

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Cota Meza

'Free trade'—for the oil multitis

The U.S. free trade pact negotiators are telling Mexico: you can keep your Constitution, but give us your oil!

This time there is no doubt as to what Trade Secretary Jaime Serra Puche said. Everyone clearly heard him say that Mexico's oil will *not* be included in the Trilateral Free Trade Pact currently under negotiation with the United States and Canada. The only problem is, no one seems to be taking him seriously.

In fact, all of the U.S. trade negotiators, each and every one an agent of the multinational oil companies, continue to arrogantly beat their fists on the negotiating table and demand, "We Want Oil!" Their arrogance, of course, is born of the Bush government's infamous gunboat diplomacy now very much on display in the oil center of the world: the Middle East.

To the United States, the highly-touted Free Trade Pact means getting its hands on Mexico's oil, plain and simple. As far as the U.S. negotiators are concerned, there is nothing else that Mexico can offer. And Mexico's protestations have all the credibility of the weakling trying to protect his lunch money from the neighborhood bully. Serra Puche told the first semi-formal meeting of representatives from Mexico, the U.S., and Canada gathered Feb. 15 in Acapulco that "the Constitution imposes clear restrictions on the negotiation of oil in any forum, and those restrictions will not change." But, as they say here in Mexico, what the dog barks and what the master says are two different things.

For example, U.S. Special Trade Representative Carla A. Hills returned from Acapulco to address an audience of the House Ways and Means Committee in Washington,

where she asserted that "our position is that, with the exception of large-scale immigration, nothing, *absolutely nothing*, has been excluded from the negotiating table. . . . We expect that there will be considerable resistance in this regard, on Mexico's part, due to impediments posed by the Mexican Constitution."

Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher, a member of the Texas oil dynasty, together with President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker, addressed a meeting of border-state governors, held in Hermosillo, Sonora, at which he declared "there are problems and disagreements . . . [but] I don't think they will be sufficiently serious to frustrate the plan."

And U.S. Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter stressed that his government wanted Mexico to "put everything on the negotiating table, with no exceptions . . . because if something is excluded, we cannot achieve our objective of equality and free trade."

It goes without question that the "mother of all battles" for Mexico will center around its oil. This was made clear by Henry Kissinger during his recent visit to Mexico, where he attended the Feb. 15 Acapulco meeting as an "observer." Oil, Kissinger publicly asserted, "will be a problem, it is true . . . but there are many ways in which we could reach a deal without having to change the Constitution." In other words, said Kissinger, you keep your Constitution, we just want your oil.

Carla Hills has been a member, since 1977, of the advisory board of

Chevron, one of the "Seven Sisters," and to judge from its reported 1988 income of \$29 billion, one of the largest of the U.S. "sisters." Hills left her multi-million dollar job in 1988 to become George Bush's favorite strong-arm "diplomat" in trade affairs.

In 1984, Chevron acquired the fifth largest U.S. oil company, Gulf Oil of Pittsburgh, and all of its production in Angola. Despite the civil war in that country, Chevron continued its production unimpeded, thanks to an agreement with the Dos Santos government whereby Cuban troops protected its oil installations against sabotage by guerrilla forces. Chevron is also a leading participant in developing the oil resources of Red China.

Carla Hills sat on Chevron's advisory board with one S. Bruce Smart who, like her, moved on to join the government. Smart became undersecretary of international trade for the Commerce Department headed by Robert Mosbacher. Also on Chevron's advisory board is former Secretary of State George Shultz, Boeing company director George H. Weyerhaeuser, and former Bank of America president and Merrill Lynch officer Samuel A. Armacost. Both Bank of America and Merrill Lynch are creditors of Mexico. The current head of Chevron, Kenneth Derr, is also a director of Citicorp, another Mexico creditor.

Chevron, like Exxon, Mobil, Texaco, and British Petroleum, are the orchestrators of the war for oil in the Persian Gulf. Following World War II, one of the historic achievements of these "sisters" was to define their own interests in the Near East, and especially in Saudi Arabia, as a "strategic interest" of the United States. The oil multitis have since carried out coups d'état, murdered kings, and unleashed wars, all in Washington's "strategic interest."