

Good news from Reagan-López Portillo talks

by Dennis Small

Ronald Reagan and Mexican President José López Portillo met for 3½ hours Jan. 5 in the Mexican border town of Ciudad Juarez, and had—in the words of the American President-elect—“a very successful and wonderful meeting.” Disregarding attempts by the Socialist International and the Heritage Foundation over recent weeks to set a confrontationist tone for the meeting, the two heads of state reaffirmed the historic friendship between the two republics, and established a personal relationship which lays the basis for further summits. The first of these is scheduled for six months from now and, according to both parties, will take up the pending substantive issues of economic cooperation between the two nations.

In one afternoon, Reagan thus reversed four years of disastrous U.S.-Mexican relations under the Carter administration, a state of affairs brought about by Carter's violent opposition to Mexico's plans to industrialize with advanced technology. If Reagan now proceeds to make a joint commitment to rapid economic growth the explicit basis of the new friendship with Mexico, by offering to trade American technology and capital goods for Mexican oil, then American citizens can once again look forward to a highly positive—and profitable—relationship with our southern neighbor.

Such a new U.S.-Mexico relationship could well serve as a model of what the “North-South” relationship as a whole can and should look like. The joint statement issued by Reagan and López Portillo after their talks indicates that the two heads of state are thinking along just those lines: “They committed their personal effort to develop the Mexican-American relationship such as to

be an example to the international community.”

The results of the summit are all the more encouraging since a major campaign was launched to sabotage the meeting—precisely because it may augur a new model for joint economic development between North and South. Over the past month, three different political timebombs were set by the international oligarchy in both the Mexican and American camps, each designed to blow up as López Portillo and Reagan were meeting. Yet each was skillfully disarmed at the summit by the thoughtful, flexible diplomacy of the two presidents.

- **Central America:** In mid-December, the opposition forces in El Salvador launched a “final offensive” to topple the governing civilian-military Junta in that country. Oligarchic elements within the Reagan camp—centered in the Heritage Foundation—encouraged the President-elect to commit American military forces to aid the Junta. Simultaneously, their “leftist” counterparts in Mexico, like Socialist International-linked Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, tried to push López Portillo to side actively with the rebels. The idea was to make of this divisive issue a central bone of contention at the summit.

The plotters failed miserably. Although the two heads of state clearly do not see eye-to-eye on the Salvador issue, they both refused to allow their overall relationship to be defined by this point. In fact they agreed to consult each other should the situation in El Salvador worsen, as Castañeda himself was forced to explain to the Mexican press.

- **Common Market:** “Bad apples” in the Reagan



Ron Edmonds/ UPI

Mr. Reagan meets President López Portillo on the border Jan. 5.

camp, like National Security Adviser-designate Richard Allen, had for months counseled Reagan to push for the formation of a "North American Common Market" among the United States, Mexico, and Canada—a policy which Mexico strongly opposes on the grounds that it would limit its industrial development. But other U.S. politicians, like Democrat Lyndon LaRouche, had vocally advised Reagan that the proposal was poison, and that the United States should build on an oil-for-technology focus.

After weeks of equivocation, Reagan finally came down on the side of the anti-Common Market faction. When asked if the Common Market would be on the agenda for future summits, Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda responded that Mr. Reagan himself had said, "It will definitely not be a priority theme."

The final paragraph of the joint statement—where the "difference in the level of development of both economies" is emphasized—is also a veiled rejection of the Common Market approach.

- **Fishing Accord:** In an eleventh hour desperation maneuver, Castañeda and his stepson Andrés Rozental, who works for him in Mexico's foreign ministry, attempted to sidetrack the U.S.-Mexico meeting by loudly announcing the week before that Mexico had decided to void its fishing treaty with the United States. Although Castañeda and family orchestrated a lot of hoopla from various Jesuit Mexican journalists to support this "anti-imperialist" sideshow, both Reagan and López Portillo ignored the issue altogether.

Within Mexico, Castañeda and Rozental appear to

have overplayed their hand, and there are growing rumors that the foreign minister will soon be replaced. The Mexican Labor Party has spearheaded a national campaign calling for Castañeda's ouster, and a full-scale polemic has broken into Mexico's major press.

North-South

The hope of the oligarchic saboteurs was that they could irreparably split Reagan and López Portillo, and drive the Mexican president into a Castro-style tirade against the "ultrareactionary" Reagan. Lining up Mexico with the radical "insurrectionist" faction in the Third World is vital to pushing the developing sector into suicidal "wars of liberation." In tandem with this, the Socialist International has been trying to recruit President López Portillo to the anticapitalist economic strategy for the Third World expressed in the infamous Brandt Commission Report. They have pressured the Mexican president to sponsor a North-South meeting in Mexico next June to discuss the Brandt proposals.

Despite the pressure, López Portillo had refused to agree to the meeting. But at the summit, he unexpectedly invited President-elect Reagan to attend as a representative for the developed North. If U.S.-Mexico relations evolve along oil-for-technology lines over the next months, Reagan's presence at the North-South meeting could well "judo" it off the intended collision course between North and South. If that occurs, the joke will certainly be on the Socialist International and their allies, who tried to disrupt last week's historic first Reagan-López Portillo summit.

The communiqué

Following is the text of a joint statement by President-elect Ronald Reagan and President José López Portillo:

The President of Mexico, José López Portillo, and President-elect Ronald Reagan met today at Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The occasion gave them the opportunity to meet again and have an exchange of views on various issues, unencumbered by a structured agenda.

The President-elect and the Mexican head of state held both a private conversation and a meeting with members of their respective staffs. President López Portillo hosted a luncheon for President-elect Reagan and his party.

The conversations were held in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect and laid the foundation for a personal relationship for the President of Mexico and the next President of the United States.

During the meeting, they reaffirmed their desire to further develop the friendly and cooperative relationship that has traditionally existed between both nations. They recognize that the diversity of issues of common interest to both countries implies a commitment to strengthen the extensive working relationship that exists between the Government of Mexico and the United States Government.

They agreed to develop bilateral mechanisms in order to make the cooperative relationship between both countries productive and beneficial. In particular, they agreed to take advantage of the direct personal link established during this meeting to deal with the future course of Mexican-American relationships.

President López Portillo and President-elect Reagan acknowledged that the relationship between their two nations is based on mutual respect and reciprocal understanding. Conscious of the fact that the cultures of their two nations have both common as well as different characteristics and taking into account the difference in the level of development of both economies, they committed their personal effort to develop the Mexican-American relationship in such a manner as to be an example to the international community.

Finally, they agreed to maintain close contact and to meet again in the near future.

The Foreign Ministry reports on the meeting

The following are excerpts from a press conference given by Foreign Minister Castañeda after the Jan. 5 summit, reported by Mexico City's daily, El Nacional.

"I dare to describe the meeting as a complete success. . . . They spoke of the need for a frank and in-depth discussion of Central America, of the respective conceptions of how such conflicts arise, and what kinds of useful and constructive things may be done to solve them.

"They agreed that Central America would be discussed more fully in future meetings, and they also agreed that if something important happens between now and the next meeting, some consultation mechanism between the two governments will be found."

Q: Mr. Secretary, wouldn't that be an interference in

the internal affairs of other countries?

A: No, we are not thinking in terms of a consultation mechanism which could mean intervention in those countries' affairs. . . . [The idea is] to find out the international dimension of those problems, not the internal aspects, but their international dimension, discussing with each other to see how not to intervene, but rather how to stop the murder and suffering of those peoples. . . . That would mean no intervention, since that would be unacceptable to Mexico. [We discussed] the possibility of a summit meeting attended by a small, but representative, group of heads of state of developing and developed countries, including, hopefully, the President of the United States.

Q: Will the question of a common market between Mexico, the United States, and Canada be given priority in the coming meetings?

A: It won't be dealt with. President Reagan was quite agreeable in stating that he no intention of establishing, or that we should create, a common market between the two countries.