July 01, 1974
Telegram, Brazilian Embassy in Buenos Aires, 'Visit of an Embassy Employee to the Nuclear Center [at] Atucha'

Citation:

Summary:
Report from the Brazilian Embassy in Buenos Aires about the visit of Brazil’s Superior War College to the Atucha nuclear plant. There its director, Jorge Cosentino, explained the Argentine nuclear program in detail and expressed interest in finding formulas for cooperation with Brazil in the nuclear field.

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Portuguese

Contents:
- English Translation
- Scan of Original Document
VISIT OF AN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE TO THE NUCLEAR CENTER ATUCHA.

1520-MONDAY-16-15 HS – TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BRAZILIAN WAR COLLEGE DELEGATION’S VISIT TO THE NUCLEAR CENTER ATUCHA, I DESIGNATED THE SECRETARY LUIZ AUGUSTO DE CASTRO NEVES, WHO HERE DEALS WITH SUBJECTS RELATED TO ATOMIC ENERGY, TO ACOMPANY THE WAR COLLEGE’S DELEGATION ON THIS TRIP.

2. AT ATUCHA, LOCATED 110 KILOMETERS FROM BUENOS AIRES, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER PARANA DE LAS PALMAS, THE DELEGATION WAS RECEIVED BY ENGINEER COSENTINO, ITS DIRECTOR, WHO GAVE AN INITIAL PRESENTATION ABOUT HOW THE REACTORS OPERATES, AS WELL AS SPEAKING AMPLY ABOUT THE REASONS THAT LED ARGENTINA TO CHOOSE NATURAL URANIUM AS THE FISSIONABLE MATERIAL TO USE FOR ITS SECOND NUCLEAR REACTOR. ABOUT THIS POINT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO MENTION THAT COSENTINO PLAYED A CRUCIAL PART IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS, HAVING, AT THE TIME OF THE DECISION, STOOD IN OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENT LANUSSE, WHO CONTEMPLATED USING ENRICHED URANIUM.

3. THE REACTOR, WHICH HAS THE CAPACITY TO PRODUCE 319 THOUSAND KW, IS STILL NOT FUNCTIONING AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY – ITS CONTROL PANEL MEASURED CURRENT PRODUCTION AT 237 THOUSAND KW. ALL EQUIPMENT IS MADE BY SIEMENS, AND BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE REACTOR, ALL THE BOARDS AND INSTRUCTION SIGNS ARE IN SPANISH AND GERMAN. ACCORDING TO WHAT I WAS TOLD, IT WAS BARELY TEN DAYS AGO THAT OPERATION OF THE REACTOR WAS PASSED TO ARGENTINIAN HANDS.

4. ARGENTINA IMPORTED 327.08 TONS OF HEAVY WATER TO RUN THE REACTOR (300 TONS FROM THE UNITED STATES AND 27.08 TONS FROM THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, THE LAST SHIPMENT WAS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE DAILY LOST OF 600 GRAMS).

5. THE PLUTONIUM GENERATED BY ATUCHA IS STORED IN POOLS, IN A BUILDING ADJACENT TO THE REACTOR. ACCORDING TO COSENTINO, THIS PLUTONIUM IS NOT PROCESSED, RATHER, IT IS STOCKED, AND THERE ARE NO PLANS FOR THE FUEL TO BE REUSED BY THAT SAME REACTOR. HE FURTHER STATED THAT, DUE TO THE LONG PERIODS OF TIME THAT THE COMBUSTION RODS REMAIN WITHIN THE REACTOR, THE PLUTONIUM GENERATED THERE ONLY CONTAINS EVEN ISOTOPES (240 AND 242), WHICH CANNOT BE USED FOR EXPLOSIVE PURPOSES. TO OBTAIN PLUTONIUM FOR EXPLOSIVE PURPOSES, ACCORDING TO COSENTINO, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO GREATLY AUGMENT THE FUEL CONSUMPTION, AS WELL AS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX AND LABOROUS OPERATION AT THE REACTOR. COSENTINO CLEARLY STATED THAT ARGENTINA HAS ABSOLUTLY NO INTENTIONS OF FABRICATING NUCLEAR BOMBS, AND THAT ARGENTINA IS HAPPY TO RECEIVE BRAZILIAN SCIENTISTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT ARGENTINA’S NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

6. COSENTINO REVEALED THAT HE HOPED BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA WOULD COME TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. HE STATED THAT, TO THIS DAY,
SUCH COLLABORATION HAS BEEN MORE A FORMALITY THEN AN EFFECTIVE PROCESS, FOR “SOME REASON THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW.” HE BELIEVES THAT SINCE BRAZIL HAS OPTED TO USE ENRICHED URANIUM IN ITS REACTORS, BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE LOTS OF INFORMATION TO EXCHANGE WITH EACH OTHER, DUE TO THEIR DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES IN THIS FIELD. HE DEMONSTRATED THAT HE KNOWS QUITE WELL THE BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM. HE MADE HIGH REMARKS ABOUT PROFESSOR MARCELO DAMY, IN HIS OPINION THE MOST IMPORTANT BRAZILIAN AUTHORITY ON THIS MATTER.

7. RELATING TO THE TECHNICAL DATA ON ATUCHA, I REITERATE THE REPORT BY THE BRAZILIAN ENGINEER JULIUS WILBERG, THAT VISITED THE PLANT NEAR THE END OF LAST YEAR, AND THAT WAS TRANSMITTED BY LETTER 976, FROM 11/27/73.


PINHEIRO
TELEGRAMA RECEBIDO

BRASEMB BAIRES
EM 1/7/74

CONFIDENCIAL
DPE/DAM-1/
VISITA DE FUNCIONARIO DA
EMBAIXADA A CENTRAL NUCLEAR DE ATUCHA.


2. EM ATUCHA, SITUADA A 110 QUILOMETROS DO CENTRO DE BUENOS AIRES, NAS MARGENS DO RIO PARANA DE LAS PALMAS, A DELEGACAO FOI RECEBIDA PELO ENGENHEIRO COSENTINO, SEU DIRETOR, QUE FEZ UMA PALESTRA INICIAL SOBRE O FUNCIONAMENTO DA USINA, TENDO TAMBIEM DISCUTIDO AMPLAMENTE SOBRE AS RAZOES QUE LEVARAM A ARGENTINA A CONFIRMAR A ESCOLHA DO URANIO NATURAL PARA MATERIAL FISSIL DE SUA SEGUNDA USINA NUCLEAR. SOBRE ESSE PONTO, CABE DIZER QUE COSENTINO FOI ELEMENTO DECISIVO NO PROCESSO DE DECISAO QUE FAVORECEU O URANIO NATURAL, HAVENDO, NA EPOCA DA DECISAO, FICADO EM OPUSCULO AO PRESIDENTE LANUSSE, QUE CONTEMPLAVA O URANIO ENRIQUECIDO.

3. A USINA, COM CAPACIDADE PARA 319 MIL KW, AINDA NAO ESTA FUNCIONANDO A PLENA CARGA - SEU PAINEL DE COMANDO REGISTRA UMA PRODUCAO DE 237 MIL KE. O EQUIPAMENTO E" TODO SIEMENS E TANTO DENTRO DA USINA COMO EM SUAS IMEDIACOES, TODAS AS PLACAS E INDICACOES ESTAO EM ESPANHOL E ALEMÃO, CONFORME FOI INFORMADO, APENAS HA DEZ DIAS A OPERACAO DA USINA PASSOU A NAO ARGENTINAS.

4. A ARGENTINA IMPORTOU 307,06 TONELADAS DE AGUA PESADA PARA A OPERACAO DA USINA (300 TONELADAS DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS E 7,06 TONELADAS DA ALEMANHA FEDERAL, ESTAS ULTIMAS PARA COMPENSAR A PERDA DIARIA DE CERCA DE 600 GRAMAS).

5. O PLUTONIO GERADO POR ATUCHA FICA ARMAZENADO EM PISCINAS...
NAS, EM PREDIO ANEXO AO REATOR. INFORMOU COSENTINO QUE OS
MESMOS NAO SÃO PROCESSADOS, ESTAO SOB SALVAGUARDA E NAO HA PLANO PA-
RA A REUTILIZACAO DO MESMO COMO COMBUSTIVEL NA PROPRIA USINA. AFIR-
MU-"ANDA QUE, DEVIDO AO LONGO TEMPO QUE AS BARRAS DE COMBUSTIVEL
PERMANECEM NO REATOR, O PLUTONIO AH GERADO SO' APRESENTA ISOTOPOS
PARES (240 E 242), QUE NAO SERVE PARA FINS EXPLOSIVO. PARA A OBTEN-
CAO DE PLUTONIO PARA FINS EXPLOSIVOS, AINDA SEGUNDO COSENTINO, SERIA
NECESSARIO UM GRANDE AUMENTO DO CONSUMO DE COMBUSTIVEL, BEM COMO
UMA OPERACAO MAIS TRABALHOS E COMPLEXA DO REATOR. COSENTINO DECLAR-
ROU TEXTUALMENTE QUE A ARGENTINA NAO TEM INTENCAO DE FABRICAR BOM-
BAS E QUE ESTAH DISPOSTO A RECEBER, SEM NENHUMA RESERVA, QUAISQUER
TECNICOS BRASILEIROS QUE QUEIRAM CONHECER DETALHES DO PROGRAMA NU-
CLEAR ARGENTINO.

6. COSENTINO MANIFESTOU A ESPERANCA DE QUE BRASIL E AR-
GENTINA VENHAM A TRABALHAR EM COOPERAÇÃO EM MATERIA DE ENERGIA
NUCLEAR. AFIRMOU QUE ATÉ HOJE ESSA COLABORAÇÃO TEM SIDO MAIS FOR-
MAL DO QUE EFETIVA, POR "ALGUMA RAZAO QUE ELE NAO SABIA QUAL ERA''.
ACHA ELE QUE, TENDO O BRASIL OPTADO PELA UTILIZACAO DO URANIO ENRI-
QUECIDO, AMBOS OS PAISES TERIAM MUITO O QUE TROCAR EM MATÉRIA DE
INFORMACOES, PELO SIMPLES CONFRONTO DE DUAS EXPERIENCIAS DISTINTAS.
DEMONSTROU CONHECER BASTANTE BEM O PROGRAMA BRASILEIRO, FEZ MUI-
TOS ELOGIOS AO PROFESSOR MARCELO DAMY, NO SEU ENTENDER A MAIOR AU-
TORIDADE BRASILEIRA NO ASSUNTO.

7. SOBRE DADOS TECNICOS RELATIVOS AO FUNCIONAMENTO DE
ATUCHA, REITEROU O RELATORIO DO ENGENHEIRO BRASILEIRO JULIUS WILBERG,
QUE A VISITOU EM FINS DO ANO PASSADO, E QUE FOI TRANSMITIDO PELO OFI-
CIO 976, DE 27/11/73.

8. AO FINAL DA VISITA, AGRADECIU EM NOME DA ESCOLA SUPE-
RIOR DE GUERRA O CORONEL EINAR WALTER BERG, QUE DECLAROU "TER FI-
CADO INTEGRAMENTE CONVENCIDO DAS VANTAGENS DA UTILIZACAO DO URA-
NIO NATURAL, EM VISTA DE O MESMO TER COLOCADO A ARGENTINA LIVRE DA
DEPENDENCIA DAS GRANDES POTENCIAS, UNICAS FORNECEDORAS DO URANIO
ENRIQUECIDO''.

PINHEIRO