

# Lopez Portillo: new era of U.S.-Latin relations a 'categorical imperative'

A new era in relations between the United States and Latin America is a "categorical imperative," Mexican President Lopez Portillo declared before Latin American heads of state in Panama Oct. 1. The hour has come, the Mexican leader stresses for Latin America to finally eliminate all vestiges of the postwar "neocolonial" system—meaning wiping out "injustice and underdevelopment" and removing "military enclaves" like the U.S. bases at Guantanamo and in Panama. Latin America will no longer be anyone's "zone of influence, sphere of strategy, or area of defense. No one can assume the role safeguarding our sovereignty but ourselves."

If it wants to live in harmony with its hemispheric neighbors in this process of development, the United States should return to the "genius of its Founding Fathers" in foreign policy, said Lopez Portillo, and end nearly a century of "imperialist" outlook toward its neighbors.

## **Carter's 'genius'**

President Carter answered Lopez Portillo's call for the United States to act on the basis of "reason," not might, the next day. Carter announced the formation of a 100,000 man military strikeforce that would be prepared to intervene in the Caribbean should Washington perceive a threat from Cuba.

The reaction from Latin America to Carter's announcement has been hostile. Addressing a crowd of 400,000 upon his return from Panama, Lopez Portillo called upon the United States to end all "military enclaves" in the area. Four Caribbean nations, Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, and St. Lucia, issued a joint communique over the weekend rejecting Carter's announced remilitarization of the region. "No decision can be taken affecting the people of the Caribbean region without proper consultations with and full involvement of the sovereign governments which represent the people of the region," the communique stated.

According to the Mexican press, even Venezuelan Minister of Mines and Energy Calderon Berti cancelled a trip to the United States in protest of Carter's military

strike force. This action is one indication of the general anger and opposition to Carter's diplomacy throughout Latin America. Under the present Herrera Campins administration, Venezuela has been counted on as a reliable U.S. ally.

In Panama, Lopez Portillo's challenge to the United States to return to the "genius of its founding fathers" reportedly left Vice-President Walter Mondale pale and quiet. Washington can no longer doubt that the Mexican head of state is taking the leading role in shaping policy for the entire southern continent. As Pena Gomez, head of the Dominican Republic's ruling Revolutionary Party, said upon his return from the Panama ceremonies, that the "Mexicans are emerging as a nation with overwhelming strength" is becoming a source of pride for Dominicans and for all of Latin America.

## **The battle for development**

Addressing the Latin American delegations to the United Nations in a brief planning session before his major energy address Sept. 27, Lopez Portillo described the present strategic configuration in Latin America as a three-level battle. The Nicaraguan Revolution exemplifies the battle to establish the internal conditions for development of the population, he said. Establishment of full Panamanian sovereignty over the Canal Zone, a process moved forward with the implementation of the Carter-Torrijos treaties Oct 1, exemplifies Latin America's fight against external pressures, a step toward the decolonization of Latin America from the "imperialist forces of the continent." From that base of strengthened sovereignty and development at home, Lopez Portillo told the ambassadors, Latin America is moving to resolve the "universal contradictions" in the battle for a new world economic order, concretely expressed in Mexico's proposed Energy Doctrine which calls for oil-for-technology exchanges.

"Against internal forces, against external forces, and to put order in all of humanity's affairs, Latin America is carrying out its efforts, fulfilling in this manner the imperatives of its unity and its reach," the Mexican President concluded.