

# Government of Panama hosts Ibero-American unity talks

by Silvia Palacios and Robyn Quijano

A continent-wide movement to bring about Ibero-American integration was forged at a historic conference in Panama Aug. 8-11, attended by 200 delegates from 22 nations of the region. Senators, congressmen, labor leaders, historians, scientists, ex-ministers, and retired military officers worked together to plan a Second Amphictyonic Congress, in honor of the first such congress organized by Simón Bolívar in 1826 to unite the continent's new republics. (In ancient Greece, an *amphictyony* was an association of neighboring states for their common interest.)

The delegates unanimously approved the "Declaration of Panama," in which they determine that "the Latin American and Caribbean chiefs of state [will] meet with the intention of forming or institutionalizing the Latin American Confederation" in 1992, to commemorate "the 500th anniversary of the meeting of two cultures." The declaration also insists, "It is historically imperative that we achieve Latin American integration, as the only way in which we can confront and overcome the constant and permanent threats against our countries, stemming from the foreign debt, the drug trade, and imperialism's military and economic aggressions."

Panamanian President Manuel Solís Palma addressed the opening session, which included hundreds of Panamanian delegates, representatives from the diplomatic corps, and the international press. On the dais sat Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, the conference organizing committee, which includes Nils Castro, Nilka de Abrego, Carlos Wesley, Fernando Quijano, Carlos Cota, Héctor Basualdo, Marisol Arcia, and Héctor Herrera, representing half a dozen nations of the region, along with the heads of each delegation from every nation of the continent.

President Solís began by urging those present to return to their countries after the conference ended, to work with perseverance and "to take back with you the good news that, at the site of the First Amphictyonic Congress, the work has begun to lay the basis for a Second Amphictyonic Congress, with the purpose of achieving the integration of all our potential for greatness into a single force, that will at last put an end to the servitude imposed upon our peoples." (See **Documentation.**)

To close his speech, President Solís quoted Pope John

Paul II's most recent encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, demonstrating that "the aspirations which will occupy the deliberations that begin today, not only answer to the clear demands of our national realities, but also bear the highest, most authoritative, blessing."

## Support for Noriega

Speaking for the Bolivian delegation, retired Gen. Lucio Añez quoted from Gen. Omar Torrijos, the Panamanian nationalist leader who "married the armed forces to the people." The battle of patriots of the continent today should be "to end dependence on the foreign debt and drug trafficking," General Añez stated. He called Panama the place where "you find the largest percentage of popular dignity in the continent," then turned to General Noriega to state, "We are proud that you, General Noriega, are here with us today."

All the delegates gave full support to General Noriega and President Solís, and the battle Panama is waging for sovereignty. The Declaration of Panama states, "That with systematic political and economic aggressions against the Republic of Panama on the part of the Reagan administration, the intention of ignoring the Torrijos-Carter Treaties is made clear, and is confirmed in the United States Congress by a resolution that seeks its unilateral abrogation under threat of invasion."

The support for the government of Panama, demonstrated at these talks, was reported widely in the Ibero-American press, constituting the final blow to the Reagan administration's attempt to isolate General Noriega and draw all of Ibero-America into the U.S. assault against that nation. By the last day of the conference, the Peruvian government had announced that it would attempt to rectify the error of having removed Panama from the Group of Eight, the Contadora support group which Panama helped found. Peru simultaneously recognized the government of Solís Palma as the legitimate constitutional government, and sent in a new ambassador.

"This event represents the antibodies which are produced in order to endure U.S. imperialism; and perfect the defense of our Latin America," General Noriega told reporters at the inaugural session of the conference. Panama must turn to-

ward Latin America today, he said, while Latin America “sees in Panama its own anguish. . . . [We] represent the mirror of all aggressions against peoples who wish to be free. . . . The meritorious representatives of brother Latin American countries who are participating in this meeting, are authentic witnesses to the history which Panama is writing today. [Panama] is suffering one of the most brutal aggressions, because it refuses to capitulate and lend its territory so that foreign forces can attack brother countries.”

### Concrete resolutions

Delegates to the conference participated in workshops on the following subjects, to draw up resolutions on what must be done to carry out Ibero-American integration: 1) Economic Sovereignty, Integration, and the Foreign Debt; 2) Law and Integration; 3) the Labor Movement in Ibero-America; 4) Drug Trafficking as a Factor of Disintegration and Intervention in Latin America; 5) Armed Forces, Security, and Defense of Ibero-America; 6) Social and Cultural Problems; 7) the Environment; 8) Science and Technology for Integration; 9) the History of Integration.

In the morning session on Aug. 9, Deputy Irrajá Rodrigues, president of the Foreign Debt Commission of the Brazilian Congress, presented three proposals: the creation of a debtors' club among the countries of the continent; the declaration of a five-year moratorium on the debt; and the creation of an Ibero-American Common Market.

Here, Marivilia Carrasco, secretary general of the Mexican Labor Party (PLM), spoke on “Food and Energy Security for Ibero-America.” “Perhaps the area which most reflects the economic deterioration of our continent under the last five years of subjection to International Monetary Fund rule,” she said, “is the reduction in the consumption of food, and the concomitant collapse of capacity to produce these foods. . . . It is urgent that we begin agricultural infrastructure projects which will permit us to achieve food sovereignty. . . . It is evident that the tasks which we spoke of for food and energy are absolutely within our reach. Together, for example, with Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil, we can be autonomous in nuclear matters; in questions of oil technology, Pemex and Petrobrás are capable of providing technological advice, and training for the skilled manpower of any country that needs it.

“Continental collaboration will awaken the imagination of the continent to construct the *Patria Grande* [Great Fatherland]. I still see the shining eyes of those Mexican peasants to whom I have had the opportunity to propose that, instead of going as wetbacks to the U.S., they can participate in making Mexican production grow in the extension of the Argentine agricultural frontier that requires immigrants from all parts of the continent for its development,” she concluded.

“Pharmaceutical sovereignty” was put forward as vital for Ibero-America by Brazilian industrialist José Carlos de Luca Magallanes, president of the Latin American Federa-

tion of Pharmaceutical Industries, who participated in the workshop on Science and Technology for Integration. He stated that in addition to sovereignty in food and energy, sovereignty in medicines is also required. He gave as an example the 1982 Malvinas War, in which Argentina was left medically vulnerable. His presentation was a polemic against free trade and the international oligarchy that controls the pharmaceutical industry.

Venezuelan Labor Party representative Alejandro Peña told the workshop on drugs: “The crime I will discuss today will be catalogued in the future as the greatest genocide in the history of mankind, mass murder worse than that of Hitler, a murder that, not content with destroying the body, also destroys the mind, and even the soul. I refer to the role played by the policies of the International Monetary Fund in the promotion of drug trafficking.” Peña continued, “However, future generations will be able to exclaim, if today we so wish it, ‘In 1988, Ibero-America united, overthrew forever drug trafficking and the IMF.’ ”

Peña continued, “We should denounce not only the fact that . . . the international banks which are owed the debt are the principal ‘launderers’ of the \$500 billion annually managed by the narco-traffickers, but also the fact . . . that the IMF deliberately promotes drug trafficking.” Peña called for the Presidents of Ibero-America to decree a continental military alliance against drug trafficking. “For that, a Continental Joint Chiefs of Staff must be created to coordinate operations.” He also asked the meeting to take steps to “detect the fields of marijuana, cocaine, and poppy in all of Ibero-America, as well as the laboratories and centers of logistical support.” He called for using military justice to judge and jail the financiers and bankers, on the charge of being traitors to the fatherland. “We must proceed immediately to seize all their goods as booty of war,” Peña said.

### Military backs Panama

“We cannot permit U.S. imperialism to continue to place its insolent boot on our territories,” said Gen. Elio García Barrios of Venezuela. “We Latin Americans must unite; as long as the armed forces are not conscious of this integration, we will never achieve it, because we must fight together to find our destiny.” Gen. Humberto Cayoja of Bolivia said, “Panama is not alone in its sovereign fight, because it is the fight for Latin American dignity, which is why we stand in solidarity with its cause.” Gen. Miguel Angel de la Flor, ex-foreign minister of Peru, told the conference that the motto of General Torrijos, “ ‘it is better to die on one’s feet than live on one’s knees,’ is growing more important each day in the fight for freedom and sovereignty of our peoples. We must increasingly shape a Latin Americanist will to achieve the project begun by the Liberator Simón Bolívar, because only through common and united action will we be able to confront U.S. imperialism, which is trying to politically and economically subjugate us.”

"There was an awareness of the need to construct in Latin America an organized and coordinated movement," Argentina trade unionist Domingo Petrecca told *EIR*, referring to the discussions in the labor workshop. "In this new debate, we should interest all the organizations of Latin America, all the labor federations. . . . There was agreement on naming an organizing commission that will bear the responsibility for planning a Latin American meeting and the formal constitution of this new entity for the entire continent," he said.

Making up the commission on the labor movement at the conference were trade unionists from Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, and Mexico. Participating from Mexico was Juan Sosa of the oilworkers' union.

The Science and Technology workshop voted up a document read to the plenary by State Deputy Cecilia Soto of Sonora, Mexico, a member of the Cardenista National Democratic Front (FDN). The document strongly endorsed nuclear energy, and also superconductivity and other advanced technologies, and called for the creation of a Latin American advanced research center.

Gen. Edgardo Mercado Jarrín (ret.), former Peruvian prime minister and foreign minister, reported the resolution of the Armed Forces, Security, and Defense, workshop. It called for abolishing the Rio Treaty, which set up an inter-American military force, on the grounds that it had proved itself worthless in the Malvinas and Panama situations. Instead, the resolution called for creating a Latin American defense board, excluding the United States, to represent Latin American interests.

### 'Hold the trench of dignity'

Gen. Manuel Noriega delivered the closing speech, before a cheering crowd of 1,000 and the international press corps. Never before have so few, he told the gathered delegates, worried so very many imperialists as they have today. "As we reach the fourth day of this meeting, where there were no ideological positions nor radical postures, where in Christian fashion we sought out that which unites us rather than what divides us, we proudly proclaim to the world, and to our own Indian, black, mestizo, and white men, that the hour of the people has come. . . . And know that here in Panama, your brothers will hold the trench of dignity in the name of duty, though we may be threatened with extermination, since we are of the belief that nationalist fighters are not the masters of their lives, since their lives belong to the fatherland."

General Noriega's speech culminated the final session, at which President Solís Palma was also present, and where each of the nine workshops presented their findings. Former Argentine Congressman Héctor Basualdo also spoke on behalf of the meeting's organizing committee, and thanked the Panamanian government for hosting the event, and General Noriega in particular, "in whom we see the light of hope for Latin American integration—may God protect him."

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## Documentation

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# Solís Palma: 'This dream of integration'

*This is the full text of the speech of Acting Minister in Charge of the Presidency of the Republic of Panama, Manuel Solís Palma, to the Meeting Toward the Second Amphictyonic Congress, in Panama City on Aug. 9. Subheads have been added.*

Gentlemen:

The welcome given today by the Panamanian people and by my government to the distinguished delegations present here is very different from that given the first efforts to organize a meeting of plenipotentiaries of the new Latin American nations, which culminated in the Amphictyonic Congress of 1826, held in our capital.

The forefathers of Latin American integration had a dream, glimpsed a possibility, shared a vision of needs and aspirations which would bring our peoples to a crossroads which would make them aware of a common destiny, shaped by the similarity of the problems of our economic, social, and spiritual development, and by the sameness of the enemies of this development.

The quality of the representatives attending this conference, for the purpose of beginning to join efforts to celebrate a Second Amphictyonic Congress, confirms that conditions already exist on the continent to make Latin American integration not only a possibility, but also so necessary that its postponement implies a high cost in hardships and sufferings, in political instability and social violence, in frustrations, despair, and failures.

Indeed, the principal motivation of governments at that time was, doubtless, the common enemy—the armies of the Spanish Crown determined to reimpose imperial dominion over the territories of the new republics. But now, when there are other forms of domination, when the common weaknesses of underdevelopment and its causes have made us understand that the main weapons used to subjugate us are our own submissiveness and disunity, when the chains of the debt,

the specter of drugs, and the poison of disinformation undermine the constitutional order of our governments and their institutions, then the common enemy becomes clear to us all and seems to dictate to us the very agenda of a Second Amphictyonic Congress of plenipotentiaries of all the enemy's victims.

### **The problems we face**

The agenda of this meeting covers a wide range of specific problems shared by all the Latin American nations, and I am certain that the deliberations begun here today will shed much light on the way these problems repeat themselves in every nation, and will show not only the similarity of the nature of those problems, but also their causes and the factors that block or hinder their effective solution. Thus, I will limit myself to a few general comments from the perspective of a chief of state always obliged, and today more than ever, to see each national problem in the context of all the other problems.

The educators present here are very well aware of the deficiencies of our educational systems which, in addition to reflecting exiguous cultural levels, also block the acquisition of political virtues which are the sole basis for sustaining effective and lasting democratic institutions. But they know that these deficiencies also depend on both the scarcity of resources allocated to education and on the destructive and degenerative influence exercised by the industry of distraction of the masses, which has superimposed a frail and fictitious culture on top of our very rich, ancient, and varied cultural traditions and on top of our evolution, which constitutes one of Latin America's essential contributions to universal civilization.

The active duty and retired military men who are here today and who well represent the new orientation of Latin America's military, understand that misery and backwardness generate dangers to the security of human society as great as the whole gamut of extraterritorial threats which bombard us daily.

The scientists present here well know that the general inadequacy of our countries in the various sciences and, above all, in the sciences that are indispensable for technological progress, are not only due to our own limitations, but also, to some extent, to an exclusive concentration of the potentials for sharing the knowledge and discoveries from other places, a treasure which belongs to certain peoples, and which others do not have easy access to.

The politicians and scientists present here know well that the primary difficulty in directing the masses toward their liberation lies not only in a multiplicity of beliefs or ideologies, but also in a permanent mystification of reality, deliberately conceived as an instrument of subjugation, not only with the intention of eternalizing privileges within the frontiers of our societies, but also for the purpose of braking the drive to forge the collective will of all of our peoples, against

an unjust and unjustifiable international economic order.

One of the most fruitful achievements that could come out of this meeting, is to determine how far we are still dominated by deception, as the Liberator [Simón Bolívar—ed.] warned us in his speech at Angostura, when he said, "We have been subjugated more by deception than by force, and degraded more by vice than by superstition." These imperial weapons, gentlemen, have been perfected during the 169 years that have elapsed since.

### **What must we do now?**

Faced with this dream of Latin American integration, today so insistent, so demanding, so urgent in our consciences, we must ask ourselves: "What can we do now? What must we do now?" Notwithstanding all foreign obstacles, and all the difficulties which the powers may place in the path of Latin American integration, I believe that it is we, and only we, who will construct Latin America. And the greatest responsibility of our leaders is precisely that: to show the way, to direct people, and to lead them with concrete steps toward that unity which, as Bolívar said, "will not come to us through divine miracles, but through noticeable effects and well-directed efforts."

Personally, I believe that among the many reasons that the realization of this splendid aspiration of the Liberator has been delayed, one of the main ones has been due to associating it always with the formation of a single great state, with a federal government that incorporates all of our nations, forgetting that Bolívar himself cautioned against such impossibilities when he said, "I think that it were better for America to adopt the Koran than the government of the United States."

Each of our countries must keep our identity as nations, but we must also make the unyielding decision to struggle in unity for the sake of our authentic independence.

Just as Western Europe has been slowly uniting, despite the diversity and individual strengths of its cultures, the force of its national historic identities, and its varied levels of development, Latin America must enter more substantive stages, and join an accelerated integration movement, to also guarantee the prosperity and well-being of our peoples, whose unfulfilled aspirations are growing daily more explosive.

A few days ago, a prestigious U.S. publication stated that this decade is a lost decade for Latin America, in that our countries have all become impoverished. Average real income, without exception, is less today than in 1980. Last year, 30% of the value of all our exports disappeared in payments to the commercial banks and to the international financial institutions, as foreign debt service. But the weight of our dependency is still more terrible when it touches the very heart of our needs, when it affects the production and consumption of food. Malnutrition, which formerly existed only in some countries or regions, has spread and now covers vast regions, and has progressively become a chronic reality for the majority of our countries' populations, who increas-

ingly depend on the import of all kinds of products, and especially agricultural products.

It is necessary to warn that dependency becomes interference in our affairs, when it is used to try to impose on us a foreign political and social model. In the case of Panama today, dependency has come to form part of political, economic, and financial aggression, which replaces the war of territorial conquest.

Among the new forms of deceitful tactics that are repeatedly employed against Latin American interests, and against the interests of each Latin American nation, the terrible experience that Panama is suffering today gives us the authority to denounce the export of dreams and ideals, and the efforts to divert our people's attentions through empty institutional lures entirely irrelevant to the national reality of each of our countries.

### **We must find our own way**

Here, again, Bolívar has left behind guideposts to show us the way, in his writings which, at times, appear to us like a catechism of liberation. In this quote, a little long but from which not a word can be eliminated, we find the definitive response to the library democracies, the showcase democracies, the democracies for export: "I should say (affirms the Liberator) that it has never for a moment entered my mind to compare the position and character of two states as dissimilar as the English-American and the Spanish-American. Would it not be most difficult to apply to Spain the English system of political, civil, and religious liberty? Hence, it would be even more difficult to adapt to Venezuela the laws of North America. Does not *L'esprit des lois* state that laws should be suited to the people for whom they are made; that it would be a major coincidence if those of one nation could be adapted to another; that laws must take into account the physical conditions of the country, climate, character of the land, location, size, and mode of living of the people; that they should be in keeping with the degree of liberty that the Constitution can sanction respecting the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, resources, number, commerce, habits, and customs? This is the code we must consult, not the code of Washington!"

In these flowing words from Angostura, the Liberator again raises his insistent and wise advice that each of the new Latin American nations be left to digest the liberty achieved with independence, in accordance with its own nature and with its own timetable.

There he expressed at great length and detail that precept of his which adorns the entrance to the Colombian Foreign Ministry, and which tells us that each people has its own regimen which the others should respect.

The time has come for us to understand that the illusions of false ideals are weapons to restrain the political, economic, and social currents of Latin America, to embroil them in sterile disputes about the degree of perfection of its institu-

tions in the face of standards that only exist in textbooks and in pamphlets of destabilizing propaganda.

In truth, it is time that the world understand that each one of our countries has its own dream, and that those dreams are different from the U.S. dream, just as they are different from those of the peoples of Europe, and of Asia, and of the rest of the world. It is time for the world to understand, further, that those dreams are as valid and as noble as those of Jefferson, and Thomas Paine, and Lincoln, and have the same right to exist and to become our ideals and goals.

### **The basis for unity**

If we merely compare regimes and match structures, paying no attention to the inevitable asymmetry of institutional evolution that can be inferred from our diversity, we will be distancing ourselves from forms of unification based on factors that give us a common entity, and we will be sacrificing the path of material and spiritual progress for all peoples for the sake of a means of individually conceiving that progress.

The first great Latin American struggle against a foreign empire did not stop to think about the different idiosyncracies of the regimes that were about to be born. In this new struggle for final liberation, let us seek that which can unite us in Latin American integration, and not that which separates us, since all that will be more easily and quickly resolved with an integrated Latin America determined to serve each one of its peoples, themselves united by an unshakeable and permanent will to excel.

His Holiness John Paul II, in his most recent encyclical on the Church's concern over social questions, and which I would like to cite on this occasion, tells us: "The developing nations from the same geographic area, and above all those from the southern zone, can and should constitute new regional organizations, premised on criteria of equality, liberty, and participation in the concert of nations, as they have already begun to do with promising results."

Thus, the aspirations which will occupy the deliberations which begin today, not only answer to the clear demands of our national realities, but also bear the highest, most authoritative, blessing.

I wish you all much success and, above all, much perseverance. When each of you has returned to your countries of origin, may all of you spread the word that during the battle of Panama against colonialism, a dream again flowered, the other dreams of the other Americans—we Americans who have always been passed over. And that these Americans, much older and more numerous than the others, have decided to take hold of our own destiny, inspired by the legacy of the Liberator; and take back with you the good news that, at the site of the First Amphictyonic Congress, the work has begun to lay the basis for a Second Amphictyonic Congress, with the purpose of achieving the integration of all our potential for greatness into a single force, that will at last put an end to the servitude imposed upon our peoples.