

Spain, France reach out to Third World

by Robyn Quijano

The nations of Ibero-America consolidated a historic alliance across the Atlantic this week. The governments of France and Spain have declared themselves in mobilization for a New World Economic Order. The two European nations could provide enough political muscle to turn Ibero-America's defensive actions against the International Monetary Fund's economy-wrecking "loan conditionalities" into a strategic offensive, to force collective renegotiation of the continent's \$300 billion unpayable foreign debt.

Spain's Prime Minister Felipe González and France's President François Mitterrand have sent special emissaries to Ibero-America to set a new agenda in North-South relations: the debt problem must be resolved so both the nations of the industrialized sector and the developing nations can get on with the important business of expanding world trade and high-technology investment.

France's Antonio Blanca, Mitterrand's special ambassador to Ibero-America, held private meetings with Colombia's President Belisario Betancur in Bogotá on Jan. 21. Blanca later told this news service that the Third World nations must not be allowed to stagnate as mere exporters of raw materials, or the debt problem will never be resolved: "What interests my government is the planned industrialization of the countries of the Third World." As an example, Blanca cited Colombia, a large coal producer; Colombia must not remain restricted to producing coal for export, but ought to "industrialize its coal exploitation and import technology to develop a carbochemical industry," he said.

The President of Spain's Institute for Ibero-American Cooperation, Luis Yáñez, is touring the continent with a similar message: the debt problem must be resolved, and debts turned into development aid, or the commerce of the advanced sector will grind to a halt. A transfer of science and technology will be central to Spain's new relations with Ibero-America, based on "cooperation and the building of a community of nations."

Should Spain and France act boldly on this perspective toward the developing sector, it could have the same strategic significance that the Family Pact between France and Spain had 200 years ago, when they jointly supported the American Revolution. And the fight today against the free trade economic looting policies of the British-Swiss-Venetian finan-

ciars that subject developing nations to the colonial status of raw-materials producers, is the same fight that was launched with the founding of the United States, as the cornerstone of an international project to build industrial republics. To give only one example of the crucial margin of support the two European nations could supply today, if France and Spain were to break ranks with the IMF and refuse to participate in economic warfare measures against the developing sector nations, then threats from London and Washington to deprive Ibero-American nations of badly needed credit and capital goods imports would mean much less.

Spain's Yáñez, whose institute is being elevated to the level of a ministry under the government of Felipe González, was in Venezuela the week of Jan. 24-28 where he announced that the Prime Minister will visit this year to further develop relations with Ibero-America. He also announced that Spain is discussing a special relation between the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and Spain. He said that a Venezuelan mission will visit Spain this month to determine how Spain's machine-tool industry can aid Venezuela's petroleum industry in the development of great projects and the supply of capital goods.

In the past weeks, numbers of important Latin American political figures have visited both Madrid and Paris, and debt and development have been top items on the agenda. Raul Alfonsín, presidential precandidate of Argentina's Radical Party, met with Felipe González over the weekend and discussed the need for joint renegotiation of the continental debt. Alfonsín later told the press that the Spanish Prime Minister has agreed to act as a liaison between Ibero-America and the rest of Europe, to explain some of the pressing problems of these nations to European countries.

From Spain, Alfonsín will travel to France to meet with Mitterrand and other top officials.

Carlos Andrés Pérez, former Venezuelan President and active Third World diplomat, is also in Spain meeting with the Prime Minister Felipe González. Carlos Andrés Pérez has toured Latin America in the recent months, negotiating a peace plan for Central America, and a development plan for the continent. The new Spanish Prime Minister will be his key ally in both projects.

Carlos Andrés Pérez is also coordinating with continental leaders, in particular with Colombia's Belisario Betancur. Betancur was ambassador to Spain for many years, and is known to back the "community of nations" principal being put forward by that government. Betancur, who won the presidency on the Conservative party ticket, has forged a policy of Third World solidarity by joining the Non-Aligned Movement and backing continental cooperation on the debt issue.

As a candidate, he campaigned on the program Pope Paul VI laid out in *Populorum Progressio*, "development is the new name for peace." Now, as President, he has refused to play the ideological games which have kept the continent in internal warfare for two decades.