

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

'Plan Bravo' and the press

The KGB and Cuba's DGI have been up to some funny tricks on the Mexican press scene.

As many people know, the KGB and the Cuban intelligence agency, the DGI, call many shots in the Mexican press. This arrangement has been tolerated by the Mexican government, which has its own methods of control in the press and views the resulting "shared assets" as a way of confining Mexico's leftists.

However, when the Ministry of Government began to crack down on some of the KGB/DGI apparatus this fall, the Cubans decided to play rough themselves. The result is upheaval throughout the left press. Mexican security specialists are now looking, in a coordinated way, at the question of Plan Bravo (the 1980 Cuban plan for disruption, sabotage, and other assaults against the Reagan administration, a 180-degree reversal of Cuban overtures to the Carter administration under the preceding Plan Alpha), the Cuban moves vis-à-vis the Mexican press, and Castro's speech Jan. 2, on the 25th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

The first scene of battle was *Unomásuno*, the left daily. When the de la Madrid government took office a year ago, successful efforts were made to pull *Unomásuno* out of the KGB/DGI intelligence orbit. Cuba's response: During the last week of November, four of the paper's top editors and writers, led by a KGB-linked ex-Jesuit named Miguel Angel Granados Chapa and top Communist Party (PSUM) ideologue Humberto Musachio, resigned. Fifty-one other editors

and writers promptly joined them. Fernando Benítez, one of Mexico's best-known "Indianologists" and historians, who has spent most of his time in recent years creating the conditions for an Iranization of Mexico, lasted only another three weeks.

A similar process occurred at *Por Esto!*, a left magazine established in 1980 as a joint operation of the DGI and forces monitoring the left for the Mexican government. For some time *Por Esto!* specialized in "behind-the-lines" reports from guerrilla forces in Central and South America, provided to the magazine courtesy of Cuban intelligence stringers.

But in mid-1983, as the Mexican government gained more control over the magazine at the expense of the KGB/DGI element, the Cubans pulled another tantrum. *Por Esto!* failed to publish a number of issues and then returned to the stands with a new look: no more special reports from the Cuban intelligence stringers. About the same time Granados Chapa of the *Unomásuno* fight, who certainly was in a position to know what the Cubans were thinking, pronounced the death sentence: "Sources in the Cuban embassy are unhappy" with *Por Esto!*'s evolution, he declared to the press.

The two publications which are moving in to take up some of the slack on behalf of the KGB/DGI apparatus are the daily *El Día*, and the weekly *Proceso*. *El Día* now has the largest flow of international information of

any paper on the Mexican scene. A specialty of the house is news of the left in the rest of Ibero-America—provided courtesy of Cuban/Social Democrat channels—and of the East bloc, provided by Novosti press service and a stable of Soviet "commentators."

El Día is also suspected of receiving money from Libya's Qaddafi. It gave wholehearted support to Qaddafi's invasion of Chad, and declared "neutrality" on the PLO issue when Qaddafi and his assets attempted to eliminate the Arafat faction.

The other beneficiary is *Proceso* magazine, established in 1976 as Mexico's muckraking left newsweekly. Editor Julio Scherer García, a Jesuit-trained Christian Democrat who has never been choosy about the intelligence agencies he works with, has kept the weekly afloat with long-contract revenue from full-color advertisements for Cuban airlines, hotels, and rum.

In fact, Cuban (and Soviet Aero-flot and vodka) ads remain the core of the advertising for *Por Esto!*, *El Día*, and *Proceso*, doubtless with greater clout in each case because of a withdrawal of Mexican government advertising.

The Cuban element is involved in yet another press scandal: that of the prestigious daily *Excelsior*. Eighteen top reporters and staff were purged by editor Regino Díaz Redondo in order to keep his own deals, including some with the DGI, in place. This takes on special significance because of Díaz's ties to one of the most powerful figures in government, Education Minister Jesús Reyes Heróles.

What would Reyes Heróles be protecting? His protégé, Rodolfo Echeverría Ruiz, might know. Echeverría Ruiz (who has broken with his uncle, former president Luis Echeverría Álvarez) is Mexico's ambassador to Cuba.