

New Democratic Majority Initiates Policy Shift Towards Americas

by Gretchen Small

Before it was even sworn in, the new bipartisan consensus emerging under Democratic leadership in the U.S. Congress gave the nations of the Americas grounds to hope that respectful, principled cooperation with the United States may become possible again. Worried leaders of the region heartily welcomed the possibility.

From Dec. 27 to Jan. 2, incoming Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) led a bipartisan delegation of six U.S. Senators to Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, three Andean nations which face disintegration, should the jackboot of globalization not be removed from their necks. Defying the Bush-Cheney policy of polarizing and dividing the Americas against one another, the delegation held respectful, friendly discussions of substance with Peruvian President Alan García, and in particular with Bolivian President Evo Morales and Ecuadorian President-elect Rafael Correa, the latter two elected for their promise to better living conditions, and whom the Bush-Cheney crowd paint as dangerous “populists” moving to form a regional “axis of evil” which threatens the United States.

Joining Reid on the visit were Democrats Kent Conrad (N.D.), Richard Durbin (Ill.), and Ken Salazar (Colo.), and Republicans Judd Gregg (N.H.) and Robert Bennett (Utah). Upon their return, Senator Reid made explicit that the delegation’s message to the Andean nations, extends to all the Americas. One word sums up the intention of the new Senate towards U.S. neighbors to the south, Reid told journalists on Jan. 8: “Attention.” The United States has to understand, that when it comes to Ibero-America, “we have been negligent and blind.” The elected leaders of these three countries hope that we will return, and we hope to work with them. We are ready to do “everything we can to continue working with Central and South America.”

Reid raised the necessity of providing an economic content to the friendship extended, following their Dec. 28 meeting with Bolivia’s President. “As we speak we’re spending \$2.5 billion a week in Iraq,” he said. “For a small, insignificant share of that \$2.5 billion, we could have a tremendous impact on infrastructure development in this part of the world, which is so badly needed.”

On Jan. 10, Reid announced that he intends to extend “for a matter of years, not months” the current preferential tariff system for Ecuador and Bolivia, without the Bush Adminis-

tration’s conditionalities which are “humiliating” to both nations. Late last year, the Republican-dominated Congress passed legislation which would terminate in June 2007 the preferential tariffs granted since the 1990s to help anti-drug efforts by the Andean nations, unless those nations signed suicidal free-trade agreements with the United States.

Ecuadorian Ambassador to the U.S. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga welcomed Reid’s shift as “stupendous” news.

A Matter of U.S. Security

As Lyndon LaRouche has long emphasized, every American patriot has understood the strategic importance for the security of the United States, of establishing a community of principle in the Americas, centered upon a commitment to mutual defense of the sovereignty and right to development of each and all its nations. This is the policy introduced as U.S. foreign policy in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine drafted by John Quincy Adams, and first backed by force under Abraham Lincoln, when the United States aided Mexico’s Benito Juárez to expel the Hapsburg occupying force (cf. LaRouche’s 1982 document *Operation Juárez*, and his September 2003 Presidential campaign piece, *The Sovereign States of the Americas*).

Thus, the strategic importance of the declaration that the Senate, under its new leadership, intends to help redress wrongs suffered by its neighbors. After six years of Bush-Cheney brutality and indifference toward the region, piled upon 30 years of International Monetary Fund-dictated destruction of national economies which successive U.S. governments have either enforced or tolerated, rage against intolerable conditions of life and a United States viewed as responsible for those conditions, is sweeping the region. Fanning that rage, is the Cheney crowd’s drive to polarize the Americas around the alleged threat of an “anti-American axis” led by Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez. By waving the “Castro/Chávez Reds” bogeyman, Cheney et al. seek to drown in blood the rebellion growing in the Americas against usury and globalization.

Good will and offers of economic assistance will not be sufficient to head off the very real threat of the Americas descending into chaos; the levels of physical economic investment required to bring living conditions up to levels necessary for survival cannot be achieved without wiping out specula-



President elect of Ecuador Rafael Correa greets U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on Dec. 29 in Quito. Correa has enraged the Cheney crowd by declaring that “life comes before debt.” Reid emphasized U.S. desire for better relations, while respecting Ecuador’s national sovereignty.

tive debts that have been paid many times over, reasserting protectionism and fair trade, and reestablishing fixed exchange rates so as to be able to make 25-50-year infrastructure investments, required to raise productivity sufficiently to generate economic surplus. The new Senate leadership’s initiation of respectful dialogue, however, at least opens the door to collaboration between the United States and its neighbors on bringing about those required global changes which, so far, only LaRouche has promoted.

‘We Come as Friends’

The first stop of the delegation was in Bolivia, a country where civil war and the outright break-up of the nation has become an actual possibility, as a direct result of decades of looting by Wall Street and London interests which deliberately shut down mining and productive interests, *while fostering the drug trade whose profits filled their coffers*. The result: Poor peasants and unemployed miners were left no possibility for survival but growing coca, the basic ingredient of cocaine. Consequently, the Bush-Cheney Administration’s current disgusting threats that there will be “consequences” for Bolivia if its government does not turn against the impoverished coca-growers, without providing any economic alternative, have driven U.S.-Bolivian relations to the breaking point.

The Senate delegation arrived with a different message: “We are here to show how much we care for Bolivia, Bolivians, and their culture,” Reid declared upon arriving in that country on Dec. 27. We come “as friends, to learn from you.”

After an “intense” meeting with President Evo Morales the next day, Reid said that his first foreign visit as incoming

head of the Senate was not a random choice, but a decision to come to Bolivia in order to strengthen its ties with the United States. “We’re here as Democrats and Republicans to help North America appreciate the potential of this mighty little country,” he said. “We came as friends, and we leave becoming even closer friends.” Reid said they discussed many things, including drug trafficking, which they agreed harms societies.

Fellow delegation member Senator Salazar, pledged in fluent Spanish on Bolivian TV, that the U.S. government will “work for Bolivia. . . . I believe all of us want the same thing, to help lift up the people of Latin America so that they can achieve the human dignity they deserve.”

Although less covered in the media, the delegation’s hour-long Dec. 30 meeting with Ecuador’s outspoken anti-free-trade President-elect Rafael Correa, was particularly useful for the Senators to get a first-hand understanding of the dynamic

dominating South America’s politics today. A friend of Argentine President Néstor Kirchner, Correa was elected on the promise to enforce the principle that “life comes before debt,” by taking on Ecuador’s foreign creditors. Even before the Jan. 15 inauguration, the President-elect’s team told IMF officials that the new government will sign no new letter of intent, and will solve its own problems without their “advice.”

Recognizing that Ecuador can only defend itself if South American integration takes giant steps forward, Correa has been organizing in the region against a key axiom of the Anglo-Dutch Liberal system, that central banks must be above governments and national interests. Add to that his stated intention not to renew U.S. rights to use Ecuador’s military base at Manta when that agreement runs out in 2009, but instead to develop Manta as a deepwater port at the terminus of a bi-oceanic South American development corridor, and it’s clear why the Cheney crowd has targetted Correa as an “enemy” before he even takes office.

The United States wants to strengthen relations with Correa, Reid said after the meeting. When asked about the Manta decision after the delegation’s meeting, Reid replied simply that “we respect the sovereignty of Ecuador,” and that is their right. Asked also about Correa’s friendship with Venezuela’s Chávez, the Senator said that Ecuadorians have the right to choose their leader, and in his view, the U.S. has now opened a dialogue with Ecuador.

Correa, for his part, told Ecuadorians that the discussions with the Senate delegation were “very cordial, very respectful, and very frank.”