

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

Party for sale: \$25 million a share

Salinas's efforts to sell the PRI to the country's shadier billionaires has triggered a national scandal.

At the beginning of the year, Government Secretary Patrocinio González Garrido expressed his government's concern over the links of certain political parties with the drug trade, and announced plans to investigate their sources of funding. But González, a member of the ruling PRI party, made no reference to the PRI itself. He should have.

On Feb. 26, the daily *El Economista*, owned by Bank of Mexico director Miguel Mancera Aguayo, reported that President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had attended a secret meeting, flanked by his uncle, Antonio Ortiz Mena—ex-president of the Inter-American Development Bank, and intellectual chief of the monetarist mafia that has taken possession of the country since 1983—as well as by PRI president Genaro Borrego. At that meeting, Salinas asked a group of prominent “businessmen” for their support for the 1994 presidential campaign, at the price of \$25 million per head.

On March 8, the magazine *Proceso* published the names and business affairs of 25 of these “businessmen,” the country's wealthiest and the principal beneficiaries of the auction of state-sector businesses in the last ten years.

Heading the list was Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, owner of the Televisa media consortium known for its defense of drug legalization. Known popularly as the “Cathedral of Satanism,” Televisa specializes in soap operas and programs in which Satanism, Dracula, drug traffickers, and prostitutes like Madonna are the stars.

Recently, Azcárraga explained his approach in an interview, stating that “Mexico is a country whose lower class is screwed-up, and is going to stay that way. We take these people out of their sad reality.” Azcárraga's late first cousin Gastón Azcárraga was reportedly an accomplice of drug trafficker and assassin Rafael Caro Quintero.

Such is the fame of Azcárraga that even his friend Juan Sánchez Navarro, owner of the Corona Brewery, told the March 8 issue of *Proceso* that Azcárraga “is a man outside of what is considered the paradigm of a businessman. . . . His mentality [is] rather low on the moral, intellectual order. . . . [His business is] an instrument that doesn't lend itself to society's well-being. And that is why Televisa is the way it is.”

Listed by *Forbes* magazine as the richest man in Ibero-America, Azcárraga was not shy in telling the President: “I have made so much money over the years, that I commit myself to giving an even larger amount.”

Also attending the meeting was Carlos Slim, a principal beneficiary of the state-sector privatizations carried out by Salinas, including Teléfonos de México and Banamex, which Slim acquired together with Roberto Hernández (reportedly as frontmen for President Salinas). Slim is second on *Forbes*'s list of the richest people in Ibero-America, and his interests are closely tied to those of Carlos Hank González, currently secretary of agriculture, and top head of Masonry in Mexico, by means of which he con-

trols a good portion of the country's political spectrum, within and without the PRI. Spokesmen for Hank González, through the magazine he owns, *Siempre!*, have often come out in favor of drug legalization.

Manuel Espinosa Iglesias was another invitee to the secret meeting, and is known not only for his fanatical adherence to the pro-drug monetarist doctrine of Milton Friedman, but also because his Banco de Comercio (before it was nationalized in 1982 by President José López Portillo) was the preferred bank of “El Negro” Durazo, a prominent drug trafficker who is now in jail.

To complete the circle, there was Miguel Alemán, Jr., son of President Miguel Alemán (1946-42) and famous for his close ties to the Hollywood mafia, Meyer Lansky, and the tourism empire of Acapulco. The younger Alemán attended the meeting as the PRI's secretary of finance.

The net result of what is now a national scandal—besides the immediate beneficiary, the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who has already asked that the PRI's registration be cancelled because it is financed by foreign interests—is the weakening of PRI President Genaro Borrego, who was unconditionally placed in the post by Salinas in order to ensure the nomination of the PRI's candidate for President in 1994. The ultimate beneficiary is Carlos Hank González who, through his leadership of Mexican Masonry, is the *zoon politicon* (political animal) of Mexico's narco-oligarchy. Hank, who likes to present himself as sent by Providence to save Mexico from disintegration, cannot be President because he is the son of a German national, but he consoles himself by making himself indispensable to Mexico's invisible government.