

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### A De la Madrid card?

*On the eve of the Reagan-de la Madrid meeting, some illusions are dashed about monetarist leverage over the President-elect.*

**F**oreign journalists and other analysts who have glibly been assuring international readers that Mexican President-elect Miguel de la Madrid is opposed to the emergency economic package announced by López Portillo Sept. 1, and will promptly reverse that package when inaugurated Dec. 1, are now shown to have been whistling in the wind. An attempt by the new President to reverse López Portillo's directives has always been doubtful because of the "carry-forward" effects of the mass mobilization behind the new measures; now de la Madrid himself has quashed such wishful thinking.

On Sept. 21, López Portillo sent a bill to Congress which would incorporate the Sept. 1 bank nationalization as part of the constitution. The bill is certain to pass, and will make reversing the nationalization by any ordinary means almost impossible.

The next day de la Madrid broke his three-week silence on the specific Sept. 1 measures. Summoning the press to his office, he called the decision to incorporate the nationalization in the constitution "a vital advance . . . patriotic and revolutionary." The nationalization "will thus remain as one more step in the irreversible advance of the Mexican Revolution," he stressed.

He went further. He justified the nationalization as necessary "to strengthen the Mexican state as the determiner of national development." Echoing the dirigistic mandate of the Mexican constitution activated by López Portillo, the future Mexican Pres-

ident stated the bank takeover "will permit running the nationalized banking system with more fidelity to the purposes of political economy as decided by the federal government in the nation's interest. . . . [It] will help channel savings adequately to the priority areas of national development. . . ."

De la Madrid clearly timed his statements for international effect. The week before he had met with Reagan envoy William Clark for half an hour, during Clark's fact-finding trip to Mexico at the time of the traditional Sept. 15 Independence Day celebration. Some U.S. press drew the conclusion, from the fact that Clark reportedly spent only 25 minutes with López Portillo, that the United States was making a successful end-run around López Portillo by shifting official channels to the President-elect prematurely.

The Oct. 8 meeting in San Diego between Reagan and de la Madrid was almost certainly arranged during the Clark tour, but in the environment created by de la Madrid's unequivocal Sept. 22 remarks, and López Portillo's United Nations address Oct. 1, the meeting is hardly a wedge against Mexico's renewed drive to guarantee its economic sovereignty and development.

This is not all that surprising. Though there is little evidence that de la Madrid was involved in drawing up the decrees, he gave indications of his backing from the first.

On Sept. 3, at the giant support

rally of over one million in the Zócalo of Mexico City, the President-elect was one of just four people occupying the speakers' balcony with López Portillo. The others were CTM labor chief Fidel Velásquez, PRI party president Pedro Ojeda Paullada, and Defense Minister Felix Galván López.

At the time, he issued the following statement: "President López Portillo firmly commands the rudder in the midst of the storm until the last days of his term. He keeps alive the Mexican Revolution and the powers of the Republic. I reiterate to him today my political solidarity and my personal affection."

A well-informed columnist reports that a delegation of hot-headed bankers and banker-linked businessmen attempted to see de la Madrid immediately after López Portillo's Sept. 1 bombshell. They were turned away, and only later got an audience after first having met with López Portillo.

How much does Washington want to play a de la Madrid card? There is no question the State Department is gung-ho.

The White House signals are less clear. During his Mexico trip Clark agreed to meet for breakfast with a group of Mexican and U.S. businessmen, many of them bitter critics of the Sept. 1 measures. The meeting could not have been pleasing to the Mexican government. Likewise the short shrift given to personal discussions with López Portillo.

However, sources in Washington report that Clark's conclusion on his return, was more that Mexico's measures were emergency actions forced in part by factors outside the government's control, than a deliberate "socializing tendency" unfriendly to the administration's free enterprise economic postulates.