

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Who's on top of U.S.-Mexico relations?

A few hints have emerged from the Reagan crew, but as yet there is no defined policy.

There's no question Reagan made the right move at the right time when he met with Mexican President José López Portillo on the border Jan. 5. It immediately set a tone worlds apart from the acrimony of the Carter era and cleared the way for a substantive improvement in relations. But now, more than midway to the first in-depth summit April 26-27, the specifics of a new policy are slow in coming together.

An encouraging sign is that Reagan seems determined to run U.S.-Mexico policy as a personal concern coordinated by the White House, not the State Department. My *EIR* colleagues in Washington report that State Department officials who could be expected to be involved in the preparations for the April Tijuana/San Diego meeting are shrugging their shoulders and referring all questions to the White House and to Richard Allen's office at the National Security Council.

The strong likelihood that Reagan will appoint long-time actor-friend John Gavin as the new ambassador to Mexico is another indication of keeping things under a White House wing. Though some of the Mexican press ridiculed the probable appointment last week, some of the sharper columnists here stressed the importance of having someone in the post who had the direct ear of the President. This is something Carter's ambassadors—Patrick Lucey and Julian Nava—could hardly claim.

But symptomatic of the slowness in pulling the Reagan operation together is the report that current ambassador Nava may stay on until early April, and that it is not known how soon after that his replacement could take up duties. This essentially means that the key U.S. embassy channel will be in limbo from now through the late-April summit itself. Reagan gave a first indication of where he wants to move when he told CBS's Walter Cronkite in early March that he would like to keep the border open to Mexicans seeking U.S. jobs.

As reported in the press here, he called on Americans to "remember that Mexico is our neighbor and friend and that it has a very high rate of unemployment. If we close the border we will in that way obstruct the only escape valve, which we call illegal immigration. If we close off that escape valve we could destabilize Mexico, and in any case it's not in our own interests."

Reagan said he was interested in the proposals of a group of governors from the Southwest, referring to the program of Texas Gov. Bill Clements, who is calling for a "guest worker" program for legalized temporary stays.

This was a sharp slap in the face to the Hesburgh commission on immigration, which had handed its final report to the White House four days before. The Hesburgh panel rejected a guest worker-type program. Spokesmen for the left

parties here immediately branded the Reagan statements as "another effort to pressure Mexico to give up its oil."

But Fidel Velázquez, the long-time head of the CTM labor confederation and one of the men most directly shaping the current presidential succession fight, sounded a different note. "Reagan's tone has relaxed a little and he's closer to Mexican reality."

This reaction is particularly significant because Velázquez has worked closely with the Labor Ministry task force in charge of Mexico's side of immigration.

Reagan made a misstep, however, with his joint call with Trudeau in Ottawa for a "tripartite" U.S.-Mexico-Canadian summit meeting. This is sure to run into heavy flak from the Mexican side, where the overtones of the hated North American Common Market are overwhelming. A lot of the good will engendered by the Jan. 5 meeting could go up in smoke.

Most serious, however, is the silence from Reagan or any of his chief advisers on the plank of U.S.-Mexico relations which will cement the relationship: a massive "oil-for-technology" accord.

This policy gap is being picked up by *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche, Jr., who made the oil-for-technology framework the focus of a widely heralded presentation to the annual Economics Symposium of the Monterrey Technological Institute last week. After a further 10 days of talks in Mexico, LaRouche will report directly to policy-makers in Washington March 26, as the keynote speaker in the *EIR*-sponsored conference, "U.S., Mexico, Central America."