

## Reactor Sale to Libya Challenged

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) has called on the Soviet Union to halt the planned sale of a 400-megawatt nuclear power reactor to Libya. At a press conference held on 30 November, FAS chairman George Rathjens and director Jeremy Stone explained that the Soviet Union is making the sale despite the fact that Libya, which ratified the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975, has openly declared its intention to acquire nuclear weapons.

"This may be the first time anyone has asked a government to challenge a signatory to the NPT," said Stone. The FAS has written to President Carter proposing international sanctions against "bad faith adherence" to the treaty, and to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin suggesting that the sale be reconsidered.

Stone returned in October from a trip to Libya with about 100 Americans who were invited to Tripoli for an "Arab-American dialogue." Press reports over this decade have indicated that Libyan president Mouammar Qaddafi is eager to lay his hands on an atomic bomb, but Stone said he was "startled" to receive personal and unequivocal confirmation of the country's nuclear aspirations from top Libyan official Ahmed El-Shahati.

Libya in the past has asked Communist China for a nuclear weapon and is currently trying to obtain enriched material from the Pakistanis. It has already purchased a small research reactor from the Soviets. The new reactor would produce enough spent fuel to manufacture a half-dozen nuclear weapons a year, said Rathjens. The sale must be accompanied by a safeguards agreement approved by the International Agency for Atomic Energy; also, it is Soviet practice to retrieve spent fuels from reactors it sells. Nonetheless, the FAS contends the sale should be stopped in view of Libya's blatant attempts to acquire a nuclear weapons capacity.

Stone wrote a letter pointing this out to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and received a bland reply observing that all the requirements of such a sale were being adhered to and adding that the general absence of U.S. relationships with Libya made it difficult to exert any leverage on that country.

Relations with Libya are at quite a low ebb. According to Stone, the Pentagon has ranked that country only after the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and North Korea as a possible source of hostilities. Official interactions with Libya are limited to educating their students (of whom there are 2000 here, 10 percent of them studying nuclear science) and buying their oil (Rathjens noted that Libyans could produce power much more economically by building gas and oil plants rather than nuclear ones). Stone, whose December FAS newsletter is devoted to an account of his trip, says the Libyans are trying through business dealings in "small" states such as Idaho to gain political influence in the United States.

Libya is a haven for controversial figures from all over the world—ranging from Spiro Agnew, who arrived in town at the same time as the American delegation, to Idi Amin, whose pictures were plastered about the city, to innumerable revolutionary groups. In 7 hours, reported Stone, one American journalist said he met with members of underground movements from black Africa, Palestine, the Philippines, Panama, Tunisia, Turkey, and Sicily. Libya is a thriving training ground for terrorist groups and is known for its lenient attitude toward airplane hijackers; its policy, says Stone, seems to have changed from "brazen defiance to plausible deniability" now that it says it is anti-hijacker but sympathetic to terrorism "in the cause of national resistance." All in all, noted Stone, "they could hardly be worse customers" for nuclear hardware.

Stone believes that the Russians might rethink the reactor deal since "the U.S.S.R. has at least as much interest in nonproliferation as the U.S. does." In any case, the FAS thinks it is time to challenge the "bland assumption" that countries are adhering to NPT just because they have ratified it. The FAS notes that there are other "potential nuclear states" eager to join the club that are also "potential false adherents" to the treaty. Countries named were Taiwan, South Korea, Iraq, and Iran.—C.H.

Secretary Schlesinger vetoed as too high a price that had previously been agreed to by both Pemex and the consortium of U.S. companies that wanted to buy the gas. It created strong political opposition in Mexico toward any hydrocarbon exports to the United States. The price that Schlesinger rejected (\$2.60 per thousand cubic feet) was based on the world oil price, calculated in terms of the Btu value of number 2 heating oil delivered to New York, and the idea that Mexico should tighten its belt and sell off its resources to the United States for less than the world price resulted in nationalistic outrage, particularly in view of the history of petroleum relations between the two countries. According to sources in Mexico City, the Mexican people were angry with Schlesinger personally and the government had to assume a strong position. In early April, Foreign Minister Santiago Roel said Mexico would not accede to pressure from rich nations looking for resources. The rebuff was all the more embarrassing to the government because a huge pipeline from the oil fields in the south to the vicinity of the Texas border was already under construction.

The Mexican domestic market for natural gas is modest, and as the development of the southern oil fields (which contain about 35 percent gas) speeds along, the amount of gas produced is quickly exceeding the capacity of the Mexican economy to absorb it. To liquefy the gas and ship it to other countries would be an economic debacle (because of the huge costs for special ships and liquefaction plants, Mexico's net earning would be reduced from \$2.20 per thousand cubic feet for gas piped to Texas to 27 cents for gas shipped to Europe), so in fact Mexico does have few options other than to sell to the United States. But to state this publicly, as Schlesinger did when he said last January that Mexico "has to sell us the gas sooner or later," was impolitic, at the very least, and possibly shortsighted because the way the gas matter is handled—according to many observers—will have a large impact on the way the oil is developed. "Mexico may have to sell its gas to the United States," says one Washington energy analyst, "but it can sell its oil anywhere."

The gas matter is expected to come up again next spring, and to be on the agenda for Carter's visit in February. The White House has asked the State Department to get involved in preparing a "nonpolitical" assessment of the top price the United States could afford to pay at this time, and Brzezinski has re-