

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

A new Henriquismo?

Javier García Paniagua could launch the first open effort in 30 years to split the ruling PRI party.

A new rumor with more real content than many is currently making the rounds of the public and private offices in the country: that a certain individual, until a few months ago a loyal member of the "revolutionary family" at the top of the governing PRI party, may run as an independent candidate for the presidency in this year's elections.

The man in question is none other than Javier García Paniagua, former director of the national security police, former Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, former President of the PRI, and former Labor Minister. García Paniagua had moved through these top posts in rapid succession in less than six years. He pushed hard for the top prize of all in the period just before Planning Minister De la Madrid got the nod instead as the PRI's presidential candidate last September. His frustrated ambitions, according to numerous sources, now represent fertile ground the PRI itself.

A number of political analysts are calling this a potential new Henriquista movement, referring to the candidacy of Gen. Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, who in 1952 attempted to fracture the PRI with an independent bid against the party's official choice. The Jacobin effort failed in its declared intention of "changing the course of the Mexican Revolution," but its "left" and "right" sponsors did mobilize some mass forces behind it, particu-

larly in the peasant sector.

Behind the 1952 operation was then-outgoing President Miguel Alemán. The situation has not changed today, it appears. The force maneuvering the García Paniagua card is reportedly the same circle of Alemán and his chief protégé, the mayor of Mexico City, Carlos Hank González.

My sources say the objective is a top-to-bottom restructuring of the Mexican system, to eliminate the kind of nationalist, pro-growth tendency which has come to the top of the PRI in key moments of its history and preserved the stability of Mexico.

As in the Henríquez case, a crazy-quilt of left and right forces is emerging behind the García Paniagua option. The Social Democratic Party (PSD), which is angling to become the official Socialist International affiliate in Mexico, put García Paniagua's name at the head of their list of 10 candidates under consideration as their presidential standard-bearer.

Simultaneously the ultra-right-wing *Impacto* magazine ran a prominent column Jan. 14 urging García Paniagua to make an independent bid. "None of the underdeveloped and subsidized opposition parties" can meet the challenges facing the country, wrote columnist Antonio Mendieta. "We believe that the solution must come from within the system, and a solution would be for García Paniagua to launch himself as an independent

presidential candidate. I do not know if that would fix up the problems of the country, but I can tell you that things would change—a lot."

García Paniagua first put together his media machine as president of the PRI from March 1981 to October 1981. During that time, I am told, he bought up a substantial chunk of the Mexican press, with money channeled through the PRI think tank, IEPES. The leftist *Uno Mas Uno* and *Proceso*, together with *Impacto* and a social-democratic wing of the PRI itself, have been in charge of propagandizing on behalf of García Paniagua. First it was as "the dark horse with a good shot at the presidency." Then, after September, it was as "the man loyal to the system who is getting a raw deal." Finally, after he left the PRI presidency and subsequently resigned the Labor Ministry post which he had been assigned but never attempted to fill, the same press issued a chorus of apologies for the man who "has been spurned by an ungrateful party hierarchy."

García Paniagua's own singular lack of political definition has aided him in his course, but his basic strength comes from factions in the military and the security forces who back him. His father, Gen. Marcelino Barragan, was one of the most important military figures of the 1950s and 1960s—and a Henriquista in 1952.

My sources are unanimous in telling me that the abrupt sacking of García Paniagua loyalist Miguel Nassar Haro as head of the Federal Security Police on Jan. 14 was a move by other government forces to neutralize precisely the threat represented by this facet of García Paniagua's apparatus.