

advantage translates efficiently in the expected performances of the two processes.

While the costs and investments required by the two processes are of comparable magnitude, about \$20 per SWU against \$150 with gaseous diffusion, one of the yardsticks to be used to compare various processes is the separation factor, i.e., the ratio of relative abundance of U-235 before and after the processing of one SWU. For gaseous diffusion, the separation factor is 1.00043; for ultracentrifugation, it is 1.5; for both laser processes mentioned, it is 10. In other words, if you start with natural uranium (0.71% U-235), you obtain after one separative element the following concentrations: 0.7103% for gaseous diffusion, 1.065% for ultracentrifugation, and 7.1% for laser processes. With laser enrichment, it is much easier to obtain the higher U-235 concentrations needed for military use (more than 90%), for feeding the starting period of an ambitious fast breeder reactor program (12 to 15%), and for future liquid-fuel nuclear fission reactors.

Laser separation techniques also valorize natural uranium much better, because they allow a lowering to almost zero of the U-235 content in the waste uranium (about 0.2 to 0.3% with conventional techniques). In other words, laser enrichment processes reduce by 20 to 30% the amount of natural uranium needed. Furthermore, laser processes not only allow separation of U-235 from U-238, but also allow extraction of parasitical uranium isotopes, especially U-236 which does not occur naturally but is created in nuclear reactors, complicating the recycling of the uranium extracted during reprocessing of burnt-up nuclear fuels. This means that it becomes possible to recover the totality of the U-235 (usually about 0.9%) still contained in burnt-up fuels. This makes reprocessing significantly more cost-efficient.

Thus, laser enrichment technologies are more efficient than ultracentrifugation, especially if we intend quick expansion of worldwide nuclear-energy use, including the expansion of advanced reactor designs and processes such as fast breeders, reprocessing, liquid fuel reactors, etc.

It is to be noted that all the modern processes presently in competition require and may stimulate frontier technology developments. Ultracentrifugation needs ultra-resistant materials developed by the aerospace industry; laser processes imply an improvement of existing lasers and a better knowledge of laser-matter interaction; cyclotron resonance is related to plasma physics and may help to shorten the path to thermonuclear fusion. But in the present situation, improvement of laser technologies is certainly what is most urgently required, because of civilian (laser cutting, inertial fusion, telecommunications, etc.) as well as military (beam-weapons) applications.

It is thus to be hoped that the DOE policymakers will not be too prudent and short-sighted in their choice, selecting the "easier" ultracentrifugation technique, but will consider the significance of the spinoffs associated with directed energy techniques.

Panama labor puts

by Carlos Wesley

Within days after Panama's National Council of Organized Workers (Conato) held its second conference on Jan. 10 and 11 on "The IMF and Ibero-America's Debt Crisis," the battle has heated up between Panamanian President Nicolas Ardita Barletta's attempt to impose the International Monetary Fund's austerity program piecemeal and an anti-austerity alliance led by the country's organized labor movement and informed by the program outlined in *EIR's* cover story of Jan. 7, 1985 ("A winning strategy for the second Panama Canal").

The two-day Conato conference in Panama City concluded with a call for global debt negotiations between the governments of the creditor countries and the debtor nations; suspension of debt repayments until the economic situation of the indebted countries improves; and the building of great development projects, such as a second Panama canal at sea level, capable of handling ships of 300,000 tons. This would industrialize Panama.

More than 200 labor leaders participated in the conference, including delegations of trade unionists from Argentina, Colombia, and Peru. Among the featured speakers were four leaders of the international Schiller Institute, who carried the day against an unholy alliance of Jesuit-tied and Communist Party economists opposed to the debt moratorium and infrastructure-project proposals.

Less than a week later, 150,000 Panamanians went out on Jan. 17 on a 24-hour strike to protest President Barletta's steps toward implementation of the IMF's demands to hand over control of the economy to foreign creditors. Barletta has announced that 20,000 public workers would be laid off, and that three state enterprises would be sold. To sweeten the pill, the U.S. banks have granted a three-month extension in debt repayments and a \$30 million outright gift to Panama—an unheard-of concession. The mass protests of late November-early December had forced Barletta to back down from his decision to mandate the full IMF austerity program at that time.

'The IMF made a mistake'

Eduardo Ríos, the leader of Panama's Building Trades and Allied Workers Union and the current coordinator of Conato who chaired the Jan. 10-11 conference, reported that "when Panama's President Nicolas Ardito Barletta, the former vice president of the World Bank for Latin America, proposed an International Monetary Fund austerity package to pay the debt a few months ago, most people didn't even know what the IMF was." Ríos continued: "I knew a little because I had just subscribed to the Spanish version of *Ex-*

IMF on the line

ecutive Intelligence Review, so I proposed that we hold a conference, our first on the subject, to educate the workers. Not one of those 'economists' saw fit to address us. We had to find a local millionaire, who happens to have a degree in economics, to explain the IMF to us."

"In fact," Ríos added, "as we undertook our successful fight to force rescinding of the IMF package, the Jesuits attempted to turn it into a subversive movement to bring down the nationalist institutions established by Gen. Omar Torrijos, while the Communists made a secret deal with Barletta agreeing to give away many of the gains contained in the Labor Code.

"Because of my involvement in the Trade Union Commission of the Schiller Institute, I have been able to broaden the perspectives of the labor movement. The IMF made a big mistake by demanding that the Labor Code be reformed to ram austerity down our throats. They stepped on our turf, now we are stepping on theirs. We have decided to master economics. We are no longer fighting for just that extra nickel an hour. Now we are also fighting for the economic development of the nation and all of Latin America."

Fearing that Ríos's perspective would gain increasing ascendancy over the whole labor movement at the Jan. 10-11 conference, the leaders of the communist-led and Jesuit-led labor federations attempted to sabotage it. First, the Communist Party and the Jesuit-led federations kept their members away. In this they were greatly aided by Minister of Labor Luís Anderson, a self-proclaimed friend of Henry Kissinger and Lane Kirkland. Not only were members of his own AFL-CIO affiliated labor federation not allowed to attend but at the last minute, his ministry denied permits for local leaders and shop stewards of three other federations. This cut down expected attendance from 600 to 200.

Second, although the Jesuits and the communist federations kept their members away, they insisted that their "economists" be speakers at the conference.

Communists, Jesuits routed

At the first session, a panel presentation on the IMF and the Ibero-American Economic Crisis, an economist from the Jesuit-led think-tank "Diálogo Social" droned on in Marxist verbiage long past his allotted time, with interminable and incomprehensible statistics that absolved the IMF of any blame for the economic crisis. The audience outlasted him. He was followed by a Communist Party economist who also criticized everything, suggesting the proposal for building a sea level canal was an imperialist plot, and that the debt

moratorium was a plot by the Pentagon to create a justification for invading Latin America. He also refused to offer any alternatives to IMF austerity. "There are no short-term, or medium-term solutions," he said. As for long-term solutions, he said, "We are in the process of writing a book and we will spell them out there."

Schiller Institute representative Maximiliano Londoño took the podium next and, as Ríos later described it, "He gave the other guys a body blow." Londoño explained how the IMF had used the debt to prevent development and to promote the transformation of the Latin American nations into drug economies. He said it was usurious high interest rates, not borrowing, which had provoked the crisis, and that it was wrong to accept the notion that it was too many people, not lack of development, that caused poverty. Ibero-America, he said, should form a debtors' cartel and force the creditor nations to renegotiate. A united Ibero-America, said Londoño, could become an economic superpower, and the greatest resource to make this possible was represented in the very hall of the conference: "Your minds, which you must develop. You must think big, you must think as generals, for this is war." He got a standing ovation.

Following this rout, the Communists decided that discretion was the better part of valor: Their scheduled speaker simply didn't show up for the second session, which was on Central America, abandoning the field to Schiller Institute spokesman Fernando Quijano. Quijano said that the efforts of the Contadora Group were the best hope for peace in Central America, and that the problems of the region could best be solved by economic development, and not by turning it into a field for East-West conflict as Henry Kissinger was trying to do. However, the two or three communists in the audience got up to challenge Quijano for saying that the "Soviet Union was responsible for the crisis in Central America," something which he had not said! The audience had no trouble seeing through this transparent attempt to change the focus of the conference.

The third session, on Jan. 11, had as its theme "Sink the IMF; Let's Build a New Canal." It was addressed by Panamanian engineer Demostenes Vergara, author of proposal for a sea-level canal, and by Dr. Uwe Parpart v. Henke and Carlos Wesley of the Schiller Institute.

Dr. Parpart evoked laughter when he began: "I have never heard such economic drivel as that mouthed yesterday by the so-called Marxists." He explained that Panama's economy depended on the canal. Since the present one would be obsolete by the year 2000, construction of a new one should start as rapidly as possible.

Parpart also pointed out that "the principal opposition to the second Panama Canal comes from the very same State Department functionaries and others tied to the Kissinger crowd, to the Robert McNamaras, to the McGeorge Bundys, who insist that the United States continue to support the IMF's genocidal policies."