

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

More oil for Japan?

One of the leading nations to agree to Mexico's proposals that technology is a proper means of payment may soon have its energy problems alleviated.

It is a busy spring diplomatically in Mexico. With the government's March 18 decision to raise its oil production levels by a minimum of 10 percent, the long-standing interest of a number of potential customers in lining up increased deliveries of Mexican crude has once again taken off. And the highlights of the Mexican diplomatic agenda give a good idea of the scope of the negotiations.

March 29: Julio Rodolfo Motezuma Cid, Mexico's Coordinator of Special Development Projects, traveled to Paris to prepare President Lopez Portillo's forthcoming trip there.

March 30: Toshio Doko, the President of Japan's business federation Keidanren, arrived in Mexico City to discuss increased oil deliveries.

March 31: U.S. Energy Secretary Charles Duncan came to Mexico to discuss energy matters, in particular Mexican natural gas deliveries to the U.S.

April 1: U.S. Special Ambassador for Mexico Robert Krueger and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, William Bowdler, held a day's meeting in Mexico City with the Mexican President and two of his ministers. The subjects discussed were natural gas and the El Salvador crisis.

April 7: On approximately this date Mexican Industry Minister Andres De Oteyza will travel to India and then Japan.

Mid April: Japan will receive

Mrs. Lopez Portillo and Mexico City Mayor, Hank Gonzalez.

May 1: Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira will visit Mexico, after having stopped off first in Washington, D.C.

Late May: President Lopez Portillo will tour France, West Germany, Sweden, and Canada.

Who, if anybody, will receive increased Mexican oil shipments?

One well-informed Mexican source noted that there are few remaining question marks regarding two of the three countries involved in the above diplomacy. Mexico is known to be unresponsive to the American desire to, in the words of a recent Department of Energy memo, establish "a more permanent price relationship" regarding Mexican natural gas. Mexico will *not* grant the U.S. a guaranteed fixed price for future deliveries of gas, and will stick to its escalator clause in all contracts. And regarding France, Mexico is on record as being favorably disposed toward Giscard d'Estaing's independent policy stance vis-à-vis Washington, and has already initiated a number of significant joint ventures with that country.

But Japan remains a question mark in Mexican thinking. Mr. Doko did all the appropriate things during his Mexico stay, assuring his Mexican hosts that Japan wants to help Mexico develop, while reiterating Japan's desire to receive more than the 100,000 bpd of oil so far agreed to. And simul-

taneously with his trip, the Director General for Latin America and Caribbean Affairs in Japan's Foreign Ministry, Mr. Tadashi Ohtaka, told the Mexican daily *Universal* that "Japan will not invest with imperialist designs" in Mexico, but is instead "respectful in every country. Besides," Ohtaka added, "it should be clear to all Mexicans that we will not even indicate in which areas we will invest, but rather will submit to what they suggest. That is, we will complement them where they need capital to develop."

But high-level Mexican officials are expressing concern that, despite these statements of good intentions, Prime Minister Ohira is thinking on different lines. These officials expressed dismay to learn that Mr. Ohira plans to travel to Washington, D.C. *before* setting foot in Mexico.

Mr. Ohira will also not ingratiate himself with his Mexican hosts with his "Rim Pacific Project" proposal. A Japanese government official stationed in Mexico told *EIR* that Ohira's idea is to pull Mexico and Canada into an alliance with other Pacific nations (such as Japan) on energy matters. It is likely that the Mexican government will view this initiative as a barely disguised modification of the hated Energy Common Market proposal which the U.S. has consistently tried to encourage Mexico to accept.

On the record, President Lopez Portillo has told the press that "we would like this proposal to be made more precise" before commenting on it. Off the record, Mexicans will be wondering if Ohira didn't pick the idea up along the way in Washington.