

Castroite leftists and 'conservative revolutionaries' unite against Caldera

by David Ramonet

It might appear anomalous that a group of anti-imperialist "revolutionaries" would join forces with neo-liberal proponents of the International Monetary Fund's economic shock therapy to achieve a common goal. But in recent weeks, this is exactly what has happened in Ibero-America, in the form of an alliance between Fidel Castro's São Paulo Forum, on the one hand, and the imitators of U.S. "conservative revolutionary" Newt Gingrich, located in the Group of Latin American Observers (GOL).

There is nothing mysterious about the alliance. Both groups have the same British belief-structures, and both seek the destruction of the sovereign nation-state and its vital institutions. Specifically, although organizing under different guises, both groups are committed to the legalization of the international narcotics trade, and to halting the recent successful offensive against Ibero-America's drug cartels, launched by patriotic forces in Colombia and Peru and backed by the Clinton administration.

From the standpoint of this unholy alliance, any government which insists on defending the traditional concept of national sovereignty, and the need for real economic development outside the framework of the International Monetary Fund, must be overthrown. Thus, Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera, who has been an outspoken opponent of IMF policy as well as a defender of sovereignty, is a specific target of this left-right scissors operation.

The FARC cartel's conference

The left side of this operation was seen in the Aug. 18-19 conference in Buenos Aires, entitled "Perspectives for Latin American Liberation," organized by the São Paulo Forum's publication, *América Libre*. Held at the School of Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires, the gathering was truly a "narco-conference." One of its high points was the report presented by Bolivian Evo Morales on his international campaign to legalize drugs.

A leader of the Bolivian Coca Producers Council (CPC), Morales is strongly backed and financed by the international "mafia" of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In recent months, he has been organizing a movement to resist the Bolivian government's U.S.-backed efforts to eradicate coca, arguing that "coca is not cocaine." In his speech to the conference, Morales indicated how he is manipulating

oppressed Bolivian peasants when he asserted that coca is a "product of national salvation," and that "to defend coca is to defend the dignity of national sovereignty." He even charged that those who combat the drug trade have "a Hitlerian mentality." The United Nations committed "a historic error" in 1961, he said, when it included the coca leaf on its list of outlawed drugs.

Although great efforts were made during the conference to avoid any mention of the São Paulo Forum, the coalition's top narco-terrorist leaders were present there in force. Clearly visible was Albano Urbano, of Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), also known as that country's "third drug cartel." From Mexico, Fray Pablo Romo came in representation of Samuel Ruiz, the bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas, better known as "comandante" of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). Romo in fact gave an enthusiastic presentation on the EZLN's activities, and along with Ruiz's other representative, José Barón Torres, as well as the rest of the audience, loudly applauded Evo Morales's drug legalization proposals.

Ibero-American 'Gingrichites'

On Aug. 22-23, Mexico City was the site of the International Seminar on Drug-trafficking, Society, and Politics, reflecting the right-wing side of this pincers operation. The conference served as a vehicle for attacking the traditional concept of national sovereignty, using the region's anti-drug war as a pretext.

The conference was sponsored by the Group of Latin American Observers (GOL) and the Rafael Preciado Hernández Foundation, run by Juan Estrada Gutiérrez. Aside from the latter, and the former Venezuelan presidential candidate Oswaldo Alvarez Paz, a visceral opponent of President Rafael Caldera, the gathering also included the president of Mexico's National Action Party (PAN), Carlos Castillo Peraza, and the Colombian Guillermo de León Escobar, president of the Simón Bolívar Foundation, and close collaborator of former presidential candidate, Andrés Pastrana.

The gathering of these forces represents an attempt to set up a regional neoconservative apparatus, not seen since the heyday of the Bush-Kissinger Project Democracy in the 1980s. Look at Castillo Peraza, for example. He poses as Mexico's Newt Gingrich, gnashing his teeth at an "overly

strong State.” Yet in July he traveled to Cuba to meet for several hours with that well-known “democrat,” Fidel Castro.

The GOL first became visible when it sent a delegation to Panama in 1990, shortly after George Bush’s invasion, in order to support the “democratic” government of Guillermo “Porky” Endara, also a toady of the Cali cartel. GOL’s coordinator at the Mexican conference, who introduced the other speakers, was one César Lepervanche, a former executive of the Venevisión television network whose owners are the very dirty Cisneros family. Lepervanche was a producer of the network’s “anti-drug” programs, two of which were most revealing: One was an interview with the Cali cartel’s favorite “anti-drug” leader, Gen. Miguel Maza Márquez, and the other was an interview with an official of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in which Lepervanche unsuccessfully tried to get the official to attack *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche.

During the press conference which followed the Mexico City conference, Alvarez Paz, Guillermo de León, and Castillo Peraza promoted the Kissingerian thesis of limited sovereignty. According to journalist Héctor Landaeta of the Caracas daily *El Globo*, Alvarez proposed the creation of “a world, or continental anti-drug international which should restate the concept of sovereignty and national security in order to confront the drug trade with greater power,” and called for a “new security theory” on the basis of which national armed forces should be redeployed.” Alvarez Paz emphasized that such a supranational apparatus would also be useful for “economic integration.”

Just how the São Paulo Forum and its neoconservative allies are working together is seen in their joint coordination of efforts to overthrow the government of Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera. On Aug. 23, Venezuelan intellectual Arturo Usler Pietri, an advocate of the Chilean model for Venezuela, organized a gathering at his home which brought together the so-called “Notables,” who played such a key role in dumping former President Carlos Andrés Pérez, and several luminaries of the São Paulo Forum. This was the second meeting of this type held to plot Caldera’s ouster, which included a representative of Oswaldo Alvarez Paz, well-known bankers and politicians, as well as retired military officers belonging to the MBR-200 (Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement). The latter grouping, led by the jacobin leftist, ex-commander Hugo Chávez Frís, is also a member of the São Paulo Forum!

Also among the attendees were Pablo Medina, a leader of the Causa-R party, also a member of the São Paulo Forum, and his fellow party member José Lira, who had just returned from the narco-conference in Buenos Aires. Manuel Quijada, an adviser to Hugo Chávez, was also there. Alvarez Paz was not able to attend personally because he was in Mexico City, participating in the above-mentioned International Seminar on Drug-trafficking, Society, and Politics.

Peña Esclusa refutes Usler Pietri on Chile

Venezuelan Labor Party Secretary General Alejandro Peña Esclusa has exchanged letters with Venezuelan intellectual Arturo Usler Pietri, on the economic alternatives confronting Venezuela and Ibero-America. Extracts follow.

Peña Esclusa to Usler Pietri, Aug. 23, 1995:

In an article published recently . . . you recommended to the Venezuelan government that it implement the Chilean economic model. With all due respect, Dr. Usler, I would like to warn you that the propaganda published by the media on the “Chilean economic model,” is a fraud, a fairy tale, an invention of the City of London and Wall Street, to con Latin Americans. . . . I hold you in such high esteem, Dr. Usler, that I want to save you from the embarrassment of looking bad in the eyes of the country, when the Chilean economy collapses in a few months. Remember that, in 1984, many illustrious voices arose to praise the Mexican model, among those, that of our dear friend Alberto Vollmer, who, 48 hours before the maxi-devaluation of the peso, wrote an article recommending that [Venezuelan President Rafael] Caldera follow the economic prescriptions of [Mexican President Carlos] Salinas de Gortari. . . .

Usler Pietri to Peña Esclusa, Aug. 24, 1995:

I greatly regret to inform you, that, at no time, have I proposed for Venezuela, the economic model of any other Latin American country, without excluding Chile. Rather, I have been fighting, and I am still fighting, to some day bring to an end the enormous folly, which has caused so much ruin among us, of a statized, command and subsidized economy. . . . You announce, with evident pleasure, the coming crack of the Chilean economy. Unfortunately, mankind has not yet succeeded in inventing an economic system of perfect stability and assured progress . . . but, at the same time, neither have we ever found a system to replace the market economy and its proven capacity for economic and social growth. . . .

Peña Esclusa to Usler Pietri, Aug. 26, 1995:

With all due respect, Dr. Usler, it seems to me dangerous for Venezuela that, being who you are, you think that the free market constitutes a solution for the country. I believe that models do exist which have functioned successfully in the past, as, for example, that promoted by U.S. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton in the 18th century. . . . I consider it of vital importance for Venezuela’s security and defense, as well as for the survival of Ibero-America, that a broad national debate on economy immediately begin, in which you and I, and all those persons who wish to join us, discuss publicly the economic alternatives which our nation requires. . . .