

LBJ Opens Drive for Latin Unity

Sees Lopez Mateos Friday to Stress Alliance Support

By Dan Kurzman
Staff Reporter

President Johnson will inaugurate this week what may turn into an intensive campaign to convince Latin America that the United States will continue to back the Alliance for Progress vigorously.

President Johnson's meetings with Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos Friday and Saturday in Palm Springs, Calif., will provide the Administration with its first forum in this campaign to underscore this country's close ties with Latin America.

This first step may be followed up in mid-March with what is hoped will be a dramatic manifestation of Washington's unflagging support of the Alliance. The White House disclosed yesterday that President Johnson is considering a conference here of all U.S. Ambassadors stationed in Latin America to coincide with the third anniversary of President Kennedy's history-making announcement of the Alliance's creation.

These preliminary moves to reassure Latin America that the United States has not lost interest in the Alliance will serve, it is hoped, to dispel doubts expressed by some Latins that the Johnson Administration backs the program as strongly as his predecessor.

Since the President took office, the Alliance has been overshadowed by U.S. embroilment in hemispheric political crises. The Panama Canal Zone riots of Jan. 9 and 10, followed by the dispute over the controversial 1903 Panama Canal Treaty and Panamanian charges of aggression against this country, has helped in some degree to revive memories of U.S. intervention in Latin America.

Nor has U.S. preoccupation with Cuban pinpricks, such as the shutting off of water supplies for Guantanamo Naval Base, contributed to the availability of time for active promotion of the Alliance.

Other Crises Cut Time

Crises in other parts of the world, including Viet-Nam, Cyprus, and Zanzibar, have further reduced this time.

Moreover, such crises have not been eased by the confusion inherent in the reorganization of the State Department's administrative structure under a new régime.

Even more important has been the salient fact that the Alliance, in the eyes of many Latin Americans, was embodied in the person of President Kennedy. His death thus left a psychological vacuum that no man or government could easily fill.

President Johnson will meet Lopez Mateos under highly favorable circumstances. For the United States and Mexico today have achieved a level of understanding that both countries consider the highest in its modern history.

Since President Kennedy visited Mexico City in 1962, to be greeted by huge, cheering crowds, relations have

improved perceptibly as the result of an agreement that was reached last year in the dispute over the Chamizal territory on the Texas border long claimed by the Mexicans.

No important decisions of a substantive nature are likely to be reached at the Palm Springs meetings. For one thing, there are few outstanding problems between the two countries to be solved. For another, Lopez Mateos's term of office will end later this year.

The future of the Alliance, however, will be fully discussed. Lopez Mateos is expected to stress that the Alliance could be improved through greater concentration of aid on the grass-roots level.

He is known to feel that more Latin peasants should benefit more directly from the Alliance, and that this could be made possible through more extensive use of the multi-nation Inter-American Development Bank.

Cuba will also probably be discussed, with both Presidents agreeing to respect each other's position. President Johnson is not likely to press very hard, if at all, for a severance of Mexican diplomatic relations with Cuba. Mexico supported the U.S. blockade of Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis, but has generally not taken a hard line toward that country.

Lopez Mateos is certain to ask for new U.S. assurances that some permanent solution will be found soon to the problem of the crop-killing

excessive salt content of the water Mexico is drawing from the Colorado River. Only temporary solutions have been reached since President Kennedy's visit to Mexico.

Nor is Lopez Mateos expected to miss the opportunity to appeal to President Johnson to use his influence in preventing the imposition of new pending trade restrictions on Mexican goods.