

The fight for nuclear technology imports

by Timothy Rush

Only a handful of Third World countries—among them India, Iran, Iraq, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—have had both the economic resources and scientific-cadre capabilities to develop large-scale nuclear-energy programs.

For the international Malthusian forces operating behind the Club of Rome “limits to growth” ideology, these nuclear programs have represented a special target. Dr. Akbar Etemad, former director of Iran’s nuclear development program, touches on one of the most important reasons below in an exclusive interview with *EIR*: “What frightened everybody in the world was not that we were building nuclear plants; everybody knew that. What frightened the world was that we were training people [working on] research and development.”

That is, major nuclear programs are more than a cheap, vital energy source in the Third World; they are what Lyndon LaRouche called recently “science-driver” efforts which pull the entire nation forward along a high-technology path.

The zero-growth forces which overthrew the Shah in Iran saw to it that that nation’s pace-setting nuclear program was demolished as one of the first acts of Khomeini’s Dark Ages regime.

The chief battleground has now shifted to Mexico. There, the government’s official goal of building 20,000 MWe nuclear generating capacity by the year 2000 is now moving into its first significant implementation phase. Bidding for the next 2400 MWe of capacity was opened in October 1981, and seven firms from four countries jumped into the competition.

The Fifth International Scientific Forum on Changes in Energy was held in Mexico City Nov. 9-13, 1981. The Forum revealed in microcosm how the Mexico battle is shaping up.

This forum in the past has served as a vehicle for generally pro-nuclear and pro-growth scientific elements to meet and plan strategy. Representative of such strata

this year were Edward Teller of the United States; Homi Sethna, director of the Indian nuclear program; and a large group of the French nuclear elite, including nuclear pioneer Bertrand Goldschmidt.

However, this year neo-Malthusian forces were able to mount a strong challenge to the dominant tenor of the conference, due in large part to the nature of the chief sponsoring group in Mexico, the Colegio de México. The Colegio de México is, in American terms of reference, something of a cross between the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and the Brookings Institution. Its director, Victor Urquidi, is Mexico’s coordinator for the Club of Rome and his office represents the most significant command post of environmentalism and Malthusian anti-growth ideology in the country.

Colegio de México researcher Miguel Wionczek not only used his chairmanship of one of the conference’s panels to assail Mexico’s nuclear development plans, but brought in an Ivy League Khomeini apologist, Bijan Massavar-Rahmani, to attack Iran’s nuclear program under the Shah. With pointed reference to Mexico’s program, Massavar-Rahmani charged that a nuclear program makes no sense for oil-rich developing nations, and therefore the only way to explain the decisions of such nations to go nuclear is corruption of government officials.

The bulk of the participants from all countries were outraged by this perversion of the purposes of the conference. Official protests against the Urquidi-Wionczek manipulations were raised by U.S., French, and other Mexican representatives.

Indicative of the tenor the clashes was the exchange between Wionczek and Cecilia Soto de Estévez, the director of the Mexican Association for Fusion Energy. After Wionczek expressed satisfaction that Three Mile Island had “finished off” nuclear energy worldwide, Mrs. Estévez rose from the floor to ask how many Mexicans Mr. Wionczek believed should be eliminated in order to give Mexico the luxury of not having nuclear energy. Wionczek dismissed the “stupid” question as beneath him. Amidst cries from the floor of “Not at all . . . not at all . . . that’s not a stupid question,” the session almost broke up, and Wionczek was obliged to back off from any further comments.

Reflecting the strength of this pro-nuclear sentiment, the final document included a call for the United States to shed the exaggerated strictures of the Carter era and return to the Atoms for Peace philosophy of the Eisenhower years.

On hand to specifically refute the attacks on the Iranian program was the director of that program, Dr. Etemad. In the following interview with *EIR* made on the scene, he explains why nuclear was the real option for Iran in the pre-Khomeini era—and why it remains so today for the rest of the Third World.