

Will Mexico shut down its only nuclear power plant?

by Hugo López Ochoa

A ferocious factional battle has broken out inside the Mexican government around the decision to bring on line the country's first nuclear plant, located at Laguna Verde, Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico. More than 1,000 Mexican technicians already work on the operational tests of the first reactor, and it is hoped that its first start-up will take place at the end of next September, to be fully on line by mid-1988. The project consists of two BW/5 reactors which will produce 654 megawatts apiece, more than 5% of the total electrical production of the country, by 1988.

But the International Monetary Fund's henchmen within the government are putting heavy pressures on President Miguel de la Madrid to abandon the idea of bringing the country into the nuclear age, as "cost prohibitive." During a recent forum on the subject organized by the Congress, Gabriel Quadri de la Torre, a Bank of Mexico "investigator," called the project a "whim of the arrogant nucleocracy." These same arguments have been used by the boss of Quadri de la Torre, Miguel Mancera Aguayo, director of the Bank of Mexico, to dismantle large industrial sectors controlled by the state, or turn them over to the holders of Mexico's more than \$100 million foreign debt.

Mancera Aguayo's cronies are the malthusian ecologists of Miguel de la Madrid's cabinet, in particular Secretary of Urban Development and Ecology Manuel Camacho Solís, who have financed a multimillion peso campaign of informational terror to spread the lie that the nuclear plant at Laguna Verde could be "another Chernobyl," besides the traditional environmentalist arguments on "radioactive contamination." Heading this disinformation campaign is the Televisa group, of the powerful Azcarraga-Alemán financial empire, whose station in the state of Veracruz, where the plant is located, transmits a daily half hour of horror stories about nuclear power. This informational terrorism may soon turn into armed terrorism. On June 15, the ecologist review *Proceso*, published a review of a forthcoming book, *Laguna Verde: Mexico's Contribution to the Pacific Holocaust*, whose authors, Armando Morones and Javier Esquivel, "predict"

that "international terrorists" will arise to attack Laguna Verde. *Proceso* targets as a potential victim the vice-director of the Federal Electricity Commission, Juan Eibenschutz, considered the father of Mexican nuclear power, attacking him as a "petty fascist."

Through interviews and "inquests" in the press, radio, and TV, the government malthusians launched the drive to "democratically" force the suspension of the project.

On June 15, the Secretary of Urban Development and Ecology told the national media that "pro and con opinions are still being heard," on opening the plant, and "the overall policy is being analyzed, to make a decision that corresponds to the national interest." This, when the reactor of the first unit is 99% completed! In contrast, Eibenschutz had stated the day before that "in the future of electrical power in Mexico, there is no way to go to but nuclear." And in an interview in *Proceso*, on June 8, he reiterated that before the end of this year, "we will already be in full tests" of the first reactor. On June 16, Eibenschutz pinpointed the source of the only problem faced by the development of the nuclear industry in Mexico, the economic austerity demanded by the International Monetary Fund: "We are at a kind of crossroads; there is awareness that we need to build more nuclear plants; but as long as economic conditions don't let us, it will be hard."

The 'Hundred' Nazi-communists

Not accidentally, Manuel Camacho's statements on Laguna Verde were given during the awards ceremony of the United Nations to the environmentalist intellectuals known as the "Hundred," for "their efforts in favor of a better natural environment (*El Universal*, June 16). "We are proud that the U.N.O. has given you prizes," said Camacho. The "Hundred" gathers the most outstanding intellectuals of Nazi-communist stamp in the country, such as Homero Aridjis, ex-ambassador to Holland, and Octavio Paz. Many of them are flagrant homosexuals who act as the interface between the Nazi right wing, such as the National Action Party (PAN), and the left, such as the PSM (Mexican Socialist Party), which are elec-

torally allied.

Comacho was trained at Princeton University by Richard Falk, a professor whose zeal to stop nuclear power was so great that he led a delegation of supporters to Teheran to march in the streets with Khomeini's mullahs, and demand the overthrow of the Shah, who had angered the Trilateral Commission by mapping an ambitious nuclear energy program for Iran.

Manuel Camacho is part of the so-called Tepoztlán Center, founded under the aegis of the Trilateral Commission, which is devoted to spreading propaganda in favor of a rural, deindustrialized Mexico ruled by the fanaticism of "Aztec fundamentalism." Camacho was trained under the intellectual tutelage of the star poet of the Televisa group, Octavio Paz, and Enrique González Pedrero, current Tabasco governor and author of the greenie book, *The wealth of poverty*. Octavio Paz is the architect of the artificial fame acquired by the "Hundred" group thanks to Televisa.

Another important component of this machine is the Mexican branch of the Socialist International long headed by Jesús Reyes Heróles, who died in 1985. As Mexico's Secretary of the Interior from 1976 to 1979, Reyes Heróles was the architect of a Political Reform conceived to give power to the Nazi-communist parties of the opposition, to pressure the ruling PRI "from within" and force the conversion of the Mexican presidential system into a British style parliamentary system. In 1979, then-President José López Portillo threw him out as a traitor. Reyes Heróles trained a generation of young politicians known as "Reyes Heróles's orphans." Camacho Solís is one of the most brilliant "orphans." Other "orphans" formed a tiny band of dissidents within the PRI known as the "Democratic Current," headed by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, ex-president of the PRI, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, ex-governor of Michoacán, who had turned down an experimental nuclear plant in his state, for ecological reasons. On May 24, he led a demonstration against Laguna Verde. Manuel Moreno Sánchez, ex-presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party (PSD)—known as the State Department party—and recently affiliated with the "Current," announced that this group of PRI dissidents is backing Manuel Camacho for President of Mexico.

Pro-nuclear Mexico

Supporters of nuclear energy in Mexico come from all walks of life. Early this year, the Committee to Defend Laguna Verde was founded by nuclear technicians, teachers, doctors, students, and industrialists. The committee got out thousands of leaflets in the state of Veracruz, entitled "A nuclear plant is not an atomic bomb, nor is Laguna Verde Chernobyl." This was widely covered in the national press.

On June 9, *Excelsior* and *Universal* reported the statements of Francisco González Telles, the director of industrial coordination of the Chamber of Transformation Industries of Monterrey, the second industrial city of the country. "We've

had enough studies. . . . Nuclear electricity must now go on line so that the country can enter the nuclear age and with it guarantee the energy needs of the productive sector," he said. On June 6, Engineer Carlos León Hinojosa, of the College of Mechanical Electrical Engineers, said that "if we stay behind in such [nuclear-electric] projects, the country will put the brakes on its development." On June 4, Dr. Gonzalo Halffter, winner of the national medal of merit in ecology and conservation, indicated that "Laguna Verde is an option in the face of growing electricity consumption."

Overall policy and nuclear energy

Laguna Verde was planned under President Luis Echeverría, at the outset of the 1970s, but it was not until 1976 that work began under President José López Portillo, who proposed to build 20 nuclear plants by the year 2000. But this project was suspended because of the debt payments crisis of 1982. On June 16, Eibenschutz proposed, in an interview in *Excelsior*, building five plants "similar to Laguna Verde," in the next 15 years. Eibenschutz explained that there are projects to triple the national capacity of hydroelectrical production, which would exhaust the potential for "economical" electricity production. "Nevertheless, if by magic we could put all of these projects into action tomorrow, it would still not be enough to fully satisfy today's electricity needs." Moreover, for power production, "We are burning a precious resource, which is coal . . . and at present two-thirds of the electricity we consume in the country comes from petroleum."

When the malthusian ecology secretary, Manuel Camacho Solís, referred to "overall policy" before deciding on Laguna Verde, he was referring to the crucial decision that will be made by President Miguel de la Madrid in less than three months: the choice of the candidate of the governing Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), for the 1988 presidential elections. One of the agents of Camacho Solís, José Arias Chávez, coordinator of the Council of Pacts of Ecologist Groups, announced on June 3 to the national press that activation of the reactors "would mean political suicide for the officials who decide on it." "We will not support the presidential candidate, whoever he may be, if within his program of government he contemplates bringing on line nuclear plants," he threatened. Then he announced that the sabotage will include "seizure of city halls, blocking of highways, and suspension of payments to the Federal Electricity Commission."

None of the visible pre-candidates of the PRI has come out categorically for nuclear power. If President Miguel de la Madrid suspends the project and orders the reconversion of Laguna Verde into a gas-generating plant, as the ecologists propose, all the talk about "modernization" of Mexico and "industrial reconversion" used by him and some of the potential candidates will be unmasked as the malthusian doubletalk of the post-industrial age.