

ROUGH TRANSLATION

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For an Anti-imperialist Nuclear Policy

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The polemic about the draft law for the reform of Article 27 dealing with nuclear matters has brought a broader discussion: What should be the national energy policy that is most appropriate, and in particular, what should the nuclear policy be?

It is easy to see that the state does not have an overall energy policy, or at least that the zig-zags in its policy result from the contradiction between the desire to develop the country and the dependence in all ways on ~~Amx~~ U.S. imperialism. Mexico is rich in oil, natural gas, and uranium; in water vapor for geothermal energy; and in water power in abundance in different parts of the country.

As hydrocarbons are the most abundant and the technology for exploiting them is the most-developed, they have been the basis for industrial growth. But they will not last forever. The policy followed by the government is to use them almost exclusively as fuels, or to exploit them irrationally in order to export them in massive quantities.

With uranium the same thing is happening. The attempt to divide the National Institute of Nuclear Energy (INEN) and grant contracts for the exploration, exploitation, and processing of uranium to multinational corporations would give to uranium the same role. On the other hand, in Laguna Verde two reactors have been installed that are operating on the basis of enriched uranium; they were bought through General Electric. The construction of the plant was done by Electric Bond and Sheir Corp., a subsidiary of GE, without the INEN having played any role at all.

As we see, the nuclear question, given its importance and complexity, is not a matter of mere theoretical debate. Hydrocarbons tend to be exhausted, and the petroleum and gas that Mexico possesses are being stored in the artificial

American wells. So it is necessary to further the implementation of new energy sources such as thermonuclear, magnetohydrodynamic [hydroelectric?], and solar. Of these, nuclear is the most developed worldwide.

In this discussion a problem appears that is technical on the surface but really political at bottom. It is a question of building either reactors based on enriched uranium and light water, or else ~~bx~~ reactors based on natural uranium and heavy water (the water is used as a moderator and coolant of the nucleus, which fuses [sic] to produce energy). If it is a question of small research reactors, the best thing is to study the different types in existence and prepare scientific cadres and technology for the future. But if it is a question of reactors for electricity production, things change.

The argument turns around the costs, the technology--which not only involves the exploitation of the uranium deposits, but also the building of reactors, the transport, storage, and reprocessing of the wastes (uranium has the quality of being able to be reprocessed after use and being used again)--and dependency.

Regarding costs, it is said that there is not much difference. The initial cost of a reactor based on enriched uranium is lower and more commercial, since this type is used in the U.S., England, France, Canada, and the USSR.

Regarding the technology, its existence in the country is poor in both cases. The most serious problem is presented regarding uranium enrichment: this requires special plants that Mexico cannot build for both technical and military reasons. Given that with enriched uranium it is easier to continue the process and build an atom bomb, the countries that possess such plants do not transfer them to other places. The nonproliferation ~~p~~ treaties have no other sense than to maintain the monopoly on atomic energy.

At present, uranium to be utilized in the plant at Laguna

Verde is being held back in the United States for political reasons. This could be repeated by the imperialists whenever they choose, thus increasing our dependence. Besides, the uranium that the U.S. enriches for other countries must be returned after it is used by them. Thus it becomes the owner of uranium that does not belong to it which it then rents to its rightful owners.

With the USSR more possibilities for agreements exist for uranium enrichment, but here imperialist pressures enter into play to prevent this. Nevertheless, this is a policy that must be looked into, although on the other hand it would not be logical for the USSR to sell enrichment plants --in which atom bombs could be produced-- to a capitalist country so geographically and politically close to the United States as our own.

Thus the most viable option for the moment seems to us to be the building of reactors based on natural uranium/heavy water. This also brings problems of costs, technological capacity, and scientific personnel; but it eliminates a fundamental point: the enrichment of uranium, which at present our country cannot do, according to the opinion of the Union of Nuclear Workers. ~~It~~ On the other hand, the possibilities do exist for acquiring the capacity to build natural-uranium reactors with a relatively superior technological independence.

This option would limit the imposition of a nuclear policy on the part of the United States and would avoid the U.S. having power over the country's uranium. It would also permit the development of a national technology and national scientific personnel that could be exported and exchanged with countries that use the same type of reactors, such as Argentina. It would also be part of an overall anti-imperialist energy policy, that with the support ~~of~~ fundamentally of the unions would lay the bases for a broad-scale anticapitalist polity. []