
Ibero-America

Clinton 'in footsteps of JFK, FDR,' but stumbles into British 'fast trap'

by Dennis Small

President Bill Clinton's first words on Ibero-American soil, as he began his week-long tour of Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina, established his clear intent of forging a partnership for prosperity with America's neighbors south of the border. In a brief speech upon arrival at Caracas's La Carlota Airport on Oct. 12, the U.S. President evoked the best features of American foreign policy in this century, and promised to build on them:

"Thirty-six years ago, John Kennedy became the first American President to visit Venezuela. And speaking to the people here, he cited his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his earlier efforts to promote friendship between the nations of this hemisphere — and I quote — 'united by nature and united in their common aspirations.' Today, I proudly follow in the footsteps of both men, committed to sustain their impulse to reach across borders and learn from our friends and neighbors, for our mutual benefit."

In subsequent speeches and remarks to the press in all three countries, Clinton underscored that "there is an enormous amount of economic potential down here, and it's a great market for America's goods and services." By working together, the nations of the Western Hemisphere can become a "stronghold for security and prosperity" of each and every nation of the region. "I want America to lead the process of economic integration and rising living standards here in our hemisphere and around the world," he explained.

Clinton also took note of the fact that Great Britain, and allied European nations, have recently moved into Ibero-America in a big way, and that the United States had to take steps to reverse this trend.

But *how* to achieve these stated policy goals? This is the field on which a battle is currently raging in Washington — and within Clinton's own mind as well.

Clamor against British free trade

In stop after stop on his Ibero-American itinerary, President Clinton was reminded by different political forces that his stated goals could only be achieved by building a New Bretton Woods global financial system, along the lines speci-

fied by U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche; by putting a halt to International Monetary Fund (IMF) looting and speculative financial assaults of the sort which recently shook the nations of Southeast Asia; and by banning, once and for all, the British doctrine of free trade and globalization which is destroying the physical economy of every nation which has been forced to submit to it.

- Venezuela: The day before Clinton arrived here, the mass-circulation Caracas daily *El Mundo* carried a prominent article reporting on an open letter to Clinton calling for him to convoke a New Bretton Woods conference, "to replace the current bankrupt monetary system with a new one." The article noted that the call had been initiated by Helga Zepp LaRouche and Ukrainian parliamentarian Natalya Vitrenko, and that it had been signed by ex-Presidents José López Portillo of Mexico, João Baptista Figueiredo of Brazil, and Godfrey Binaisa of Uganda, as well as by prominent Venezuelan congressmen, politicians, trade union leaders, and others. *El Mundo* added polemically that "Venezuelan ex-President Carlos Andrés Pérez expressed his total disagreement with the initiative, noting that 'President Clinton can't do anything.'"

Pérez is a close friend and ally of the Anglophile Sir George Bush, and was thrown out of office in May 1993 and then jailed for crimes of corruption while President. His outburst against Clinton will only improve the U.S. President's standing among Venezuelans, who despise Pérez for what he did to the country.

The news of the open letter to Clinton was also reported on a number of radio and television stations during Clinton's brief stay in the country.

- Brazil: On Monday, Oct. 13, as Clinton was arriving in the country, an article appeared in an important regional paper, *Jornal do Commercio*, of Porto Alegre, written by LaRouche associate Vitor Grunewald, which reported at length on Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's recent attacks on international speculation, and explained Lyndon LaRouche's initiatives to establish a replacement for the bankrupt IMF system.

- Argentina: A delegation of the opposition “Alliance for Work, Justice and Education,” including former Argentine President Raúl Alfonsín, met with President Clinton on Oct. 16, and urged him to work for “the modernization of Bretton Woods,” and to help devise strategies to counter the risks of globalization, including the “notable increase in the movement of speculative capital,” which led to the recent financial crisis in Southeast Asia.

A far sharper formulation came from former Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín, a hero of Argentina’s 1982 Malvinas War against Great Britain, who is currently a political prisoner for life, at London’s behest. In an open letter to President Clinton, which was prominently covered in the Argentine media, Seineldín called for the United States and Argentina to ally against their common historical enemy, “the British Empire, which was defeated by the Founding Fathers of your country in the battle for independence led by Washington.” Seineldín added a very personal appeal to Clinton to fulfill President Kennedy’s commitment to help lift the nations of Ibero-America out of poverty: “Divine Providence has placed the fulfillment of that commitment in your hands, after John F. Kennedy’s tragic fate. Only in that way can we defeat the tyranny exercised by international usury, the drug trade, and corruption.”

Free trade’s death toll

Clinton, however, is hearing not only the voice of Ibero-American patriots, but also that of the menacing British Empire.

Throughout his trip, Clinton combined his call for economic cooperation with Ibero-America, with a reiteration of his support for deadly British free trade and globalization. “Globalization is irreversible,” he told a business gathering in São Paulo, Brazil on Oct. 15. “Protectionism will only make things worse.”

At each stop, Clinton made a particular point of defending the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), initiated by his predecessor Sir George Bush, and of pressuring the U.S. Congress to grant him “fast track” authority with which to negotiate NAFTA’s extension to all of Ibero-America, and establish a so-called Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005.

“Fast track” should actually be called “*fast trap*,” since the doctrine of free trade is a classical British policy ruse. The application of free trade in Mexico, through NAFTA, led over the first half of the 1990s to the decimation of that country’s physical economy, and the bankruptcy of its banking system. Then, the British moved in on the heels of the collapse, in an ongoing takeover raid of that country’s financial system. As of this writing, 59% of the assets of the country’s entire banking system are controlled by foreign banks — the vast majority of which are either directly British (such as the drug-running Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp.), or controlled by London (such as Spain’s Banco Santander).

The same tale of piracy can be told for nearly every country in South America. In Chile, 48% of the assets of the country’s Top 10 banks are now controlled by London; in Argentina, it is 54%; in Venezuela, 48%.

The British are also moving in to grab the continent’s prodigious raw materials wealth. British Commonwealth mining giants — such as Anglo American, Rio Tinto, and Barrick Gold (of which Sir George Bush is an international advisory board member) — have taken up dominant positions in nearly every nation of Ibero-America. Here the way has been paved by IMF-imposed liberalization of national mining legislation, and by the forced privatization of state-sector mining giants like Brazil’s Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), recently sold for a song to a financial group headed by George Soros, Queen Elizabeth’s own surrogate speculator.

London makes its move

On the political front as well, London is on a roll. On the eve of President Clinton’s visit to Argentina, a 40-person Argentine delegation, led by rabid Anglophile Foreign Minister Guido di Tella, Finance Minister Roque Fernández, and Mining Minister Alieto Guadagni, lunched at London’s Carlton Club with 40 British businessmen, and attended a conference arranged for them at the British Confederation of Industry on Oct. 7. At a press conference following the CBI appearance, Di Tella squealed that “relations between Argentina and Great Britain are 98% perfect.” British Minister of State of the Treasury Alistair Darling explained: “I urge those who haven’t yet invested in Argentina to do so immediately, because the advantage will be for those who get there first, not for those who look for what’s left later on.” Argentina’s Guadagni slavishly concurred: “I advise British investors to take advantage of the excellent prices” of Argentine property. “These won’t last long. . . . With what you spend on a piece of land in Europe, you can get five or six times as much in Argentina.”

As for London’s ties with Brazil, these will be greatly fortified by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s upcoming trip to Great Britain. In early December, the Anglophile Cardoso will be formally knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, thereby becoming the first sitting (or perhaps kneeling is a more apt description) President in the Americas ever to be so “honored.”

This will undoubtedly do damage to the positive U.S.-Brazilian relationship President Clinton just worked so hard to establish. Clinton told his Brazilian hosts, with evident sincerity: “The United States would never knowingly make any suggestion that would undermine the growth of Brazil or any other country. It is not in our interest.”

But if Clinton doesn’t want to see the economy of Brazil and of other nations crumble, nor watch as the British Commonwealth sharks move in to snatch up control of everything south of the Rio Grande, he will have to stop pushing London’s free trade policy.