

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

The case of Mr. Juan Eibenschutz

The head of the National Energy Commission looks like the first casualty as a more pronuclear energy plan takes hold.

On the eve of the unveiling of Mexico's new National Energy Plan (PNE) Oct. 14, a shake-up in the government energy planning area gives some important clues as to the winners and losers in a major behind-the-scenes planning fight.

The big loser is Juan Eibenschutz, head of the National Energy Commission. He woke up Oct. 1 to find that he had been kicked upstairs to a management post in the Federal Electricity Commission. According to friends, the change came as a *fait accompli*. Eibenschutz had made a name for himself as a determined environmentalist and "solar-ólogo," as the big solar-energy boosters are known here.

The winners include the pronuclear forces in energy planning. According to numerous sources, the Energy Plan will give a strong boost to nuclear. And one of the primary authors of the plan, Adrian Lajous, Jr., was named to take Eibenschutz's post.

A consultant for the U.S. Department of Energy passing through here last week reports he could feel which way the wind is blowing from the Mexican response to the DOE proposal that a world-scale solar energy demonstration project be conducted in Mexico jointly with the DOE and the U.S. Congress. "You may find yourself in competition with nuclear for funds," he was told. The priorities in the new plan for energy sources are nuclear, hydro and

geothermal—not solar.

The Energy Plan should also be a boost for the "rapid growth" advocates in the cabinet, led by Industries Minister de Oteyza, over the "slower growth" faction headed by Finance Minister David Ibarra. One principal drafter of the PNE, Vladimiro Brailowski, had earned his spurs designing the 1979 high growth National Industrial Development Plan (PNDI) for de Oteyza.

The fall of Eibenschutz from the Energy Commission post damages a deeply rooted faction in energy planning here, which under a nominal "pronuclear" cover has in fact done everything possible to shift Mexican energy policy into a replica of the disastrous policies followed by the Carter administration.

Fernando Hiriart, the Undersecretary for Mines and Energy in the powerful Resources and Industrial Development Ministry (Sepafin), took over his post in 1977 with remarks like: "Mexico must not imitate foreign models of industrial development. We should follow instead a road of appropriate technologies. . . . The traditional 8 percent growth of the electric sector must be slowed down to 6 percent. . . . We must save energy."

It was Hiriart who appointed his sidekick Eibenschutz to the Energy Commission post. Immediately, a series of seminars, publications and publicity campaigns were issued from the commission around the theme of energy conservation.

In 1978 discussions with the Mexican Fusion Energy Association (AMEF), Eibenschutz strongly defended the dean of European environmentalism and antinuclear campaigns, Count Otto von Hapsburg. "I know him personally and he is a very close friend of mine indeed," he stated.

Eibenschutz also told the AMEF that Pemex director Jorge Díaz Serrano was a disaster for Mexican energy policy: "He augmented the reserves magically. He is overexploiting the wells. . . . He knows nothing about energy."

Abroad, Eibenschutz collaborated closely with the Workshop on Alternative Energy Systems (WAES), run by U.S. Trilateral commissioner Carroll Wilson. The WAES report was conceived to provide academic rationale for Carter's incompetent antinuclear and conservationist policies.

But other officials, serious about developing Mexico's nuclear potential, shaped President López Portillo's May trip through France, West Germany, Sweden and Canada around the nuclear technology theme. López Portillo himself, during the trip, aggressively defined nuclear as "the most important" energy source worldwide to replace oil in the 21st century.

When senior politician Hugo Cervantes del Río was axed as head of the Federal Electricity Commission in June, the hubbub focused on generating capacity failures that came during a period of drought. What may have been equally significant is that Cervantes, an indifferent advocate of nuclear, was replaced by Alberto Escofet Arigas, a major pronuclear spokesman. Ironically, Eibenschutz's new job puts him under Escofet's thumb.