Kra Canal: on Thailand's horizon

While projects for a new inter-oceanic canal in Panama or Colombia are still only in the proposal stage, at the other side of the Pacific the "Kra Canal," promoted since the early 1980s by *EIR* and the Fusion Energy Foundation, is being moved toward realization.

On Jan. 15, a special committee of the Thailand parliament will visit the proposed site for the construction of a canal through the Isthmus of Kra in southern Thailand. The proposal now on the agenda in Thailand is for a two-lane canal, adequate for supertanker passage, which would join the Andaman Sea in the west with the Gulf of Thailand. The canal would shorten the route between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. By the end of January, the parliamentary committee is expected to pass a mandate for a government-commissioned full feasibility on the proposal.

Immediately, the Kra Canal would alleviate the dangerously increasing traffic through the narrow straits between Singapore and Indonesia, with a shorter route across the Thai isthmus. Also proposed is a superport to be constructed at the current city of Songkla at the eastern end of the canal, which would service all of Southeast Asia. An industrial zone would also be built up along the canal sides, marking a total shift in Thailand's economy toward full industrialization.

The parliamentary committee has heard testimony from Uwe Henke v. Parpart, director of research for the U.S.-based Fusion Energy Foundation, from Mr. K.Y. Chao, who financed a feasibility study for the canal in 1973, and Gen. Saiyud Kerdpol (ret.) of Thailand, who has argued that the canal is vital for Thailand's national prosperity and hence, vital to its national security.

In 1973, the canal was on both Thailand and Japan's agenda, as critical for world trade flows from the Mideast to Japan and the western United States. But with the 1973 oil hoax, the idea was put back on the shelf. In 1983, the Fusion Energy Foundation began a campaign for the canal in Thailand as one of the key projects specified in both Lyndon LaRouche's economic development plan for the Pacific Basin, and by the Global Infrastructure Fund of Japan.

The enemies of the canal are, not surprisingly, those who take their orders from the technocrats of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Henry Kissinger also has voiced his desire to return the "canal to the graveyard forever."

But in the past two years, the Thai economy has been hit hard by IMF-enforced austerity and currency devaluations. Thai leaders in government, military, and business, are now looking to the canal as the only alternative to the total destruction of the Thai economy.

can be placed so as to practically dig the channel in the desired shape, leaving very little subsequent earth-moving to be done.

The charge that PNEs will release dangerous radiation is a hoax. The explosions create little or no radiation in the first place, so little that it would be dissipated before having any effect on the environment. But, if properly engineered, the explosions themselves create sealed compartments that prevent the little radiation that might be there from leaking into the environment.

Finally, although the technology is largely monopolized by the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States is under obligation, by the explicit terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to share the PNE technology with any nation that requests it. No nation has to date made such a request, but it is high time they did.

In terms of the great projects discussed in this chapter, PNEs could make a very great contribution especially to the trans-Andean water projects and in road and railroad construction, where the use of PNEs could easily reduce construction times up to 75% or more, cut costs in half or less, and make feasible projects that otherwise couldn't be done at all.

Air transport

Finally, an expanded program of air transport, for both passenger and freight, needs to be implemented. Ibero-America's accidental geography, including the Andes, means that air transport will always be needed for moving high-value items. To satisfy the needs of the next century, trans-continental passenger traffic will increase dramatically, primarily for business purposes. To satisfy these needs, all of the major cities of Ibero-America will have to either greatly expand their existing airports, where that is physically feasible, or construct entirely new airports. Moreover, smaller airports need to be constructed linking hundreds of smaller cities.

For the short term, most airports today have ample unused capacity, which means that simple scheduling of more flights at off-hours can meet the new requirements. There is also excess freight capacity, as most passenger airline flights have room for considerable air freight in their holds that is not now being utilized. However, in the future, the continent will need to develop specialized fleets of cargo planes that can efficiently transport high-value cargos such as capital goods.

Next week: Water resources management projects.