

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

Straws in the wind for 1982

Though the choice of successor for López Portillo is still a year off, the jockeying for position is well under way.

Close analysts of the political scene in this capital confirm the intensification of political maneuvering aimed at securing "inside track" toward the nomination to succeed José López Portillo as President of the Republic.

López Portillo's term ends Dec. 1, 1982, but the successor is traditionally selected in a process of intense intra-party consultation at least a year earlier. López Portillo, for instance, was *destapado*—unveiled—in late September 1975, 14 months before the end of Luis Echeverría's term.

Longtime observers of the Mexican political scene stress three important events of the last three weeks in particular.

The first of the events to set the internal corridors of *politica à la mexicana* buzzing was the July 30 speech of Defense Minister Gen. Félix Galván López.

Gen. Galván gave President López Portillo a pleasant surprise, speaking to the 7th Regional Meeting of the Chiefs of Military Zones, when he showed mastery of the thinking of such figures close to López Portillo's heart as Hegel and Machiavelli.

But more important were declarations such as this: "The concept of national security in the current time cannot be found, and perhaps never could be found, separated from the concept of justice, liberty and progress."

To some observers, Galván's

speech implied that he had entered the presidential sweepstakes. In fact, as far back as last March, the French weekly *Le Monde* had suggested that the next Mexican president might well be a military man.

Although this analysis is generally viewed as extreme, it is certainly the case that the Mexican armed forces have increased their political weight substantially under López Portillo, and are expected to have a growing political role as the constitutional defender of Mexican sovereignty as the country's oil wealth grows.

In a highly unusual formulation of praise, López Portillo responded that "I would have liked to have conceived and written the speech myself; it is made up of the most massive, complete, and structured foundation that I have ever heard."

The second development is the surprising frequency with which, in each government office, in the Chamber of Deputies, and in the private business sector, one comes across the rumor that López Portillo will announce the creation of an Energy Ministry in his fourth State of the Union address Sept. 1. There is no question that the person to get the new cabinet post—and thus enter the lists of the *presidenciables*—would be Pemex chief Jorge Díaz Serrano. A source linked to PEMEX told us that the announcement could come at the time a new PEMEX building is inaugurated in Mexico City shortly after the Presi-

dent's Sept. 1 speech.

Lastly, López Portillo designated Dr. Rosa Luz Alegría as the new Secretary of Tourism, replacing Guillermo Rossell de la Lama, who accepted the PRI party's nomination for governor of *Hidalgo*. Alegría, the first woman cabinet member in the history of Mexico, was formerly the Undersecretary for Evaluation in the Planning and Budget ministry, and is known to have enjoyed the President's complete confidence in that role. Her replacement in the key Evaluations post is none other than the president's son.

The appointment of Alegría did not so much bring a new figure into the presidential sweepstakes—she herself is not viewed as *presidenciable* at this point—it struck a blow against an old one.

Rumors had been rife that Mario Moya Palencia, Interior Minister under Echeverría and frontrunner to have succeeded him, would get the post and vault to a strong position for 1982.

The other, even greater, significance of the designation, is to have placed someone in the tourism post not controlled by former president Miguel Alemán, long-time czar of Mexico's extensive tourist industry. Alemán for a generation has used tourism—together with communications and real estate speculation—as the base for a powerful political machine heavily influencing presidential succession choices.

Alegría, who comes from the pro-industry wing of the PRI party, is expected to promote tourism as an adjunct to more fundamental development in the country and not a replacement for it, as Alemán has attempted to do.