

## FDR's Good Neighbor Policy

In his First Inaugural Address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared: "In the field of world policy, I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors."

Speaking on Pan-American Day on April 12, 1933, Roosevelt applied this policy to the nations of the Western Hemisphere, stating: "Never before has the significance of the words 'good neighbor' been so manifest in international relations."

With this policy, Roosevelt returned to the original intention of the Monroe Doctrine, as formulated by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, which called for a community of principle among the sovereign nation-states of the Americas based on the commitment to fostering the General Welfare of the populations of each nation. This policy itself was a reflection of the policy of the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the 30 Years War in Europe in 1648. This treaty stipulated that the basis for enduring peace was for each nation to act "to the advantage



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt (left) and Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas, who welcomed FDR's Good Neighbor Policy. The Good Neighbor Agreement was signed in 1941, after Cárdenas left office.*

of the other."

Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy was thus a rejection of the imperialist interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine as expressed by President Theodore Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt rejected unilateral action and intervention into the affairs of the sovereign nation-states of the Western Hemisphere. Instead, he emphasized mutual security against aggressors and the promotion of economic development to raise living standards.

In the case of Mexico, Roosevelt did not intervene to reverse the 1938 expropriation of foreign oil holdings by the government of President Cárdenas. Rather in 1941, the United States

signed a Good Neighbor Agreement with Mexico, recognizing Mexico's sovereign right to control its oil. The agreement also included the extension of credit by the U.S. Export-Import Bank, to Mexico, for the purpose of infrastructure development.

Roosevelt's intent was to make this policy, initially implemented in the Western Hemisphere, the basis for American foreign policy globally, following World War II. In September 1943, he reported to the U.S. Congress: "The policy of the Good Neighbor has shown such success in the hemisphere of the Americas that its extension to the whole world seems to be the logical next step."

panies.

On May 13, 1938, Mexico broke relations with Britain and only resumed them in January 1942.

During his administration, which coincided with that of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States, Cárdenas was inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal and counted upon Roosevelt adhering to his Good Neighbor Policy (see box), which Roosevelt enunciated as early as December 1932. And although Roosevelt was not able to prevent certain measures taken under pressure from the oil companies against Mexico, nonetheless, there was no U.S. intervention. And as we shall see, in November 1941, after Cárdenas left office, Roosevelt

delivered on his promise of a Good Neighbor Policy, when the United States and Mexico signed the Good Neighbor Agreement, which recognized Mexico's sovereignty over its subsoil wealth.

However, before this was achieved, one of the most dire consequences of the Royal Dutch Shell/Standard Oil Company boycott was that it forced Mexico to sell its oil to the Axis powers, including Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Japan, and thus exposed Mexico to an acceleration of Axis subversive activity. As Betty Kirk, an American journalist with close ties to the government of Lázaro Cárdenas, reported: "The biggest consumer of Mexican oil from the time