

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Part I: The surprising PSD

Not social-democratic and hardly a party, its newly launched presidential campaign bears watching.

As I indicated to you in this space a few months ago, the Mexican Social Democrat Party (PSD) is a very strange political beast.

You may remember that I documented its origin in Monterrey Christian Democrat circles, and its close continuing ties to those circles, despite its evolution into one of the most important directing forces of both terrorism and environmentalism in the country under a "left" political coloration.

Now I present some important updates. At its presidential nominating convention Feb. 28, the PSD nominated 74-year-old former PRI party luminary Manuel Moreno Sánchez as its standard-bearer for the July 4 national elections.

It was not so surprising that the party chose someone from outside its own ranks. It has almost no membership of its own. The PSD had in fact published a long list of potential candidates, with all but one or two from outside the party.

However, the choice of Moreno Sánchez is significant. Moreno Sánchez rose in the PRI party in the late 1950s to the powerful post of head of the Senate, and retains to this day wide political recognition. The decision to nominate him means that the PSD has serious plans to split the PRI "from within." There are unconfirmed reports that the PSD is courting other PRI figures who lost out in the current round of nominations for congressional seats.

One of the PSD's models is the campaign waged by José Vasconcelos, former Education Minister, against the candidate of the fore-runner of the PRI party in 1929. Vasconcelos attempted to split the unity of the governing party with demagogic appeals to "clean out corruption."

Moreno Sánchez was an enthusiastic Vasconcelista at that time. On Feb. 28 he accepted the PSD nomination with an ugly attack on the morality of PRI presidential candidate Miguel de la Madrid.

On behalf of PSD masterminds Roberto Guajardo Suárez and the brothers Luís and Edmundo Sánchez Aquilar, Moreno Sánchez immediately pledged "a new kind of campaign," different from the PRI's direct contact with voters.

The statement implied use of the media and "polling" manipulation which is a hallmark of PSD activity. Under its previous name, Acción Comunitaria, the PSD formed a special subsidiary called the Mexican Institute of Public Opinion (IMOP) in 1975. IMOP in turn designed the media package for the Mexican Communist Party's 1976 electoral bid and published appropriate "polls" to bolster the PCM and discredit the PRI.

The PSD's expertise in this area came directly from close Guajardo Suárez associate Hermann von Bertrand, S.J., who is widely documented as the creator of Mexico's most lethal terrorist group of the

early 1970s, the 23rd of September League. Von Bertrand's teaching specialty is sociological techniques to measure "public opinion." To this day Guajardo, IMOP, and von Bertrand share offices in the same building in Mexico City.

From reliable sources, I have learned that the PSD plans to launch its presidential campaign on or around April 1 in the northwestern state of Sonora. The principal speaker, in addition to Moreno Sánchez, is scheduled to be Adip Sabag—the president of IMOP at its founding and subsequently the operation chief for the PSD's successful environmentalist campaign to prevent the construction of a nuclear training reactor complex at Lake Pátzcuaro in Michoacán state last year. Sabag's speech will be a vitriolic attack on the successor test reactor center now scheduled to be built in Sonora, I am told.

The PSD emerged in Monterrey during the sixties, first as a faction in the Mexican Employers' Confederation (Coparmex), then as the moving force of the Mexican Social Christian Movement (MSC) and the Social Union of Mexican Businessmen.

My associates in Europe are now tracing out the ties of this network into the European "Solidarist" groups, of both "left" and "right" tinctures. When a colleague of mine recently confronted PSD secretary-general Luís Sánchez Aquilar with all the "anomalous" features of PSD activity, he calmly brushed each aside—until my colleague raised the "solidarism" question. Sánchez Aquilar then hit the roof.

In Part II: The PSD's business consulting empire.