

Bush Agenda Slammed At Monterrey Summit

by Valerie Rush

The Summit of the Americas took place in Monterrey, Mexico on Jan. 12-13, drawing together heads of state for what was expected to be just another “photo opportunity,” against a backdrop of sympathetic clucking over spreading poverty and the “crisis of governability.” In public, at least, the summit was a dialogue of the deaf, with President George Bush blindly chanting his mantra of “free trade solves everything”—the very same policy which has driven Ibero-America to the edge of the abyss where it finds itself today—and various Ibero-American heads of state, led by Brazilian President Luíz Inacio Lula da Silva, insisting that this “perverse” policy is a proven failure, but offering no serious alternatives. Thus it fell to the followers of Lyndon LaRouche to bring the voice of reason to this Summit. Nearly 30 activists from the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) in Mexico saturated the event with literature on the looming world financial catastrophe, and on LaRouche’s proposal for a New Bretton Woods to reorganize the global monetary system. The activists made sure that copies of LaRouche’s programmatic campaign document, “The Sovereign States of the Americas,” got into the hands of various heads of state and the media representatives.

Protecting the Banks

The U.S. position at the summit was outlined most succinctly by Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega, in a Jan. 6 speech on summit objectives, given before the Council of the Americas. The number one answer to poverty, he argued, is “protecting property rights”—and he made clear he meant the rights of foreign investors and creditors, primarily.

The second priority, Noriega said, is to facilitate the flow of remittances to the region through the major banks, because this money—sent back home by the millions of Ibero-Americans working in largely low-wage jobs in the United States, their own countries’ economies having been destroyed under free trade—has become the largest source of foreign revenue for many countries. If these nations are going to maintain the façade of servicing their unpayable foreign debts, it will be revenue from remittances, among other sources, which creditor banks so urgently need to keep the balloon afloat a bit longer.

Brazil’s President Lula spoke for the victims of these free-trade looting policies of the past decade, which were imposed

with the lying argument that privatization and market reform would bring prosperity. Not true, said Lula. The 1990s “was a decade of despair. It was a perverse model that wrongly separated the economic from the social, put stability against growth, and separated responsibility and justice.” Argentine President Néstor Kirchner added that “it is unacceptable to insist on recipes that have failed.”

Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Vélez reported that in his 50-minute meeting with International Monetary Fund chief Horst Köhler during the summit, he had urged the IMF to exclude infrastructure investment from the calculations of the fiscal deficit ceiling the IMF regularly imposes on these countries. He emphasized that he was speaking in the name of all the Ibero-American countries: “We need more space for social investment. . . . The IMF and multilateral [financial] institutions can help us, and should help us, by accepting the suggestion of all the South American countries that infrastructure investment not be included under the fiscal ceilings. If we need to build a roadway or waterway required internationally, why should we include this under the fiscal ceiling? By not doing so, we will have the opportunity to make investment advances that will have a major social impact.”

The Voice of Reason

LaRouche Youth Movement activists managed a number of personal encounters with Ibero-American Presidents, including Chile’s Ricardo Lagos and Bolivia’s Carlos Mesa. They also had an exchange with Mexican President Vicente Fox which garnered widespread coverage in the press there. Just after his arrival in Monterrey, Fox went to Mass at the Monterrey Cathedral, where he was approached by three LYM organizers, who urged him to take up LaRouche’s demand for writing off the Ibero-American foreign debt. They added that Mexico’s true friend and “good neighbor” in the United States is LaRouche, and gave him LaRouche’s book *Road to Recovery*.

The LYM’s brief exchange with Fox made headlines in papers ranging from the radical leftist *La Jornada*, to *El Norte*, *Milenio*, *El Universal*, *El Heraldo*, and *El Porvenir*. All covered the LYM’s call not to pay the foreign debt, its protest against the policies of the IMF, and more.

The LYM organizers joined a march against the do-nothing summit, where they were the only contingent to offer real programmatic alternatives to the sterile protests of the “anti-globalization” activists. Among the LYM’s chants was the popular “Who Is the Axis of Evil?: The IMF and World Bank!” The LYM’s enormous banner drew the attention of the media; it declared, “LaRouche: Mexico’s Ally Against Cheney and the IMF,” and “Put the IMF into Bankruptcy; For a New Bretton Woods with Justice and Development.”

Playing the part of the “bad boy” at the summit was Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, whose provocative behavior stirred up a media hornets’ nest, providing Bush and company with a handy source of distraction from the real issues.