

U.A.E.'s Economic Humanism Builds a Modern Nation

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

“Wealth is not money. Wealth lies in men. This is where true power lies, the power that we value. They are the shield behind which we seek protection. This is what has convinced us to direct all our resources to building the individual, and to using the wealth which which God has provided us in the service of the nation, so that it may grow and prosper.

“Unless wealth is used in conjunction with knowledge to plan for its use, and unless there are enlightened intellects to direct it, its fate is to diminish and to disappear. The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people.”

These are the words of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and president of the federation of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). With this concept of economics, which is in direct contradiction to the fundamental axioms of liberal economics, based on monetary profit, Sheikh Zayed has overseen the development of the U.A.E., from a desert inhabited by small numbers of Bedouins, to a thriving, modern economy with a fast-growing, cosmopolitan population. During the same period, roughly, in which the economies of the “advanced sector”—Western Europe and the United States—were decomposing, under the blows of deregulation, globalization, and the frenzied stock-market speculation, the relatively tiny economy of the U.A.E. developed by leaps and bounds.

A Short History

The countries joined in the federation known as the U.A.E., were historically sheikhdoms, ruled by families, whose economies were based on simple agriculture, fishing, and raising livestock. In 1820, Great Britain began to play a role in the area, by signing a series of truces with the ruling families, in order to safeguard British shipping. The “Trucial States,” as they became known, felt British influence, until 1968, when Britain announced it would abandon its protectorate commitments east of the Suez Canal, which it completed in 1971. In that year, the seven Trucial States of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Dubai, Ras al Khaymah and Umm al Qaywan, joined together to form the U.A.E. and declared their independence, as did Bahrain and Qatar.

The crucial factor triggering economic change in the region, was the discovery of oil, first in Bahrain in 1932, then in Qatar in 1939. It had been found in Iran in 1911, and was

developed in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s. By contrast, the two leading oil producers of the emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, discovered and developed oil only in the 1960s. Following British disengagement, most of the countries in the region moved to take over the oil concerns, which became state-owned.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, born in 1918, was named after his grandfather, Sheikh Zayed bin Khalifa, who had ruled the emirate for an extraordinarily long time, from 1855 to 1909. As a young man, the later Sheikh Zayed spent a long time in the desert with Bedouin tribesmen, during which he learned a great deal about falconry, camel breeding, and above all, the vital role of water in human existence. In 1946, he was chosen to be the ruler’s representative in the Eastern region of Abu Dhabi, around the oasis of Al Ain, which consisted of nine villages based on agriculture. Sheikh Zayed organized improvements in the water supply, by having the ancient underground water channels or *falajes* cleaned out, and developing new ones. Soon, Sheikh Zayed developed a city plan, and started what was to become a large-scale reforestation program, which, in the meantime, has made Al Ain an area dominated by greenery.

With the discovery of oil, major financial resources became available, which made possible Sheikh Zayed’s vision of transforming the desert land into a modern country, like those he visited in Europe during a trip in 1953. In 1966, he became ruler of Abu Dhabi, and in 1971, following the establishment of the U.A.E., he was elected its President, a position he has held until the present.

Natural Resources at Man’s Service

Following his fundamental concept, that the wealth of a country lies not in material riches, or in raw materials resources per se, but in its educated labor force, Sheikh Zayed allocated the increasing oil revenues to the development of basic infrastructure, for transportation, electricity, education, and public health. In 1973, it was decided that the government of Abu Dhabi, which had the greatest share of oil and gas resources of all the U.A.E., would take a controlling share of the former, and total ownership over the latter.

With these resources, basic infrastructure has been built up, allowing for the population to grow from 250,000 in 1971 to 3.3 million in 2001. A large part of the working population

has been made up of expatriates who came from Asia and all over the Arab world, due to the lack, initially, of a skilled labor force in the country. Sheikh Zayed's commitment has been to develop the native population, into a modern labor force, convinced of the economic, social and moral importance of productive labor: "Work is of great importance, and of great value in building both individuals and societies. The size of a salary is not the measure of the worth of an individual. What is important is an individual's sense of dignity and self-respect. It is my duty as the leader of the young people of this country to encourage them to work and to exert themselves in order to raise their own standards and to be of service to the country. The individual who is healthy and of a sound mind and body but who does not work commits a crime against himself and against society.

"We look forward in the future to seeing our sons and daughters playing a more active role broadening their participation in the process of development, and shouldering their share of the responsibilities, especially in the private sector, so as to lay the foundations for the success of this participation and effectiveness. At the same time, we are greatly concerned to raise the standard and dignity of the work ethic in our society, and to increase the percentage of citizens in our labor force. This can be achieved by following a realistic and well-planned approach that will improve performance and productivity, moving toward the long-term goal of secure and comprehensive development."

The approach outlined here, includes gradually progressing from a society with basic infrastructure, to one with advanced agriculture, to an industrialized state. When one visits Abu Dhabi today, one sees this process under way, as the capital city is a thoroughly modern metropolis, with elegant, high-rise buildings, designed with an Islamic touch, for housing as well as business offices. Government programs like the Sheikh Zayed Housing program, set up in 1999, provide interest-free loans for lower-income citizens. Another program, the Abu Dhabi Department of Social Services and Commercial Buildings, financed the construction of 6,000 buildings with 93,000 apartments earmarked for citizens, who can repay their financing over a long term. A third program provides funds for loans for citizens to build their own homes. Such programs are not restricted to the capital, but cover the entire country.

A similar approach has been followed for the construction of energy and water infrastructure, the latter based on extensive desalination plants, to provide the water required for domestic, industrial and agricultural use. The vast expanses of green throughout the capital, testify to the attention paid to this vital resource.

Abu Dhabi, as characteristic of the U.A.E., is a striking example of how raw materials resources can be invested, not in palatial estates, but in the physical economy of a country, beginning with the infrastructure required to develop a modern, educated population.

Mexico in Crosshairs Of Human Rights 'Mafia'

by Rubén Cota Meza

Former Mexican President Luis Echeverría Alvarez (1970-76) appeared before the Special Prosecutor for Past Political and Social Movements on July 2, and again on July 9. Echeverría faces charges of "genocide," "forced disappearance," and "abuse of authority," for his alleged responsibility for the bloody events of Oct. 2, 1968, when demonstrating students were killed in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Plaza, and of June 10, 1971, when paramilitary gangs attacked demonstrators near the city's Zócalo square.

Simultaneous with Echeverría's appearance, the Mexican daily *Reforma* interviewed Argentine guerrilla Enrique Gorriarán Merlo in his jail cell at Villa Devoto; he is serving a life sentence for the killing of 39 people in the Jan. 23, 1989 attack on the La Tablada military barracks, carried out under Gorriarán Merlo's orders by the Movimiento Todos por la Patria (All for the Fatherland).

Three days later, on July 5, the prisoner's daughter, Adriana Gorriarán, met with Mexican Foreign Affairs Secretary Jorge Castañeda, who immediately delivered to Mexican President Vicente Fox a letter in which she reveals alleged illegalities in the arrest of her father, which was carried out in Mexico, in October 1996. Gorriarán's lawyer Rodolfo Yanzón declared that both Jorge Castañeda and Fox himself have already pronounced on the alleged illegality of the arrest, but that "we want an explicit and formal statement by the Mexican government."

Evidently, both the *Reforma* interview with Gorriarán Merlo and Castañeda's meeting with Gorriarán's envoy, were pre-arranged by the Foreign Secretary himself.

Trying and jailing heads of state and officials of former governments, along with retired or active duty military officers, on the one hand, and freeing terrorists who took up arms against those governments, on the other, is the chosen vehicle—flagrantly seen in Peru as well—of the international financial oligarchy to finish off the sovereign nation-state itself.

MSIA Leader: Nation Is Target

Marivilia Carrasco, president of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement, collaborators of Lyndon LaRouche in Mexico, issued a statement on July 10, noting that "such events do, in fact, merit a serious 'truth commission' inquiry, capable of confirming, for example, that on Oct. 2, soldiers not only did not receive orders to shoot at the demonstrators,