiency. According to this propaganda line, there is no one *inside Mexico* capable of managing the largest company in the world.

Recently, a new fabricated scandal has broken out regarding Pemex. José Luis Manzo Yépez, chief of the Department of Liquid Gas and Polymers Land Shipments, a dependency of PMI Comercio Internacional, SA de CV, the international branch of Pemex, went before the Comptroller's Office, the Attorney General's office, and the Chamber of Deputies with a suit alleging "damage to the national resources" caused by officials from other areas of the same company.

According to the suit, there exist "irregularities" in a contract between Pemex and the Texas petrochemical firm Lyondell, to transform propylene into polypropylene, which imply "losses" for Pemex. The officials named by Manzo Yépez declared that they "had initiated proceedings toward presenting a legal suit against the author of the lies."

Manzo Yépez is but a strawman for the current director of PMI International, Adrian Lajous, Jr., who in turn is known for the emotional instability

characteristic of his entire family. His duties with the company have been that of a salesman of Mexican products on the Rotterdam spot market, controlled by the major oil multinationals. PMI Internacional is legally headquartered in Holland.

Strangely enough, those being sued by Manzo Yépez—particularly the former deputy director of Pemex's petrochemicals department, Robles Segura—are politically known as part of a faction inside Pemex which wants to restructure the Mexican giant along the lines suggested by Enrico Mattei's proposal. Mattei was chief of the Italian oil company Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), and an advocate of an independent energy policy for his country. Mattei died in 1962, in a suspicious airplane accident and the plan languished.

Mattei's public enemies were the world oil monopoly which he himself baptized the *Sette Sorelle*, or the Seven Sisters, which formed themselves into a global cartel during a secret meeting at the Achnacarry Castle in Scotland, to exercise total control over world energy reserves.

All of which raises the question, who jailed oil workers' union head Joaquín Hernández Galicia, an act which paved the way for the present dismantling of Pemex?

In a June 29 interview with *Proceso* journalist Salvador Corro, Hernández Galicia states that his imprisonment is the product of a conspiracy.

"What we are suffering is something that was put together by the previous prosecutor's office, something

very badly done . . . very diabolical," he said. "I am not going to go free. I am only going to leave this place in a plastic bag, my friend. Let's not fool ourselves," he responded to a question as to what he would do if he were to go free.

Hernández Galicia states that he has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the cache of weapons imputed to him "was sold 20 years ago to the Army and to the prosecutor's office." Regarding the charge of having assassinated Zamora Rioja, an agent of the Attorney General's office, Hernández Galicia says he has proof that the man "was pistol-whipped to death. . . . According to the testimony, I am being condemned for creating a square wound. . . . [It appears that] Zamora Rioja's death was caused by a square bullet," he concluded sardonically.

Hernández Galicia maintains that if the President of the Republic were to meet with his relatives or his lawyers, they would be able to prove his innocence. "There is a great deal of evidence that we would present to the President. There are more than 100 pieces of evidence, all favorable and proving that we are innocent."

The question more and more Mexicans have begun to ask, therefore, is, what really happened with Joaquín Hernández Galicia?

Alfredo López Ramos, former labor leader at the Salinas Cruz refinery, was also jailed on Jan. 10, 1989, and condemned to 10 years in prison "for trying to destabilize the company." According to López Ramos, he was freed thanks to a review of his record by the presidency and by the Government Ministry. He now maintains that "I don't believe it was the President of the Republic" who ordered the operation against Hernández Galicia and the oil workers' union.

If not he, then who?