

## Congressmen seek to lift ban on book

*Issued in Caracas, Venezuela on Oct. 2, 1991:*

We, the undersigned, Senators and Representatives of the Republic of Venezuela, in our capacity as representatives of the popular will, through the present communication express our allegiance to the National Constitution and our commitment to defend the rights of all Venezuelans, especially that of freedom of expression, specified in Article 66 of the Constitution in the following terms:

"Everyone has the right to express his views either orally or in writing, and, in so doing, to make use of any media, with prior censorship being prohibited. . . ."

Based on this constitutional precept, as well as on the mandate of our own conscience, we proclaim our most energetic opposition to the existence of censorship or any kind of prohibition of any book or publication.

It has recently come to public attention that, on February 15, 1985, and by order of the Civil Court of the Fourth Circuit, a book called *Narcotráfico, SA* was prohibited from freely circulating. Because of the aforementioned, and independently of the concepts presented in that book, we call upon the appropriate authorities, and especially upon the Judicial Branch, to correct that irregular and unconstitutional action, which, by any lights, is prejudicial to free speech in Venezuela.

Signed:

Rafael Montes de Oca (Copei)

Rafael Tudela (Independent)

Gabriel Niño (Independent)

Casto Gil Rivera (MEP)

Rafael Guerra Ramos (MAS)

Héctor Collins (Independent)

Aristóbulo Istúriz (Causa R)

Ricardo Gutiérrez (PCV)

Pedro Escarrá (MIN)

Luis Manuel Esculpi (MAS)

Héctor Pérez Marcano (MAS)

Jesús Valderrama (Independent)

Alexis Ortiz (Independent)

Pablo Medina (Causa R)

César Pérez Vivas (Copei)

Luis Hernández (Independent)

Rodrigo Cabeza (MAS)

Jorge Leon Díaz (Independent)

*Party affiliations listed for purposes of identification only.*

Tinoco hired Ugarte to work for him at Tinoco's private bank, Banco Latino.

In his television appearances, the PLV's Peña, noting that Tinoco had also been cited in *Narcotráfico SA*, called for an investigation into Tinoco's enormous power over Venezuelan finances. Tinoco serves as chief executive of the Latino financial group, representative of Chase Manhattan, Central Bank chief, and Venezuela's chief debt negotiator, all at once, Peña noted. He is buying up banks on Venezuela's borders with Colombia, and promoting a financial reform that will lead to Venezuela becoming a narco-economy. Many foreign banks, including Tinoco's Chase, which have been investigated in the U.S. for drug money-laundering, are planning to take advantage of this situation, and are grounds for suspending the financial reforms, Peña stated.

He further called for an investigation into the funds which are being used to buy up the basic state-owned industries of the country, since "it is not a secret that interests tied to the drug trade are interested in colonizing and monopolizing the Venezuelan economy, and they could very well use the so-called process of privatizations to do so."

On Oct. 1, the editorial of the Sunday edition of the widely read *Diario de Caracas* tore into the Pérez government's foreign debt refinancing concluded earlier this year as one more "fraud," not only from the standpoint of the debt being illegally contracted, but also due to "the prejudice to the country that could have been caused by the fact that Pedro Tinoco was the negotiator with the foreign banks." Citing Peña's charges, *Diario de Caracas* noted that Tinoco's role in the debt negotiations was more complicated than Ugarte's three identities; Tinoco wore four hats: "president of the Venezuelan Central Bank, negotiator of the foreign debt, head of one of the most important financial groups in the country, and adviser to Chase Manhattan Bank (the bank that presided over the creditor banks' steering committee)." This poses a clear conflict of interest "whose implications must be clarified and quantified before the nation," *Diario de Caracas* concluded.

The same day, the daily *El Nacional* gave Tinoco a full page to promote his projects. He pumped his financial reform, calling it helpful to Venezuela because by bringing in "the good banks, the solid international banks," Venezuela could "transform itself into an important regional financial center." We should furthermore move towards privatizing our oil industry, he added.

Tinoco has not limited himself to interviews to defend himself. Peña has been "harassed because of his denunciations," *Diario de Caracas* reported Sept. 28. Strangers have driven ostentatiously past his home several times in an all-terrain vehicle with tinted windows, and taken pictures of his wife and apartment, the paper noted. To make sure Peña understood the surveillance was a threat, the same drivers later came back to deliver an old quarterly report from Tinoco's Banco Latino.