

with Seineldín after the December 1990 rebellion against the Army high command. After being released from jail, De Sagastizábal broke with Seineldín and hooked up with Ceresole to found the Argentina in the World Studies Center, the organization which sponsored Chávez's trip to Argentina.

Shortly after Chávez's visit, De Sagastizábal supported Army Chief of Staff Gen. Martín Balza, whose public *mea culpa* for having waged war against terrorism in the 1970s, was used by the human rights mafia to step up demands for the Armed Forces to be dismantled, and officers incarcerated for human rights violations. De Sagastizábal also vehemently asserted that "we have no type of contact with ex-Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín, with whom we have profound differences, which go far beyond politics."

A project that was 'Made in Britain'

by Gretchen Small

Hugo Chávez's relationship with the British government first publicly emerged on March 12, 1995, when an *El Nacional* columnist reported that the political counsellor of the British Embassy, Paul Webster Hare, had been seen dining with Commander Chávez at a deluxe restaurant in Caracas. Columnist Jesús Eduardo Brando featured his report under the subhead: "Perfidious Albion."

Chávez soon revealed that his relationship with the British Embassy involved much more than being treated to sumptuous dinners. Speaking later that month in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at a press conference organized for him by his notoriously anti-Semitic Argentine controller, Norberto Ceresole, Chávez whined that he faced political "persecution," his human rights violated by the government of Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera, which objected to the "official conversations" which he had been holding with the British Embassy. Chávez reported that British Ambassador John Flynn had been organizing a visit to London for him, but the trip had been cancelled, after President Caldera personally protested to the Ambassador that if such promotion of Chávez continued, perhaps the Venezuelan government would meet with leaders of the Irish Republican Army.

The Chávez radicals were proud even then that they had British support, boasting in the publication of the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 that their man Chávez—fresh from his meetings with Fidel Castro in Cuba and with Colombian narco-guerrillas in Santa Marta, Colombia—had been meeting with Ambassador Flynn.

Defending the Cali Cartel's men

At the same time that it was laundering Chávez as a "democrat," the British Embassy was engaged in its own campaign against the Caldera government, which had dared violate "free trade" by imposing capital controls, after the national banking system had collapsed. The virulence of the campaign was best expressed by the London weekly the *Economist*, which labelled President Caldera a "cockroach," during this time.

In 1997, the British Embassy opened another war against the Caldera government, this time coordinating with networks openly linked to the Colombia's narco-terrorist Cali Cartel. In April 1997, the Venezuelan military captured one of the last remaining kingpins of the Cali drug cartel, Justo Pastor Perafán, who had been hiding out in Venezuela for more than a year. Because the multibillionaire Perafán was a well-known socialite in Colombian high society (e.g., he had been a special guest at President Ernesto Samper Pizano's 1994 inauguration), he could provide hard evidence on the "gentlemen above suspicion" who protected the drug trade in both Colombia and Venezuela, should he decide to talk.

The Clinton administration immediately filed papers for Perafán's extradition to the United States. His networks in the Venezuelan Congress, based in the Interior Affairs Committee of the House of Deputies, went into action, seeking to block his extradition by cooking up a case to have Perafán extradited instead to Samper Pizano's Colombia, on the legal technicality that he entered Venezuela illegally.

Caldera's Minister of Interior Relations, José Guillermo Andueza, a hard-liner on narcotics, denounced the Congressional maneuver. He soon found himself the target of a cooked-up "corruption" scandal, based on material provided by . . . the British Embassy. Perafán's supporters in the Interior Affairs Committee of Congress charged that Andueza had illegally negotiated with a German government company, for a contract to revamp Venezuela's national identity card program, ignoring a bid for the contract placed by Britain's De la Rue company. The Congressmen, waving around documents provided by the British Embassy on the advantages of De la Rue's services, launched war against Andueza, and called hearings into his alleged "corruption."

Perafán was, finally, shipped up to the United States, but the new British Ambassador, Richard Wilkinson, immediately jumped into the middle of the De la Rue fight. Wilkinson, who announced that he considered his mission to be to aid in "the modernization of the Venezuelan state," used an interview with the Venezuelan newspaper, *El Globo*, to blast the Caldera government for acting "without any transparency," when it signed with the German government company, rather than with Britain's De la Rue. De la Rue not only prints the national banknotes of some 100 countries, but also specializes, interestingly enough, in providing "security and cash processing equipment to the banking, retail, leisure and trans-

port industries in over 120 countries.” One Venezuelan journalist thereupon dubbed the new Ambassador Wilkinson, “the Blade.”

Campaign managers

In May 1998, Chávez finally got his visit to London, a trip, as he informed the Ninth Annual Roundtable of the *Economist* held in Caracas in May 1999, which was organized by “my friend Wilkinson.” Here, Chávez finally was introduced to all the “right people”: officials from the Blair government, members of Parliament, a gathering at Oxford University, and the president of British Petroleum.

As his Presidential campaign took off, so did Chávez, who began flying around the country to campaign in a plane provided by Henry Lord Boulton, the scion of the most Anglo-philic family in Venezuela for centuries.

Next to come on board Chávez’s team was Al Gore’s machine. In August, Chávez began meeting with a Gore close friend and top fundraiser, Miami businessman Howard Glicken. On Sept. 16, Glicken wrote a memorandum to U.S. Ambassador John Maisto, urging that the U.S. government establish “a credible working relationship and dialogue” with Chávez. Glicken explains in the memo, later published in its entirety by the Venezuelan magazine *Primacia*, that he and Chávez “have become personal friends,” and that he has stressed to the “very malleable and receptive” Chávez that he must not only “talk the talk,” but he must “walk the walk,” if he wants to be elected. As evidence that he is learning to “walk the walk,” Glicken reports that Chávez has met with David Rockefeller’s man, Gustavo Cisneros. And, he informs Maisto that the Inter-American Dialogue—the leading voice for British policy toward the Americas in Washington—is eager to invite Chávez to Washington.

Glicken, himself, has walked in mighty dirty circles along the way. Glicken’s recent career was built around his ties to Gore, since he became Gore’s chief fundraiser in Florida in 1987. (He and his wife reportedly drive around in two Jaguars with license plates reading “Gore 1” and “Gore 2”). Glicken is said to have built up his business connections by telling the clients of his Americas Company, that he is a key Gore Ibero-American adviser. But, in 1998, he pleaded guilty to charges of money-laundering for Gore’s campaign, shortly before picking up the Chávez assignment in Caracas; still, that’s the least of his dirty dealings. In 1991, a gold-trading company that Glicken had founded in 1983, Metalbanc, and two of its officers, were indicted for drug money-laundering and conspiracy, in Operation Polar Cap, a major U.S. government strike at the Medellín, Colombia drug cartel. Glicken, who claimed not to have known that two of the six officers of the company were involved, received limited immunity, in exchange for testifying for the prosecution. Not so his Metalbanc partner, Harry Falk, who received a 27-year jail sentence.

A re-made man

On Sept. 28, Chávez’s candidacy unveiled a new image. In a lengthy interview with the daily *El Universal*, Chávez proclaimed: “Over the last few years, I have been revising my positions, and I am very close to the thesis of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, when he speaks of the Third Way. . . . I adhere to it, and we continue studying it.” Venezuela must work within globalization, he declared, “because we cannot return to the paternalistic state which bankrupts the economy.” Chávez promised he would never resort to the exchange controls which had so angered his sponsors, when Caldera applied them. “Exchange controls are nefarious,” Chávez pronounced. “We know that exchange controls generate corruption, parallel markets.”

In mid-October, Ambassador Wilkinson told a meeting of London’s Anglo-Venezuelan Society (where former Ambassador John Flynn now operates), that Chávez would almost certainly win the election in December. That was a good thing, he averred, because in his personal experience, he had found that Chávez is “a man with whom one can hold an intelligent conversation. . . . His popularity and his legitimacy . . . [are] indispensable conditions for the harsh measures which the next President will have to take.” If Chávez reduces corruption and the inefficiency of the state, Wilkinson added, this would be “a good beginning.”

British interests have wasted no time since Chávez’s election. U.K. Energy and Industry Minister John Battle visited Venezuela in April, and signed agreements which strengthen Venezuelan ties with the British oil industry. A bulletin issued the same month by Britain’s Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) promoted the “excellent opportunities” which are available for British companies under the Chávez regime. U.K. companies are moving back into oil exploration, and “large untapped gas reserves . . . are expected to be developed under open market conditions,” while power generation, transmission, and distribution, telecommunications, environment and tourism also offer opportunities, the DTI wrote. (Labeling Venezuelans “compulsive consumers,” the DTI also made clear that Britain will not abandon its strongest tie to Venezuela: the sale of Scotch whiskey, which today generates one-third of all British exports to Venezuela.)

So, too, Britain’s lackeys in the United States are making their move. No sooner had he been elected, than Vice President Al Gore (who has an impeccable eye for corruption) extended a personal invitation to Chávez to attend his February global conference against corruption in Washington, D.C. Chávez announced that he would attend, and would meet with President Clinton at the same time, but when no meeting with Clinton materialized, Chávez stayed home. On June 18, Venezuelans were treated to pictures of Commander Chávez being hugged by Sir George Bush, as he emerged from his limousine at Bush’s 75th birthday bash in Houston, where Chávez was one of the honored guests.