

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### Televisa and presidential hopefuls

*The powerful Televisa empire is cleaning up its image, in hope of choosing the next President.*

**T**he most powerful radio and television chain in Mexico, also owner of Spanish International Network, the largest Spanish-language television chain in the United States, Televisa, has just undergone some drastic changes by "exiling" its president, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, to the United States. In his place was named Miguel Alemán Velasco, the son of Mexico's President from the 1940s, Miguel Alemán Váldes.

The significance of the change lies in the fact that Emilio Azcárraga over the years had accrued enormous political power in the country, power that no President has been able to limit. Televisa is the country's leading opinion-maker, and as such is considered more powerful than the ruling PRI party itself. The television chain has the largest number of viewers in the country. Azcárraga was in a position to determine the rise or fall of politicians, governors, political parties, and cultural figures. If he decided to discredit someone from the public or private sector, that person was finished. The bestial despotism of Azcárraga was not limited to sinking careers. A promoter of pornography, banality, drugs, and alcohol, Azcárraga was the number-one threat to Mexican security.

His association with organized-crime figures like Arturo Durazo Moreno, one of Mexico's most important drug traffickers, and Manuel Espinosa Yglesias, former president of Mexico's largest private bank, Banco de

Comercio, had earned Azcárraga the reputation of being organized crime's highest official.

Televisa was founded in the 1930s as a radio chain. Station XEW was known then as "The Voice of Latin America," for its influence not only in Mexico but throughout the Spanish-speaking continent. The company was originally founded by RCA Victor and National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

In the '30s, Televisa head Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta received the backing of NBC through New York's Alfred Cleveland Bloomfield, representative of the U.S. mafia chieftain at the time, Arnold Rothstein. Bloomfield controlled or had contacts with the major casino owners of the United States, all of whom sent their stars to Mexico to support the business deals of the old Azcárraga Vidaurreta. In New York City alone, Bloomfield controlled more than 200 movie and drama theaters. He was also Gloria Vanderbilt's lover, whose family was tied to the Morgan dynasty.

Bloomfield arrived in Mexico at the end of the '30s and created an empire of movie theaters, casinos, hotels, and drug dealing. It was in this period that he linked his fortunes to Azcárraga and to the business group around Miguel Alemán, Sr. Bloomfield turned Acapulco into a "world class" tourist center, with the backing of Alemán—who became known thereafter as "Mr. Acapulco." Bloomfield was also the protector of Virginia

Hill, the "ambassador" of Ben "Bugsy" Siegel, who thus established his "Mexican connection" in the drug world. It was through that connection—which also involved the Nazi-loving Errol Flynn—that many illegal fortunes of those now known as "leading free enterprise entrepreneurs" were made.

Azcárraga's departure from the chairmanship of Televisa does not mean that the policy of the empire is going to change. His dismissal is what is known in the business as a "facelift." Azcárraga's highly controversial image was not exactly what the interests behind Televisa wanted to project, as Mexico enters into the process of selecting its next President.

The naming of Miguel Alemán Velasco to the throne of Televisa, means that the families which hold the real power in Mexico have decided to employ the power of the Alemán political network in a deliberate bid for the presidency. The preference of Alemán is well known: Manuel Bartlett Díaz, Mexico's interior minister. The relationship between the two is close and goes way back. Bartlett is a political creation of Mario Moya Palencia, interior minister during the 1970-76 period, who was also the presidential candidate of the Alemán group at that time. But due to the opposition of then-President Luis Echeverría, Moya's aspirations were nipped in the bud—the reason, by the way, for the filthy campaign of villification run against Echeverría by the press, radio and television stations under Televisa's control.

Curiously, Charles Pilliod, the new U.S. ambassador in Mexico and former president of Goodyear Tire and Rubber (Goodyear Oxo in Mexico), is a friend of Romulo O'Farril, president of the Administrative Council of Televisa and the authorized distributor of Goodyear Oxo.