

Secret meeting plans chaos in Mexico

by Dennis Small, Latin America Editor

A semi-secret gathering of some of Europe's leading oligarchic strategists and prominent Mexican businessmen in late January plotted to launch economic warfare against lame-duck Mexican President José López Portillo, and his policies of rapid industrial growth. The \$2,000-per-head "Atalaya '82" conference, held in the city of Guadalajara Jan. 14-17, also resolved to shatter any political obstacles to this onslaught inside Mexico—in particular the large and powerful ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) party.

The declaration of war was issued the second day of the conference by its chief organizer, Agustín Legorreta, the head of Mexico's largest private bank, Banamex. He told a stunned press conference that he no longer supported President López Portillo's economic strategy,

arguing that it produced inflation which had to be fought at all costs—even that of provoking a sharp recession. Inflation, Legorreta threatened, "is a cancer which will sooner or later have fatal consequences."

Political observers in Mexico are comparing the Atalaya meeting to a similar conspiratorial gathering of the same elements in 1976, at the Mexican resort of Chipinque. As a result of the Chipinque planning session, a group of Mexican businessmen led an economic insurrection against the government of Luis Echeverría, then in his last year in office. Investments dried up; \$4 billion in capital was withdrawn from the country, forcing a major devaluation of the peso; and rumors were set in motion throughout frightened middle-class layers of possible assassinations and coups d'état.

Participants in the Atalaya meeting

The following individuals were among the leading plotters present at the Atalaya '82 meeting:

- **Prince Nikolaus Lobkowicz:** A scion of the Czechoslovakian nobility who completed a term as president of the University of Munich Dec. 31. Lobkowicz is on intimate terms with the paladin of Bavarian neo-Nazism, Franz-Josef Strauss; with former NSC director Zbigniew Brzezinski; and with the most unreconstructed ideologue of Nazism still alive in Germany today, Armin Mohler—formerly of the SS, today the head of the "respectable" Siemens Foundation. Lobkowicz, who taught at Notre Dame University in the United States from 1960 to 1967, lectured his Mexican hosts on "The Importance of the Cultural and Historical Experience of Europe."

- **Gustav Thibon:** From the University of Avignon in France, Thibon is part of the Catholic schismatic network led by the reactionary Archbishop Lefebvre. Thibon is also renowned as a specialist on the thought of the fascist philosopher, Nietzsche.

- **Agustín Legorreta:** As head of the drug-linked

Banamex, Legorreta has close relations to the notorious Schlumberger family, which sponsored the Permindex assassination bureau responsible for the murder of President John F. Kennedy and for the more than 30 hit attempts against French President Charles de Gaulle. Remy Schlumberger is today on the board of directors of Banamex; and Legorreta himself is a member of the Islet Foundation, a known Schlumberger front.

- **Bruno Pagliai:** Pagliai shares the directorship of the Tamsa steel company with Gaetano Zocchi, a former director of Permindex. Pagliai is on intimate terms with the noble Savoy family of Italy, and works closely with the drug-running network centered around former Mexican President Miguel Alemán.

- **Juan Sánchez Navarro:** From one of Mexico's oldest oligarchic families, Sánchez Navarro is also one of the few Mexican members of the secretive Mont Pelerin society, which supports the anti-growth "free market" economic policies of Milton Friedman.

- **Emilio Azcárraga Tamayo:** Head of the Mont Pelerin Society-linked Mexican think tank, CEESP, Azcárraga is a key promotor of Milton Friedman's anti-industrial policies. Azcárraga is the principal shareholder of Televisa, Mexico's largest television chain which has been strongly advocating the drastic reduction of the Mexican population. He is also part of the inner circle of former President Miguel Alemán.

Echeverría publicly denounced the Chipinque conspirators—who met in the black of night disguised with hoods—as “fascists.”

The same pattern of induced conflict between the Mexican government and private sector has re-emerged. Top private bankers returning from the Atalaya meeting expressed a “lack of confidence” in the Mexican peso, and called on businessmen to put all their liquid assets into dollars—a hair’s breadth from transferring them out of the country altogether.

The *Washington Post* then contributed to the environment, reporting that over \$4 billion had already fled Mexico in the last half of 1981—with worse developments planned for 1982. And a Mexican business leader interviewed by *EIR* reported bluntly that his federation believed that a frontal assault on the government and its economic policy was needed—and that he expected a sizeable devaluation of the peso in 1982 and a drop of GNP growth rates from 8 to 4 percent.

The Rockefellers’ Council of the Americas held a quiet seminar in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 21 to get out this scare story to American corporate executives. And the Wharton School think tank deployed its Mexico expert, Abel Beltrán del Río, to Monterrey, Mexico to prophesy gloom to a business seminar there.

The irony of this coordinated attack is that the Mexican economy is—in its fundamentals—perhaps the *strongest* economy of any today in the underdeveloped sector. It has had real GNP growth rates of 8 percent for each of the last four years, higher than any other in the Third World; it has invested its oil revenues judiciously in capital formation and purchase of advanced technology; and it has created nearly 1 million new productive jobs per year over the recent period.

These were exactly the arguments adduced by Mexican President José López Portillo to counter the Atalaya conspirators. On Jan. 21 he spoke before a group of Mexican industrialists, and appealed to them to consolidate an alliance for economic growth between the public and private sectors. “There are economic pressures against Mexico,” he told the businessmen, “and we have to defend ourselves because we can in no way stop growing.”

These economic pressures are all converging around the July 1982 presidential elections, which is when the Atalaya conspirators hope to achieve real political instability inside Mexico, possibly by forcing a sizeable devaluation of the peso. “Hurricane winds” have been seeded across the country, recently reported a widely read column in the Mexico City press; the reference was to the moves to shatter the ruling PRI party being carried out by the left and right opposition parties, and by complicit elements within the PRI itself.

If the Atalaya conspirators get their way, it will be a “hot summer” indeed in Mexico this year.

BACKGROUND

The roots of the Atalaya conspiracy

by Hector Apolar

The origins of the Atalaya meetings go back to the 1960s when Banamex’s head, Agustín Legorreta Chauvet held extensive discussions with Herman Kahn’s Hudson Institute in the United States. Out of that collaboration came Legorreta’s idea that Mexican businessmen have been made to understand that the era of “business is just business” is over. Kahn advised Legorreta to establish a kind of “round table” to address the issue. After consulting with the heads of the most powerful economic groups in Mexico, Legorreta went forward with his idea.

In 1974, Banamex organized an international meeting on “Perspectives of Humanity,” whose stated purpose was to publicize the anti-growth theories of the Club of Rome. The main speakers were: Herman Kahn; Antonio Carillo Flores, former Mexican Foreign and Finance Minister and head of the United Nations-initiated Population Council; Victor L. Urquidi, the only Mexican member of the Club of Rome and head of the liberal think tank, Colegio de México; international Jesuit monetarist Robert Triffin; Raul Prebisch; Walter Rostow; and Jorge Castañeda, Mexico’s current Foreign Minister. The conclusion of the meeting was rather crude: Mexico has to stop its population growth.

In 1979, after a period of reorganization, Legorreta institutionalized his idea in the form of a series of meetings called Atalaya. A committee of the 20 top businessmen of the country was established, and in 1979 they organized an “International Food Conference.”

The main speakers in 1979 were: Julián Rodríguez Adame, former Agriculture Minister of Mexico and International Secretary for Agrarian Development of the Rockefeller Foundation; Mahabub ul Haq, the Pakistani World Bank and Cambridge University “radical”; Manuel J. Clouthier of Mexico’s Businessmen Coordinating Council and others. The conclusion of this meeting was that Mexico lacked the capacity to feed its population.

In 1980, the Atalaya meeting focused on the “Future of Capitalism,” and in 1981 discussion was centered around the need for Friedmanite solutions to Mexico’s various economic problems.