

Ibero-American Conference meets

Pledges to strengthen science and technology

At the first Ibero-American Conference on Science and Technology, held in Madrid, Spain from Jan. 29-31, representatives from Latin America, the Philippines, Portugal, and Spain agreed to establish a permanent General Financing Fund to aid in the "development of investigations in Latin America" and to "promote joint research between Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and the Philippines by strengthening the scientific and technological capacity of each individual country and the group as a whole."

The conference, organized by the Ibero-American Cooperation Center, was convened to define what are the technological and scientific needs of Latin American countries and to outline "concrete programs" to meet those needs. Top on the agenda was the state of labor power in the respective nations and what measures should be taken to increase the potentialities of labor power.

This initiative is another step by Spain to become the "bridge" between Latin America and the Europe of the European Monetary System. Manuel del Prado, president of the Ibero-American Cooperation Center, made this clear in a statement to the press one day before the conference convened: "The conference will allow for a definition of a new dimension in relations between the participant countries.... If Spain joins the Common

Market, it would be the main spokesman of Ibero-American rights in that institution."

Opening the conference, the Spanish Minister of Industry Rodríguez Sahagún pointed to the direction that Spanish efforts could take in the future. It is very important to bring together scientists and investigators, he said, but there is also the need to gather together those who "apply science," that is, industrialists and technicians.

At the conference were research and development ministers from 17 Latin American countries, Portugal, Spain, and the Philippines and delegations from the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Andean Pact, and the Inter-American Commission on Nuclear Energy.

Applying technological know-how

The research and development ministers reported on the state of scientific investigations in their respective countries. A seminar was then held on "programs of joint actions in scientific and technological investigations." It was as a result of these discussions that the Financing Fund was proposed and approved. The research programs to be financed by the fund include nuclear energy, raw materials, human resource development, agriculture, and food-growing techniques. In the future,

The conference

When: Jan. 29-31, 1979.

Where: Madrid, Spain.

Who attended: representatives from Argentina, Mexico, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, Guatemala, Haiti, Panama, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia.

What was discussed: 1) the state of scientific investigations in each country, 2) the scientific and technological needs of the Ibero-American countries, 3) the global priorities to be tackled, 4) the possibilities for joint bilateral investigations, 5) the problems to be solved in the administrative, juridical, and financing field before engaging in bilateral investigations, and 6) the education and training of labor power.

What was decided: to establish a General Financing Fund with an initial \$4 million per year to promote scientific and technological investigations and, in the future, the transfer of technology; and to present a common position at the United Nations Conference for Science and Technology to be held in Vienna next August.

What is in the future: additional bilateral or group meetings by representatives of the participating nations after the delegates report back; other ministerial level meetings have been suggested as have meetings of Ibero-American industrialists and technicians; an Ibero-American heads of state meeting in Madrid being mooted by the Spanish press; and more in the series of conferences on science and technology.

the fund's role will be expanded to include the transfer of technology. Its board of directors will be made up of scientists, technicians, and industrialists.

In his speech to the conference, the Spanish Minister of Science and Education, Inigo Cavero, announced that Spain has a three-year plan to invest \$900 million in a scientific program. "We must raise general consciousness to the fact that scientific investigation is, in itself, a cultural value which no country can ignore and that this value undoubtedly has an economic expression which cannot be overlooked."

The scientific program, the Minister added, will "increase investigations both in the universities and in the Superior Council of Scientific Investigations (CSIC)." The CSIC, one of the main operational centers of the Opus Dei organization in postwar Spain for the promotion of scientific investigations and application, made a public request on Jan. 25 for a reorganization "within the frame of a general plan for scientific investigations, including all the sectors involved in Spanish investigations. The CSIC Board of Directors made three proposals: (1) to release information about future plans by government officials involved in investigations, (2) that a parliamentary debate be initiated on present and future investigations to clarify the position of every political party, and (3) that a law of investigation be drafted as a departure point for new investigation efforts.

The role of the universities

Peruvian delegate Antonio Pinilla delivered probably the most well received presentation. One of the main problems faced by Latin America, he said, is the state of its universities because of the "negative influence of the French Encyclopedia which continues to this day and which teaches to repeat but not to think." He stressed the importance of redefining the concept of a university as a "center for critical thinking and scientific investigation.... The countries that have given more importance to science are the ones that have achieved more important development."

Dr. Heriberto Herrera, Science Attaché from the Mexican Embassy in Spain, concurred. His speech highlighted the importance which Mexico has given in its present development plans to "the formation of personnel prepared to properly apply science and technology."

Spanish scientist Luis Arizmendi explained that Spain has been able to assimilate advanced technology precisely because it has a broad layer of technicians and scientific cadre as well as many research units.

The ministers in attendance also pointed to the "brain drain" or "inverse transference of technology" as a problem. The best professional cadre formed by the Third World have to emigrate because the "developing countries do not have the conditions and infrastructure to keep them," the Venezuelan daily *el Nacional*

editorialized on Feb. 5. "The Ibero-American community," continued the daily, "will present a common position at the United Nations conference on Science and Technology to be held in Vienna next August; but regardless of the results obtained at that international conference, Spain, Portugal and Latin America have already decided... to prevent emigration of its scientists" by creating a "network of investigation centers and also bases for the training and formation of personnel."

—R.D. Cedeno

A university to foster development

Last October, the Venezuelan Ambassador to Spain, Ernesto Santander, proposed the creation of an Ibero-Arab-American University on Spanish soil to be backed with OPEC funds and to help create the technical and scientific cadre needed for Third World development plans. The following are excerpts of Santander's proposal published in the Spanish weekly Cambio 16 last October.

We launch the idea of creating an Ibero-Arab-American University especially dedicated to the search for new energies that could guarantee the industrial development of humanity.... The search for a new world demands a university that can facilitate cooperation between the developed and developing worlds, a university that would fundamentally study the energy problems of the world.... This university, made possible by an Ibero-Arab-American agreement, should be specifically promoted by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the important international instrument of the Third World which has prevented confrontation and conflict between the industrialized countries and the producers of raw materials. This organization (OPEC) would assume an active role in areas that go beyond the mere oil problem and would express its concrete support for structuring the new mentality which must be at the service of a new international economic order, thus acquiring plausible moral standards.... We are conscious that this is a high and demanding idea which demands an initial strategy in agreement with the final aims, as well as permanent fighters to achieve such a formidable goal. We are equally conscious that there is no ethnic superiority, but an evident technological superiority; however, it is possible and necessary to gain that technological superiority in universities of real learning and in centers demanding high standards of investigation. Our strength lies in unity and modernization, our power in the gradual conquest of technical and scientific knowledge.