

Latins Ponder Barring Nu

By Lewis H. Diuguid
Washington Post Staff Writer

MEXICO CITY — Twenty-one Latin American nations are taking part here in what may be the final, fruitful stage of the Mexico-led quest to exclude nuclear weapons from all of the hemisphere south of the United States.

The objective of the meetings is a treaty to create a nuclear-free zone, the first of its kind. There are buoyant predictions that before the current sessions of the Preparatory Commission end these nations will have agreed upon a text and declared their intention to adhere to it.

But not all the states are as determined as Mexico to renounce future nuclear armament. Even should the treaty be signed, the necessary nation-by-nation ratification would require perhaps two years. Efforts to shorten this period by skirting disputed issues could, in the opinion of some experts, reduce the effectiveness of the treaty that emerges.

Problem of Signatories

One problem is the varying attitudes of the five nuclear powers that would be expected

to sign an accompanying protocol assuring that they would respect the treaty.

The United States has suggested it would sign if Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands were excluded from the zone and if its rights to ship nuclear arms through the Panama Canal or fly them over Latin America were not restricted.

It is also the U.S. position that the treaty would be meaningless if Cuba were excluded from the zone. Cuba has said it will not participate in any way. This leaves open to question whether the United States would sign.

France and Britain have indicated a willingness to go along. The Russians said recently they are disposed to sign if others do, but if their "others" includes China they face the fact that the Chinese have declared they will have nothing to do with the treaty.

With such problems before them, the delegates' hope of completing their task in two weeks may founder, even with their projected 11-hour working days and Saturday sessions.

Rewriting Seven Sections

Interest in the treaty has proliferated since the Preparatory Commission came close to agreeing on a text here last May. It is now rewriting seven disputed sections. There are observers here from many nations outside the zone involved. For the United States there is the Ambassador to Mexico, Fulton Freeman, and a specialist from

the U. S. Disarmament Agency.

Actually the idea of a nuclear-free zone was the brainchild of former Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos, who mentioned it in a 1963 speech. A year later the 21-nation Preparatory Commission was formed. Its president is Alfonso Garcia Robles, Subsecretary of Mexico's Foreign Ministry.

The proposed accord has been named the "Treaty for Denuclearization of Latin America," which has been described as a mouthful which is actually a misnomer. One diplomat wanted to know how a zone that never had nuclear weapons could be denuclearized. And it would not be strictly Latin American either, since two of the states expected to sign are the former British colonies of Jamaica and Trinidad-Tobago.

Diplomatic Viewpoints

Some advocates see the treaty as building up prestige for Latin America; others have qualms over its potential diplomatic advantages for Mexico as sponsor of the idea. Not all Latin countries are in favor of putting this international spotlight on Mexico, a nation considered by some to be smug in its relative affluence.

Argentina and Brazil have led a faction that insists all 21 states must ratify before the treaty becomes effective. The compromise proposal is that a specified number, perhaps nine, can put it into effect, allowing those desiring total conformity to come in later.

As for Cuba, the Mexicans

are hopeful that, with time, the advantages of insurance against nuclear threats will coax the island republic back into participating in hemispheric affairs.

The treaty would prohibit "the testing, use, fabrication or acquisition, by whatever means, of all nuclear weapon-

clear Arms From S. America

ry." It would not exclude jointly acceptable atomic explosions for peaceful purposes.

U.S. Suggestions

In its observations to the Commission, the United States noted that peaceful and military nuclear explosives are not easily distinguishable and that those for peaceful use should

remain in the hands of contracting nuclear powers.

Another U.S. suggestion was to link the proposed treaty's small administrative body with the Organization of American States, but the Mexicans and others oppose this.

Close ties would be formed with United Nations agencies.

The publicized reporting to them of any violation would be the only means of enforcing the treaty. The pact, it is believed, could set precedents for the nonproliferation treaty expected eventually from the Geneva Disarmament conference.

As proposed, the Latin treaty and its protocol would include

three categories of nations: those forswearing nuclear arms, outside states with territorial interests in the zone, and the nuclear powers.

The United States would seem to fall into both two latter categories. Any U.S. concurrence is expected to be in treaty form, and would require consent of the Senate.