

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Bhutto treatment for López Portillo?

British Intelligence circles want to see the former President's pro-growth "sins" punished.

"It would be extremely gratifying and just if the federal Attorney General were to launch an investigation into the illegal fortunes accumulated by officials of the previous administration," declared an op editorial in yesterday's edition of the Mexico City daily, *El Heraldo*. The principal target of such investigation, the article made clear, should be former Mexican president José López Portillo.

The *El Heraldo* column is just the latest volley in a media bombardment of the former Mexican President, designed to deflect Mexicans' growing rage over their drastically lowered living standards from the International Monetary Fund, onto a convenient scapegoat.

The virulence of these attacks vividly reminds me of President Ali Bhutto of Pakistan who, under similarly phony charges of "corruption," was tried and hanged in 1979 by the military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq. Henry Kissinger's famous threat that he would make a "horrible example" of the stubbornly pro-growth Bhutto now haunts López Portillo.

On December 8, the daily *Novedades* asserted that "a President who takes his country to such a disaster deserves a trial." Among López Portillo's "crimes," *Novedades* listed the President's last-minute measures, decreed Sept. 1, Mexico to defend economic sovereignty through the imposition of exchange controls and the nationalization of the usurious private banks. Asking readers "how is he going to pay?" the *Novedades* edito-

rial suggested options for a variety of attacks on the President, ranging from a trial, to physical assaults, to harassment of his family.

As readers of this column might remember, *Novedades* is partially owned by former President Miguel Alemán, Henry Kissinger's closest ally in this country.

But these calls for López Portillo's head are no more than "native" regurgitations of a worldwide propaganda campaign born out of British intelligence circles to portray López Portillo as a corrupt leader who in his greed for wealth and power brought only misery to his people.

A good example is the Dec. 20 issue of *Time* magazine which asserts that "to many Mexicans, the previous regime's corruption is best symbolized by 'Dog Hill,' an Olympian, 32.5 acre complex high above the Mexico City smog line, where López Portillo has built palatial homes for himself and his children."

While Kissinger denounced Bhutto for wanting to build a national Pakistani nuclear industry, *Time* can't pardon López Portillo for his "grandiose development schemes, including a national system of support for basic agriculture and a plan to build 20 nuclear reactors."

Time's phrase reads like a poor English translation from the equally pro-British and anti-growth German magazine *Der Spiegel*, which in its Nov. 15 issue had asserted that "on an isolated hilltop, high above the acrid smog of Mexico City, he [López Por-

tillo] builds himself an Alcazar, a mighty fortress of red stone."

The story of López Portillo's "greed for mansions" had originally appeared here in Spanish in the magazine *Proceso*, which, as you might remember, ran a vociferous domestic campaign against the López Portillo administration's plans to use its oil revenues to industrialize.

The "academic" justification for this witch-hunt is a voluminous treatise on "corruption in the Third World" produced by the Philadelphia-based Wharton School of Economics. Authored by Russell Akoff, a sociologist trained in the London-based Tavistock Institute of psychological warfare, the study gives guidelines for directing national passions away from economic growth and onto so-called government corruption practices.

The image of a greedy President insensible to his people's plight is clearly aimed at diverting the Mexican population's anger over the present economic crisis away from the International Monetary Fund and other such monetarist agencies now demanding the dismantling of this country's industrial base. Totally absent from *Time* magazine and the *Der Spiegel* articles is mention of the mismanagement by New York-London-Basel banks and the IMF of the world economy.

A domestic version of this diversionary job was presented Jan. 3 by Federico Reyes Heróles, son of Education Minister Jesus Reyes Heróles and a columnist for the leftist daily *Uno mas Uno*. In his article, Reyes passionately defended the capital-flight specialists of the formerly private banks, whom López Portillo called traitors in motivating his Sept. 1 bank nationalization. Said Reyes of these bankers: "[They] indeed have many sins to their name, but not that of creating the crisis we are going through."