

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

Think tankers and Iranization

Some interesting things popped out when the cream of U.S. and Mexican think tankers got together.

Several weeks ago, this correspondent took a short trip to the beautiful and historic city of Guanajuato, 300 kilometers northeast of Mexico City, to seek out the news behind an interesting meeting of liberal Mexican, U.S. and Latin American academics.

The four-day meeting took place from July 28 to Aug. 1. It was organized by the U.S. Studies division of Mexico's Center for Research and the Teaching of Economics (CIDE), an institute of postgraduate studies attended by broad strata of the Mexican state bureaucracy.

The imposing name of this particular conference was "Mechanisms of Decision-Making of the U.S. Government."

While such U.S. luminaries as Bob Bond of the New York Council on Foreign Relations and Abe Lowenthal, director of the Latin American division of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. canceled at the last minute, other able representatives of the so-called liberal foreign policy establishment in the United States were very much on the scene.

What I found out right away is that these think tankers live, sleep and breathe the issue of "destabilization." Riordan Roett, reigning Brazilianist star of John Hopkins, show mala will fall" within four to five months.

Susan Kaufman Purcell, Latin

American specialist on the State Department Policy Planning Staff, casually dropped the bombshell that "there are some who have told me that the government of Saudi Arabia will fall in nine months." A few of the more knowledgeable Mexicans in the audience, aware of the Carter administration's record of undermining the Saudi regime since the Saudi refusal to join the Camp David pact, recognized that this was no unwitting remark. And they feared for Mexico.

Purcell went on to pledge that if destabilization occurred in the Persian Gulf, the State Department policy was not to turn to Mexico for making up the lost supplies of oil. "The State Department is very clear that a high level of oil production would produce a high rate of inflation that would destabilize Mexico."

But in the same breath she urged the establishment of a "special policy arrangement" with Mexico, a phrase immediately understood as a call to lock Mexican energy resources into U.S. strategic needs.

Ms. Purcell only made matters worse when she tried to correct herself: "I don't mean to say that. . . . I don't want to say that we should have a 'special relationship' with Mexico. . . . Well, we could use different words, but they would mean the same thing."

Purcell is no innocent in such matters.

A long-time profiler of Mexico's political command structure and particularly of Mexico's crucial presidential selection process, Purcell has done research service for both the Council on Foreign Relations and the Woodrow Wilson Center before moving into her State Department post.

Later Richard Lucco, a think tanker based at Williams College, declared to the audience without the least hesitation that "the Schlesinger shock created Heberto Castillo."

According to Lucco, Castillo—a prototerrorist leader of the opposition to the Mexican government's energy development policy—"was a nobody" until Schlesinger, during his tenure as Energy Secretary, sabotaged the U.S.-Mexico gas agreement. After the Schlesinger move, Castillo was converted overnight into a "nationalist" hero with the slogan "Hide the oil under the bed."

During the recess, Lucco indicated to me that Heberto Castillo's brand of Mexican nationalism now had to be "viewed as an independent variable" in estimating possibilities for internal political conflict in Mexico. "A la Khomeini," I thought to myself.

And the leading Mexican think tankers present, such as Carlos Rico of CIDE and Jorge Bustamante, government-sanctioned guru on immigration issues were indistinguishable from their U.S. colleagues. Rico exhaustively outlined how Central American instability can be imported into Mexico.

This column was contributed by Mexico City EIR correspondent Hector Apolinar.