

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Whither De la Madrid?

Two opposed camps are battling to shape the economic policy of the Mexican presidential candidate.

The dust raised here last month by the intricate maneuvering leading to the unveiling of Miguel de la Madrid as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional's presidential candidate for 1982, has not settled yet. The country's various political machines are jockeying for positions in De la Madrid's first cabinet—whose selection is still over a year away!

But the byzantine maneuvering is beginning to give way to a more substantive debate between two major factions over the kind of *program* De la Madrid should carry out during his 1982-1988 term.

Mexico's largest and most powerful trade union grouping, the CTM, and Industry Minister José Andres de Oteyza, are emerging as the loosely allied leading forces of an effort by the country's nationalist layers to guarantee continuity with López Portillo's pro-growth policies.

On the other side of the fence, zero-growth circles working out of key political institutions such as the Institute of Economic, Political and Social Studies (IEPES)—the PRI's policy-making think tank—are aggressively calling on the candidate to place economic growth on the back burner, and instead focus its efforts on reducing Mexico's high population growth rate.

This month, the IEPES issued its official Program of Government, calling for a "real national persuasion" campaign to convince

Mexicans that a slower population growth rate would allow all Mexicans a better life. Aware of the suspicion that such Malthusian proposals arouse among nationalist elements here, the IEPES authors argued for "confronting those ideological conceptions which disqualify all population policies by associating them with the imperialist dogma of 'overpopulation.'"

It is still too early for me to tell you just who is behind the IEPES report, and to what extent it will influence De la Madrid's thinking. Nonetheless, some close allies of President López Portillo I talked with are concerned over the earlier role of Manuel Bartlett, now De la Madrid's electoral campaign director, in the introduction of population control policies in Mexico in the early 1970s. Bartlett at the time was head of the Office of Government under Interior Minister Mario Moya Palencia, and helped Moya design a highly controversial campaign promoting population reduction and other Malthusian proposals, under the slogan "Vamos haciendo menos" ("Let's make ourselves less").

I must say that I share many nationalists' distrust of these policies as "imperialist." I have well-documented proof (which I will make available to my readers at a future date) that U.S. Malthusian organizations such as the Washington-based Population Institute have worked with the Mexican pri-

vate TV broadcasting firm, Televisa, in a media campaign promoting population reduction in Mexico. Televisa is politically controlled by the Miguel Alemán interests—who are Moya's major sponsors.

The IEPES program is not the only game in town. The CTM labor federation has issued its own Program of Government focused on industrialization, and which explicitly rejects Malthusian arguments which glorify ruralization. "The radical transformation of Mexico," argues the CTM, "must be based on a process which is eminently urban industrial." Fidel Velásquez, the powerful head of the labor group, has also made arrangements to secure labor's input into De la Madrid's camp, by announcing this week that he will personally oversee labor's integration into the electoral campaign.

Industry Minister de Oteyza is also playing an important role in campaigning for a continuation of López Portillo's pro-growth policies. In an Oct. 10 meeting of the Chamber of Manufacturing Industries (Canacintra), de Oteyza warned that "a country with great needs and with a high demographic growth rate like Mexico does not have the luxury of stopping its economic growth."

De Oteyza, one of the pillars of the López Portillo government's pro-industrial policies, is known to be personally close to De la Madrid. Rumors in this capital are that he and José Ramón López Portillo, the president's son, who is Vice Minister of Budget and Planning under De la Madrid, will both play key roles in guaranteeing policy continuity—probably by holding ranking cabinet posts in the next government.