

Clinton State Dept. adopts Bush line on Ibero-America

by Valerie Rush

By wholeheartedly embracing the so-called human rights and demilitarization approach of its predecessor toward Ibero-America, the Clinton administration is signing on to a catastrophic policy course south of the border. Under the noxious influence of the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD)—a sort of Western Hemisphere Trilateral Commission which wrote the Bush policy on Ibero-America—President Bill Clinton has ended up backing the *wrong governments* in Ibero-America, and is promoting policies which are paving the way for narco-terrorist takeovers in that part of the world.

Exemplary are the cases of Venezuela and Peru. In Venezuela, where more than 90% of the population despises its corrupt government, President Carlos Andrés Pérez's sole bulwark of defense is Washington. And yet in Peru, the highly popular government of President Alberto Fujimori, which has dealt devastating blows to the Shining Path narco-terrorist gang, is under the combined siege of Shining Path and corrupted elements of the Peruvian Congress and military, *backed unabashedly by the U.S. State Department*. The resulting destabilization of the continent is paving the way for an explosion of narco-terrorism, and even civil war will spread across the continent unless Clinton reverses course.

Venezuela: dictatorship by any other name

Venezuelans are anxiously awaiting the results of a Supreme Court decision to be handed down May 20 on whether sufficient evidence exists to try President Pérez for his role in embezzling millions in public funds. A 73-count indictment against Pérez was submitted to the Supreme Court by Attorney General Ramón Escovar Salom, and has already been approved by Chief Justice Gonzalo Rodríguez Corro. Should a majority of the 15 Supreme Court magistrates support

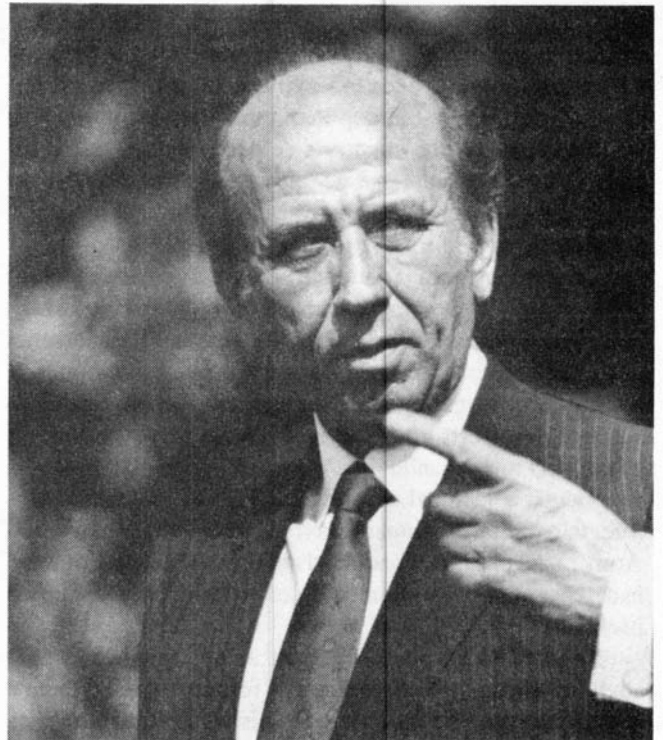
Rodríguez Corro's finding, the case will go to the Congress for a vote on lifting Pérez's immunity, preparatory to a Senate impeachment trial.

Although Pérez had initially indicated that a full Supreme Court decision favoring the indictment would be sufficient to prompt his resignation, he has since reneged. On May 11, he told Spanish television that he would merely seek a leave of absence and appoint a cabinet minister to replace him during the trial. The head of Pérez's Democratic Action party, Humberto Celli, told the press that such an alternative to resignation "would lead to riots in the streets." International wire services such as Britain's Reuters are also reporting that Venezuelans might take to the streets if Pérez is absolved. In fact, there is a very real prospect of civil war if Pérez survives this latest move to pry him out of the presidency.

Pérez is reportedly resorting to police-state maneuvers to help him cling to power. According to Juan Liscano, leader of the opposition Patriotic Front, Pérez and a small coterie of military loyalists are attempting to orchestrate a series of terrorist acts, which would then be used as a pretext for a repressive crackdown, and even engineering a "self-coup" to allow him to remain in the presidency.

It is also feared that the Supreme Court and/or Congress might be pressured and bribed by Pérez to vote in his favor.

Although Pérez's notorious personal corruption is the immediate driving force behind the popular sentiment for his impeachment, the underlying hatred of his government is universally attributed to the devastating effect his neo-liberal economic "reforms," dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have had on a country once one of the wealthiest on the continent. By slashing the investment budget, keeping interest rates sky-high, and permitting imports to flood the country under his free-market policies, Pérez's government



The United States is backing the corrupt dictator Carlos Andrés Pérez (right), calling him a “fellow democrat,” while doing everything possible to sabotage Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori (left), who is waging a full military war against the narco-terrorists. This was the Bush policy; why doesn't Clinton get smart?

is responsible for devastating the country's agricultural and industrial sectors, thereby driving up unemployment and prices and pauperizing a large proportion of the country's middle and working classes. Money that once went into investment is now pouring into speculation, and drug-money laundering is considered the country's only “boom industry.”

Despite the fact that Pérez has only survived two military coup attempts by the skin of his teeth, has repeatedly employed police-state methods to repress the country's huge protest movement, and is facing likely impeachment proceedings, the Clinton administration continues to argue the Bush line that “Pérez equals democracy,” and has to be defended at all cost.

In mid-April, the Clinton State Department sent a communiqué to the Venezuelan Military High Command warning that any move by the military to dump Pérez would lead to an immediate U.S. suspension of relations with a successor government—even if new elections were promptly called. According to local press reports, the statement stirred “huge unrest at various levels of the Armed Forces, including the high command, because it represented . . . an intervention into the internal affairs of the country.”

Pérez was a favorite of the Bush administration, and in return for promoting Bush's “new world order” on the continent—including IMF dictates and repeated public attacks on Ibero-America's armed forces—received unquali-

fied backing as a “fellow democrat.” President Clinton, who has every reason to shun the corrupt Venezuelan leader as the dictator that he is, has instead accepted the urgings of the Inter-American Dialogue—perhaps at the behest of former Dialogue president Richard Feinberg, who today runs the Latin America desk at the National Security Council—and has thrown his support to the besieged Pérez, thereby alienating an entire nation.

Peru: U.S. backs Shining Path

In Peru, the Clinton administration has again made a disastrous choice. Only here, President Clinton's preoccupation with defending “human rights” has, under the direction of the Inter-American Dialogue, placed his administration in league with one of the most genocidal subversive movements in the world.

The problem began in April, when Clinton received the credentials of Peru's new ambassador in Washington, with a brief but politically explosive speech. Breaking protocol, Clinton stated that his administration appreciated Peru's progress on the human rights front, but demanded further steps in that direction, and full autonomy for Peru's Congress in pursuing alleged incidents of abuse.

With this international backing, a gaggle of pro-terrorist Peruvian congressmen attempted to use concocted “evidence” of military human rights abuses to indict the institu-

tion of the Peruvian military as a whole. Armed Forces Commander Gen. Nicolás de Bari Hermoza fought back by accusing the congressmen of serving as “allies of the internal enemy,” that is, the Shining Path terrorists, in a systematic effort to discredit the country’s defense forces. He specifically refused demands that he release the names of military intelligence officers, insisting that this would constitute a veritable “hit list” for terrorist assassins.

General Hermoza is nationally credited with the Fujimori government’s successful persecution of Shining Path, which began in earnest in April 1992, after President Fujimori shut down the terrorist-infiltrated Congress which was sabotaging his anti-terrorism efforts. He is considered an important obstacle to the efforts of such Project Democracy mouthpieces as the IAD to dismantle Peru’s Armed Forces and eliminate the country’s national sovereignty. It is no accident, therefore, that military commanders from around the country, and Army ranks in Lima, conducted an impressive show of force in defense of General Hermoza, and of the military institution itself.

Yet the Clinton administration, at the urging of its IAD advisers, abandoned all pretense of respect for the principle of non-intervention and ordered Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson—a hold-over from the Bush administration—to step into the fray. On April 22, the same day that Army tanks ostentatiously paraded past the U.S. Embassy and Peruvian Congress to defend their war against subversion, Aronson called President Fujimori on the telephone and warned him that “the United States views this show of force as an unacceptable attempt to intimidate the legislature. . . . The Congress has every right to investigate human rights affairs in Peru.” U.S. chargé d’affaires in Lima Charles Bradshaw went even further, publicly warning that the Armed Forces’ defiance “not only endangered democracy, but also puts international aid [for Peru] at risk.”

On April 27, the Washington Office on Latin America, a leftist human rights lobby associated with the Marxist Theology of Liberation networks on the continent, sponsored a seminar on Peru in Washington, D.C. which served as a sounding-board for the anti-military diatribes of Peru’s congressional allies of Shining Path. The seminar boasted of the presence of such Washington luminaries as Luigi Einaudi, former U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States, Philip MacLean, assistant to Bernard Aronson, and Peter Hakim, the head of the Inter-American Dialogue.

Robles spouts lies from U.S. Embassy

These U.S. threats and pressures notwithstanding, General Hermoza—backed by President Fujimori—refused to capitulate. It was at this point that Gen. Rodolfo Robles Espinoza appeared on the scene. Army General Robles released a letter to the media in Peru on May 5, accusing General Hermoza and presidential adviser Vladimiro Montesinos of running a death squad within the Army that was

responsible for “systematic violations of human rights of Peru’s population.” Robles’s accusations were made from the U.S. Embassy in Lima, where he and his family took refuge. Robles has since flown to Argentina, and has announced plans to travel to Washington, where he hopes to testify before the U.S. Congress and establish a residence.

Robles had been the number-three man in the Peruvian Army until his links to a State Department-backed coup attempt against Fujimori last November were exposed, and he was relieved of his command over Peru’s southern region and demoted.

Robles has demanded that President Fujimori fire General Hermoza and replace him with Gen. José Valdivia, an officer whose loyalty was sharply questioned during the November coup attempt. Valdivia is currently assigned to a post in Washington. Robles went so far as to demand that Fujimori name him Army inspector general, where “I would be in charge of investigating and putting on trial those responsible for human rights violations.” Robles received the public endorsement of imprisoned general Salinas Sedo, who had led the attempted coup against President Fujimori last Nov. 13.

General Hermoza responded to Robles with a May 6 statement noting that Robles has not offered a single shred of evidence to back up his charges. He added that these “tendentious imputations were formulated by an officer who only now publicly maintains that he knew of presumed human rights violations. He had the obligation and moral duty to courageously denounce them when they occurred, according to the principles of military honor and decorum, as solid military behavior dictates.”

On May 9, President Fujimori issued a statement fully supporting General Hermoza, praising his leadership in the anti-subversion effort, and vowing that unless “concrete evidence” of rights violations were presented to him, there would be no changes in the military command. Minister of Defense Gen. Victor Malca accused Robles of “disloyalty” before the Peruvian Congress, and the Supreme Council of Military Justice has since stripped Robles of all rank and has begun proceedings against him for “insubordination, insulting his superiors, affronting the nation and the Armed Forces, desertion, and fraud.”

The surfacing of Robles and his timely accusations against Hermoza are getting wide play in the U.S. press. The May 12 *New York Times* interviewed him, making no mention of his ties to the would-be coup-makers and giving his undocumented charges full credibility. The *Times* article also contains a clear-cut message to the Fujimori government, by quoting an anonymous “senior State Department official,” who insists that no U.S. aid will be given Peru until investigations of these human rights violations have been conducted, and the offenders punished. “From a foreign policy standpoint,” the official said, “human rights is a *sine qua non*. . . . And Peru, I think it is safe to say, is the test case for Latin America.”