

Can U.S. relations with Mexico get worse?

In light of President Carter's commitment to a "European-style" campaign to bolster the dollar, it remains to be seen whether the Administration will go further and join the "Grand Design" policy for economic expansion in the advanced sector and the rapid industrial development of the Third World which is at the center of West German, French and Japanese global policy. Perhaps the best indicator of this in the weeks and months ahead will be U.S. relations with Mexico — the leading Third World participant in the Grand Design — which over the past two years have suffered from gross mismanagement at the hands of National Security Council director Zbigniew Brzezinski and Energy Department head James Schlesinger.

In fact, during the past week U.S.-Mexican relations sank to their lowest ebb in 50 years following the announcement by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of a plan to build special "impenetrable" fences along several key sections of the U.S.-Mexico border to stem the illegal immigration of Mexican workers into the United States. (The fence is modeled on those used in Vietnam, and is to be constructed of twelve feet of steel mesh with an underground cement base and a "razor-sharp steel grating," which according to its builder "could rip a bare foot to shreds.") While INS and State Department officials tried to play down the significance of the fence, observers including the *Washington Post* concurred that it was just the first step toward sealing the entire U.S.-Mexico border.

The sharp deterioration in relations provoked by the scheme was signaled in the unusually harsh terms used by Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo in responding to the fence-building plan. Referring repeatedly to the fence as "a discourtesy," Lopez Portillo denounced it as a "unilateral action. . . it is a discourteous and inconsiderate action." He concluded by stating that "I hope this discourtesy is not carried out, and if it is implemented, then it should be explained to us so that we in our own house can make our own decisions."

Observers here and in Mexico generally agree that the border-sealing plan is another in a series of "pressures" by the Brzezinski crew to secure strategic control over Mexico's vast oil resources. As outlined in last week's *Executive Intelligence Review*, the NSC is supervising the preparation of a Presidential Review Memorandum on relations with

Mexico which will focus on how to prevent, in the words of Brzezinski, the development of "another Japan south of the border." As outlined in the various think-tank reports which are feeding into the PRM, the border issue will be a key weapon to back up this policy.

However, as Lopez Portillo's statements made clear, Mexico has no intention of bending to this type of blackmail pressure. Because of this, the "soft-liners" around Senator Edward Kennedy involved in relations with Mexico have also stepped in. On the day after President Lopez Portillo's statements, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Patrick Lucey announced that the U.S. would postpone construction of the fence "to have time to analyze the matter."

The emergence of Lucey as the "liberal, friend of Mexico" follows the same approach taken fifty years ago by Ambassador Dwight Morrow who was sent to Mexico by British Morgan banking interests to subvert Mexico's national development efforts after the more violent attacks — including the threat of armed intervention — failed to reverse the progress brought about by the Mexican Revolution.

However, the so-called "soft-liners" this week made clear that while they prefer other means they have no major differences with Brzezinski's ends. This was reflected in an editorial in the *Washington Post* on Oct. 31 which rejected the "unnecessarily brutal" aspects of the new fences but fully agreed with the need to tighten the border.

Ironically, in the same week that U.S.-Mexico relations suffered a sharp downturn, President Lopez Portillo was signing major economic cooperation agreements with Japan based on the exchange of oil for capital goods and advanced technology — precisely the type of development relationship the U.S. has turned down in the past. In a statement which should be read carefully by foreign-policy makers in the U.S. at this juncture, Lopez Portillo stressed the need for approaching economic development from a global standpoint: "We must definitively abandon formulas of collective self-destruction and take on economic problems from a genuine global perspective. . . those countries such as Mexico which have energy must commercialize it from a universal and humanistic standpoint, but those which have technology must act in the same manner. Otherwise there will be no exchange."