

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

A 'green' presidential campaign

Ecologists fail to halt Mexico's nuclear project, but their political godfathers are still in the running.

Mexico's greenies suffered a blow July 18, when their so-called "Victory March" in the state of Veracruz, intended to halt the imminent inauguration of Mexico's first nuclear plant at Laguna Verde, drew a mere 200 supporters from across the country. Despite millions of pesos invested in a publicity campaign to try to bamboozle the population of Veracruz into shutting the plant down, the greenie march was a wash-out.

The "Victory March" was timed to intersect a multimillion-peso public-relations campaign mounted by Interior Minister Bartlett and Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE) Minister Camacho Solis, both rabid ecologists. This was to have been the "final phase" in the plan to annihilate the Mexican nuclear project. On the afternoon of July 18, radio and television news shows were repeatedly carrying a statement by Camacho Solis, that "the reconversion of Laguna Verde into a gas-electric plant is not being discarded." The electrical workers' union, SUTERM, has insisted that the cost to convert the virtually completed nuclear plant to a thermal one would be more than the cost of constructing one from scratch.

This has nonetheless been the insistent demand of the greenies, who allege that no matter how much technical security is provided, sooner or later Laguna Verde would become another Chernobyl. The same day of the "Victory March," the leading Mexican daily *Excelsior* carried a front-page article railing against the inauguration of the plant.

An editorial in the same edition panic-mongered that an explosion at Laguna Verde would kill 100,000 in the first year and injure another 600,000, long-term cancer victims would number 40,000, and economic damage would cost more than \$300 billion. Entire pages of photographs showing the greenie protests against Laguna Verde graced the rest of the edition. The greenies themselves have insisted that once operative, Laguna Verde would probably become a target for terrorists.

And with it all, the march failed. Camacho Solis's declarations were taken off the air come the evening news, and the social communications bureau of SEDUE blocked publication of the statement the next day, with explanations that the minister's words had been "misinterpreted."

Weeks before the march, thousands of leaflets had been issued by the National Committee in Defense of Nuclear Energy, made up of industrialists, professionals, and students from throughout the country. Titled, "A nuclear plant is not an atomic bomb, and Laguna Verde is not Chernobyl," the leaflets were even distributed to the greenie protesters.

And in the days just prior to the march, the national weekly newspaper *Solidaridad Internacional*, charged that the ecologists' campaign to link Laguna Verde to a "corrupt government nucleocracy" was sheer hypocrisy. The newspaper observed that, according to the confessions of one of the editors of the greenie magazine *Ecología*, the anti-Laguna Verde

campaign is financed and coordinated from the offices of Camacho Solis, Budget and Planning Minister Salinas de Gortari, and Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources Eduardo Pesqueira.

All of them are key figures in the Mexican branch of the Trilateral Commission, the so-called Tepoztlán Center.

During the month of July, for example, *Ecología* editor Gabriel Quadri de la Torre—also an "adviser" to the rabid monetarist head of the Bank of Mexico Miguel Mancera Aguayo—will be traveling to Washington "to get economic support from the non-government private agencies." The costs of the trip will be picked up by Camacho Solis, Salinas de Gortari, and Eduardo Pesqueira, according to a collaborator of Quadri. The California-based Sierra Club is sponsoring Quadri's stay in Washington. He will be meeting with World Bank officials. According to information received by *EIR*, SEDUE allocates \$700,000 a year to "promote citizen participation," i.e., for the green movement.

One of those most responsible for the publicity campaign against Laguna Verde is presidential hopeful Manuel Bartlett, who in July of 1986, prevented the creation of an inter-sectorial group within the Mexican government to run an educational campaign on nuclear energy. A top Bartlett staffer, Ignacio Morales Lechuga, has been accused by the general secretary of SUTERM of financing the ecologists along with former Veracruz governor Agustín Acosta Lagunes.

With the choice of the PRI presidential candidate just months away, the warning of greenie coordinator José Arias Chávez that activation of the reactors "would mean political suicide for the officials who decide on it" is clearly proving a factor in the presidential succession fight.