

Cuba, Mexico heads of state meet

Energy, industrial development posed as the alternative to war

Mexican President José López Portillo and Cuban President Fidel Castro launched an historic organizing drive last week to pull the world back from the edge of nuclear war through the implementation of a sane energy policy which will "give content to the new world economic order." After two days of talks on the Mexican Caribbean island of Cozumel on May 17 and 18, Castro endorsed López Portillo's proposal to "make energy the responsibility of all mankind" and to "assure all countries access to technology and favorable financing to develop alternate energy sources."

Castro will advance that proposal at the Non-Aligned heads of state summit in Havana, Cuba next August, and López Portillo will present the plan to the United Nations General Assembly in September.

The Mexican President had discussed his ideas on a sane global energy policy with U.S. President Carter during his February visit to Mexico and called for a producer-consumer conference as an urgent war-avoidance measure. Carter claimed then that he would study the idea, but López Portillo's offer, which could destroy Energy Secretary Schlesinger's energy warfare against the U.S. population, was blacked out of the U.S. press by all but this news service.

The Mexican President made the same proposal the following week to French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing during Giscard's visit to the Mexican capital. Giscard endorsed the idea, presented it to the European Economic Community, and has since been organizing among the OPEC oil producing nations against energy anarchy and for strong international backing of the Mexican proposal.

During Giscard's February visit to Mexico, López Portillo spoke of the "apocalypse," the end of humanity through nuclear confrontation, if a sane global energy policy were not adopted. Since then Schlesinger and Defense Secretary Harold Brown have warned that they would use military means to "protect U.S. oil supplies," a statement widely interpreted in Mexico as a threat of invasion to secure Mexican oil as a U.S. "strategic

reserve." This and the Carter Administration's sabotage of expanded trade relations with Mexico with the explicit aim of crippling Mexico's ambitious industrial development plan have led Mexican government analysts to understand not only the grave danger of war, but also the danger of a fascist transformation in the U.S., should opposition to the current policies emanating from the Carter White House fail to halt these policies.

This is the context in which the Castro-López Portillo summit took place. The day before, a sweeping cabinet shuffle took place in Mexico which was seen as a strengthening of the government's capability for mobilizing forces internally, as well as internationally behind its increasingly aggressive foreign policy.

As the speeches and the joint communiqué excerpted below demonstrate, both Presidents determined to undercut the Cold War strategy coming out of London and Washington, by defining the real issues confronting the socialist and capitalist world alike: "peace and progress or war and misery," development and transfer of technology or genocide. Castro himself stated that ideological differences are not important since Cuba and Mexico are totally united in the essentials: the goal of the development of peoples, "our fundamental resource," through education and a rising standard of living.

Castro exposed the Carter Administration's human rights policy as hypocritical, describing the brutal genocide in such countries backed by the U.S. government as Nicaragua and Chile, and the genocidal nature of Carter's refusal to sell medicines to Cuba.

The Castro visit to Mexico, his first since he left his land of exile to return to Cuba 23 years ago, marked a consolidation of long-term efforts by both nations against fascism in Latin America. For over 20 years, the U.S.-imposed economic blockade against Cuba has been designed to isolate Cuba from the rest of Latin America. Mexico's call for an end to the blockade and López Portillo's determination to closely collaborate

History of Mexico-Cuba Relations

For the past two decades, Mexico has been the only country in Latin America to maintain normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, despite intense pressure from Washington. In 1962, Cuba was expelled from the Organization of American States at U.S. initiative, during the second Alliance for Progress meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Mexico did not support this move. Two years later, after intense political armtwisting and economic blackmail, the U.S. cracked the resistance of several key Latin American nations, such as Brazil, and forced through an OAS resolution mandating termination of all trade with Cuba. Mexico was the only country in Latin America to refuse to comply with this U.S.-authored economic blockade against Cuba. As Cuban President Castro noted last week while in Mexico, this is a simple fact which the Cuban people will never forget.

But Mexico's stance toward Cuba is not based on support for Cuba's socialist ideology. It is a product of a century-long Mexican foreign policy tradition, premised on strict adherence to the right of nations to self-determination; the principle of national sovereignty for all nations; and non-intervention in other nations' internal affairs (often referred to as the Estrada Doctrine).

This policy has earned Mexico a position of unparalleled respect throughout Latin America. After a century of consistent principled diplomacy, Latin American nations recognize that Mexico's is by no means a rhetorical stand, but a practical political question—as Mexico's relations with Cuba demonstrate.

Cuba shares this foreign policy perspective, as the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of Castro's visit makes clear.

with the Castro government on foreign policy offensives end two decades of containment.

Immediately following the summit, President José López Portillo met with Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo and demonstrated his commitment to take a strong stand against dictatorships. After a briefing by the Costa Rican President on the genocide being carried out against the Nicaraguan population by dictator Anastasio Somoza, López Portillo announced Mexico's break in diplomatic relations with that government. (Costa Rica broke relations with Nicaragua months ago when the Nicaraguan military attacked Costa Rican territory in its war against the opposition Sandinistas).

Beyond López Portillo's moral commitment against genocidal dictatorships in Central America, he pledged to fight against the anarchy of oil prices "which is being turned into a scourge ... for the developing countries that do not have oil." While backing the creation and existence of OPEC and promising never to be a "scab" against that organization, the Mexican President chastised OPEC for increasing the irrationality of the current world economy, and called again for all nations to take up the challenge of energy as the responsibility of all mankind to bring about a new world economic order.

—Robyn Quijano

'We did not come for Mexico's oil'

Arriving in Cozumel, Mexico on May 17, Fidel Castro described the purpose of his visit as follows.

...On hearing news of our meeting, some in the world have been speculating about my motives in visiting Mexico.... We did not come to ask for anything material from Mexico. We didn't come seeking Mexican oil nor Mexican gas—something very fashionable these days....

We come as friends; more than as friends, as brothers. In the first place to satisfy our desire to get to know personally, to greet and to converse with, your illustrious President; to bring our most friendly, most fraternal, greetings to the Mexican people; our solidarity. To work to broaden our relations and to develop our cooperation; to exchange impressions about the way we can work together for a new international economic order, for the interests and rights of the peoples of the so-called Third World; how we can struggle and work better for its development and for friendship, understanding and peace between peoples....

Oil 'the responsibility of all mankind'

At a luncheon given in his honor on May 17, Castro spoke of the scramble for oil supplies, and hailed Mexico's intent to use its oil supplies for development.

We congratulate you, Mr. President López Portillo, that you have clearly expressed that you don't intend to "see Mexico's petroleum developed as a function of U.S. oil needs," but rather as an instrument for the development of your own country. We hail that, distancing yourself from those who see their own oil from a perspective of egoistic privileges, you have maintained that oil be declared "the responsibility of all mankind," without this being contradictory to your decision to use it, at the same time, in the construction of your own country.

Many have had resources; few have known how to manage them prudently. Cuba gives its full support to Mexico's courageous, wise, and patriotic oil policy. It also supports the legitimate demands of the Mexican emigrants—the bitter and inevitable fruit of the mutilation of your national territory and the underdevelopment imposed in the past by the force, arrogance and domination of the United States—for a just, civilized, and humane treatment in that country....

Let us speak, Mr. President, about the historical events and political criteria which bring us together, regardless of whatever differences may exist between our two systems, whatever the difference in our ideologies. Latin America links us in a common concern and a similar focus when we accept the urgency of preserving and maintaining natural resources, suppressing the residues of colonialism, eliminating the equally historically outlawed tyrannical and neofascist regimes. And we proclaim the necessity of implanting in our lands democratic societies which can select for themselves the path of their future transformations....

'We must maintain justice and liberty'

López Portillo answered Castro with a historic speech bound to raise the hackles of Cuba's enemies. He defined the present social crisis in Mexico and outlined how Mexico's aggressive oil policy was needed to deal with the crisis.

Since our histories are marked by great similarities which bind us together, we visit each other periodically. And when this happens between two so inseparably linked brothers, it is a healthy custom to reflect upon our reciprocal past.... Mexico lived the first social revolution in Latin America, and perhaps in the world, in this century....

Our Revolution is a troubled one, Comandante Castro, a troubled revolution, necessarily immersed in a market economy; a revolution subject to historical and geographical factors which afflict and debase its values, now suffering in the world of economic disorder in which we are immersed.

Our revolution, Comandante Castro, is living through its most arduous trial in this decade of the 1970s. The revolution is troubled because the path of

liberty has ensnared justice. And that is the grave challenge to which this generation, which is the inheriting generation, must respond. We must unsnare justice and maintain liberty. An onerous challenge, when many of the most important decisions are made in tribunals, in centers which are alien, distant, sometimes hostile, and very frequently indifferent.

Our country now—and I'm not going to wear you out with details—is living a crisis which offers both a danger and an opportunity unprecedented in our history, if we figure out how to manage correctly our non-renewable resources, which in the present moment of world disorder have become not only a factor, but the factorum of peace and progress of war and misery.

Thus, among the themes we discussed in this morning's meeting, the fundamental element was the oil policy which Mexico desires to live, and not only live, but which Mexico dares to preach.

We have sought your sympathy for the ideas that energy resources are the responsibility of mankind, which has not figured out how to organize itself and in this very moment is on the edge of a cliff. We wish to pledge our possibilities, our potential, to give meaning and content to a new economic order which, although recognized among nations, remains a formal and empty framework which must be satisfied and filled out with specific commitments, starting with those we can assume regarding energy resources.

Thus, Mexico is proposing in every forum, in every contact—this is proper among brothers—the advantage of giving content to the new world economic order, with a clear position in regard to the ordering of the production, distribution and consumption of all alternative energy sources. So that—without distortions from irrational consumption or unilateral demands—a way can be found to organize them to the benefit of the world.

We have insisted on this and have talked about it maybe even too much, Comandante. But it is without a doubt one of the themes in which my country is deeply interested as a vehicle for achieving peace, harmony and progress.

I have found you to be understanding, and, I hope, supporting. It is a struggle of the developing countries, of the poor countries, cornered by the powerful ones, to establish rules ... for matters important to all.

Mexico: 'a bulwark for Latin America'

Speaking at a dinner held on May 17 Castro compared the Cuban and Mexican Revolutions.

...I think that there are many kindred elements, much affinity, between Mexicans and Cubans, between the Mexican Revolution and the Cuban Revolution. The first social revolution in this hemisphere was the Mexican, the first social revolution—as the President

said at noon today—in this century. The second social revolution—we call it the first socialist revolution—was the Cuban Revolution.

There is a reason to history; things don't happen in vain. We think that our common history, our common experience, unites us. There are differences, but the difference does not lie in the legitimacy, in the purity, nor in the power of our revolutions. The difference is in the historical moments, conditions and circumstances in which each of them occurred.

We have always been very interested in the Mexican Revolution; its experiences, its development, its ideas interest us today and will interest us tomorrow. We cannot forget that this Mexican Revolution was always a source of inspiration to Cuban revolutionaries and continues to be a source of very rich experience.

...In Mexico we see the president insisting on a number of ideas which deeply impress us. I'm going to cite as an example what he says about education:

He says that education is the basic investment, is the basic resource. And that is exactly how we conceive of education in our country. And we could subscribe to these words: the basic investment in the basic resource.

He has insistently stated other ideas which we entirely share. The idea that education and training are the way to make unequals equal, to create a real opportunity for the talent, the intelligence, and the vocation of every human being....

I said that Mexico has more natural resources than Italy, France, or Spain. Why can't Mexico—which in addition has an even more valuable resource—come to be a major industrial power in our world? ...I am convinced ... that Mexico will come to be one. It is not a simple question of faith; it is also a result of the history of Mexico, of what you have been able to do so far. And that for us is a banner, a bulwark, a bulwark for Latin America, and we know what bulwarks are, because we also are—or, we believe we are—a modest bulwark of the peoples of Latin America.

...If we inspect the rest of our America, I think that no other people is in better condition and more apt today to defend that bulwark....

Cuba: marvelous economic achievements

Lopez Portillo responded by pledging himself to replicate in Mexico what Castro has achieved in Cuba and to take a leading role in defending Latin American resources.

It is true that our Revolution was the first social revolution of this century.... But many years later we have to see reflected in the other revolution, your Revolution, a great part of our youth. We have to see ourselves in it and we have to see ourselves in what Cuba is doing and achieving, a prodigious combination of small quantities and immense quality, an important

leavening for this generation and for the century to come.

The memories, which by your prophetic voice were rendered important, of what we thought or said on some occasion puts me in a serious predicament. I have to measure the distance between what I thought, what I said, and what I have achieved. And the net result—I must recognize it—is not very positive. This brings me to an authentic, sincere anguish.

You have made marvelous achievements, but I have achieved little, very little, Comandante. But I can tell you, in the light of your sincerity, that I want to equate with yours my own capacity for service and for sacrifice to the cause of my country. And if, by some combination of circumstances, I cannot render good results, it will not be for lack of willingness, but rather for lack of opportunity and security in a world which makes us subject to conditions and limitations from which we cannot escape.

What could I add that you haven't already said about our goals? I could only say, following some of the precepts of our Constitution, that the nationalist effort of Mexico fundamentally consists of posing our own problems, trying to solve them with our own resources, and seeking our economic and social independence. And this simple, yet well-defined effort, in the context of our geographical circumstances, is the historic task before us.

And, in agreement with you, I am absolutely convinced that Mexico, a conscious bulwark of Latin America ... desires to fulfill its historic responsibility. And I am absolutely certain, after having heard it, that your voice is prophetic in presaging the destiny of our country; it will always be in fraternal friendship with the very affectionate Cuban people....

Castro: U.S.-Cuba relations 'perfectly bad'

Castro held a press conference on May 18, the end of his trip, at which he delivered a tough challenge to American policy in the Caribbean.

Q: *How are relations between the United States and Cuba? Are they better or worse with Carter? How do they stand?*

Castro: I would say they continue perfectly bad. Now, if you ask me if there's been anything new, I would say yes, although they continue perfectly bad in that the blockade is continued ... 100 percent....

Q: *(What about)...Cuba as an exporter of revolutions...?*

Castro: I lament that revolutions cannot be exported, because if they could be, we would solve our foreign exchange problems.

Q: *...You are accused of active interventions in the*

affairs of Nicaragua and also El Salvador. ...

Castro: There's nothing we need more than to be blamed for what's going on in Central America, in El Salvador, and in Nicaragua. Somoza accuses everybody of intervention. But in reality, the only one who reminds us of the interventionary path in Nicaragua is Somoza, because Somoza is the son of the North American intervention in Nicaragua. He is the net result of the intervention. The only real proof that there has been intervention in Central America is Somoza.

Do you think that they can go on killing thousands of people and "disappearing" an infinite number more? Do you think that they can loot a country for decades and the people will just cross their arms? How many hundreds of millions of dollars have the Somoza family pillaged in Nicaragua? Can people put up with that kind of situation forever? ... Sooner or later, and probably sooner rather than later, Somoza will be relegated to the garbage can of history.

Q: ...*What is your government's position in regard to the Guantanamo base and what are the practical residues of the blockade decreed in America against your country?*

Castro: ...The Guantanamo base remains; it is there by force against the will of our people... The blockade has done us plenty of harm economically; it hurts us. But it cannot achieve its objective of smashing the Cuban Revolution. I think that, on the contrary, the Revolution is more solid than ever and the blockade has failed. Sure, we were used as a "guinea pig."

Now the "empire" is a bit more careful, subtler. Now they don't resort to such direct blockades. I don't know if you know that the blockade includes not only food, but also medicine. You can't export even an aspirin from the U.S. to Cuba. That is, it is an implacable form of economic aggression which doesn't square at all with the "human rights" preachings of President Carter. Because if your molar hurts and they don't even let you take an aspirin to kill the pain, that is against human rights.

I'm talking about aspirins and toothaches, but could speak of much graver illnesses. You could speak of the lives of children, women, and old people which can be lost because you cannot get a specific medicine. And it seems to me that one of the most miserable and grotesque things you could do is deny a country even the right to obtain medicine. It's much more than a toothache.

So I ask myself: How can the famous preaching about human rights be reconciled with the policy of blockading Cuba?

Despite all, they blockade Cuba. They don't

blockade Somoza, nor Pinochet, nor Stroessner, nor any of those fauna. They blockade Cuba.

However, how many children out of each thousand born in Nicaragua die every year? How many children die in Chile, how many in Paraguay and other places? In Haiti how many die? I think they've lost count already and don't know whether it is 150 or 200 of each thousand during the first year on earth there in the land of "Papa Doc." However, how many die in Cuba, despite the blockade and despite the Yankees prohibiting the sale of medicine to Cuba? Last year, we reduced the figure which had been 60 before the Revolution, to 22.3, the lowest in all of Latin America. And life expectancy, which had been 58 years before the Revolution, now is 72 years. What do you think of that? Now we are at the level of Canada and the United States in life expectancy. And in infant mortality, we are at the level of the developed countries, despite the blockade and the U.S. sales prohibitions.

And why does the United States do that? Do they want people in Cuba to live fewer years? Do they want more children to die each year? What do they want with this? What do they want?

They don't blockade South Africa, for example; they don't blockade Rhodesia. Fascist governments, fascists who oppress millions of Africans. They blockade Cuba.

And what has all this accomplished? How is the Revolution doing? What country in this Hemisphere has better education indices than Cuba? And what country has better health indices, sports, culture, despite all? So you can see that a Revolution is worth it.

Q: ...*What can the peoples of Latin America do to support the struggles in Central America?*

Castro: ...public opinion and solidarity could put a brake on foreign intervention in those countries, although I think that the United States is sufficiently wary after the Vietnamese experience. I don't think that the U.S. is going to think of creating new Vietnams in Central America....

Q: *What counsel would you give to today's youth?*

Castro: ...Man has accumulated instruments of destruction capable of annihilating the world, and humanity has never known such a peril, such a real risk. We know it well, because we lived through a crisis in the month of October 1962, and we know that at that moment the world was very close to war. And I believe that the younger generation have a vital interest in guaranteeing the survival of humanity.