

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

The immigration issue—again

“Operation Jobs” had its predictable negative effect on U.S.-Mexico relations. But there’s more to the story.

The week-long “Operation Jobs” launched by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on April 26 netted an estimated 5,500 “illegals” working in nine U.S. cities with large Hispanic minorities, some 2,000 deportations to Mexico, and a new shock to U.S.-Mexico relations.

On April 28, the Mexican Foreign Ministry issued a statement that “this operation seriously worries the government of Mexico,” because of reports of human-rights violations and targeting of Mexican-American populations.

Two days later the new Mexican ambassador in Washington, Bernardo Sepulveda, lodged an official protest with the State Department. In carrying out the raids, he charged, the U.S. government “has apparently resorted to unusual procedures which constitute a virtual negation of access to legal resources which U.S. laws guarantee.”

Sepulveda was referring to widespread reports that undocumented workers had been forced into “voluntary” deportation agreements without right of counsel, and that many of those detained—both legal and illegal workers—had been mistreated.

The Mexican press was saturated with stories on the round-ups. Labor leader Fidel Velásquez indicated concern not only for the rights of Mexican workers, but also for the additional strain on the Mexican economy that a large

number of deportees would create.

Unmentioned in any public statements, but very much in the minds of many here and of law-enforcement officials in the United States, is the potential that the crackdown will trigger violence in Hispanic areas.

What most worries knowledgeable Mexicans is not so much the raids per se, as their function to clear the way for unprecedentedly restrictive immigration legislation now before the U.S. Congress.

Roger Conner, head of the hard-core “shut-the-borders” lobby in Washington, named the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), explained that “the main thing the INS did that was new in the operation was that they brought the media’s attention to something that the INS does every day. The reason they have done this is to make people more aware of the fact that illegal immigrants are taking valuable jobs from Americans; that the way to stop it is to make it illegal for employers to hire illegal aliens; and that the best way to do that would be to pass the Simpson-Mazzoli bill.”

The Simpson-Mazzoli bill was drafted by the Father Theodore Hesburgh’s Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy and sponsored by a crew of fanatical Malthusian blue bloods headed by Cyrus Vance and Robert McNamara, operating under the innocent-sounding “Citizens’ Commit-

tee for Immigration Reform.” It would cut the number of legal immigrants allowed into the country by half, from the current 800,000 to 425,000; levy stiff penalties on employers of illegals; and set in place a “1984” nightmare of obligatory worker ID cards and centralized computer tracking of workers.

The bill brings into reality the nightmare Mexico has been living with since the beginning of the Carter era of a shut-off of job opportunities in the United States. Immigration-watchers in Washington tell my *EIR* associates that the bill’s passage is “virtually assured” this session, after Attorney General William French Smith’s April 20 press conference at which he announced that administration opposition to the bill was reduced to a few minor points.

Such scapegoating of minority and immigrant workers for the effects of Paul Volcker’s depression could have not come at a worse time, given the critical economic pressures on Mexico—themselves for the most part the product of the Volcker madness.

The move also jeopardizes some of Mexico’s friends in the United States such as Texas governor William P. Clements. Not only are Clements’s efforts to advance a sound guest-worker program virtually dead, but his own re-election effort this year could be hurt by Hispanic voter backlash. In an Austin press conference April 28, Clements indicated alarm about the effects of Operation Jobs on U.S.-Mexico relations and the Texas economy. “Mass deportation is not the solution for the unemployment crisis,” he declared. “Texas has a lot of investment which requires a growing labor force.”