

## Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

### Sonora '81: investment opportunities

*The long-awaited Sonora '81 industrial fair was a great success for both hosts and visitors.*

**S**onora '81, one of the most important industrial fairs Mexico has seen in recent years, took place in Hermosillo, the capital city of the northern state of Sonora, Oct. 11-24. I have mentioned this fair before in this column, and *EIR* will present further in-depth coverage in the future; but I wanted to give you a preliminary report on this major event.

The fact that a state took the initiative to show foreign and Mexican investors not just what the state produces now, but also what it can and must produce during the next 50 years, succeeded in convincing many businessmen that Mexico's federal government has important regional backup for its industrialization project. One impressed businessman told me that this—as much as Mexico's famed oil wealth—is the real guarantee of the country's future.

Economic activity in Sonora is based on four primary sectors, exhibited in different pavilions: agriculture, ranching, fishing, and mining. These pavilions provided full information on present and prospective production systems; the way in which each product is currently utilized further downstream; and on the economic feasibility of other potential uses.

The exhibits that most grabbed the attention of the officially estimated 120,000 visitors, were those of Sonora state's Planning and Budget Ministry, and of the Mexican

Fusion Energy Association (AMEF), the sister organization of the U.S. Fusion Energy Foundation, publishers of the prestigious *Fusion* magazine.

"Sonora in 2031," the exhibit of the state planners, employed audio-visual and other displays to illustrate the quality of development the state would achieve during the next half-century, centered on the installation of nuclear-based agro-industrial complexes, known as nuplexes. It showed that the state of Sonora would have two pairs of nuclear-power plants that would be the heart of two new agro-industrial cities. The energy, and especially the waste heat, from these plants, would be used to desalinate water, thus breaking the main limit to agricultural growth in the rich, though arid, region of Sonora.

The AMEF booth also picked up on the nuclear theme, making use of various scale-models of nuclear plants. Oak Ridge Laboratories in Tennessee, for example, loaned a model of the Clinch River liquid-metal fast-breeder reactor, and General Atomic did the same for the high-temperature gas-cooled reactor it is developing. The AMEF booth walls were covered with blown-up photos of nuclear plants in various stages of construction, and of the latest discoveries of the solar system, including the Saturn pictures taken by Voyager.

The AMEF presentations also polemicized strongly against the in-

ternational environmentalist movement which has restricted nuclear energy development in the U.S., and now threatens Mexico as well. Fair visitors returned repeatedly to the AMEF stand to hear detailed explanations on how nuclear plants function; of their relative economic advantages; and of the absurdity of the environmentalists' arguments. Literally hundreds of businessmen, hundreds of potential investors, hundreds of professionals, and thousands of students of all ages, stopped at the AMEF booth to ask questions, ranging from the technical to the most intensely political.

Also present at Sonora '81 were the country's foremost industrial groups, each showing off its product lines and latest technological advances. Foreign businessmen also had booths, including representatives from Japan, France, the United States, and Hungary. President López Portillo opened the expositions, and congratulated Gov. Samuel Ocaña for a job well done. The fair coincided with Ocaña's annual State of the State message, which numbers of Mexican and foreign dignitaries attended, including various governors from the American border states.

Particularly notable, by his absence, was California Gov. Jerry Brown, who didn't even make an appearance at the fair. Well-informed sources told me that they believed that Brown feared to go because he figured he would never pass the Health Ministry's strict sanitation test, given his known relationship with the fruit fly. Another report, however, has it that he was hostile to the fair's pro-nuclear orientation, and realized that his standard environmentalist outbursts would be poorly received.