

Caldera rips 'green' hypocrisy at U.N.

by David Ramonet

Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera strongly attacked the destabilizers of his economic recovery program before the 49th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 30, denouncing the "hypocrisy" of environmentalism. He also once again warned of the precarious situation Venezuela finds itself in—together with all debtor countries—because of the usurious foreign debt which will consume 35% of the Venezuelan national budget next year, and he stated the need to start a new round of negotiations.

"We certainly accept the necessity of defending a clean environment for our populations, and we are very much prepared to contribute to this effort; but we cannot refrain from noting that, on more than one occasion, the ecological fight for a clean environment has been hypocritically used to close off access of the developing countries to the markets of the rich countries," Caldera told the assembled delegates. "We maintain that the transfer of technology must be broad and genuine, because if not, the chasm which separates us from the developed countries and which is growing larger every year will end up becoming insuperable, and will lead to a sharp and bitter division between two segments of humanity, with unpredictable, and fatal, consequences."

An important component of Caldera's Stabilization and Economic Recovery Program is premised on the participation of large investors in the exploitation of the vast mineral resources of the southeast portion of Venezuela. A large part of these resources, such as the huge gold deposits estimated to rival those of South Africa in size, are found in the states of Bolívar and Amazonas, in the Venezuelan Amazon.

But this and the rest of Caldera's policies have come under sharp attack by British and U.S. financial circles, ever since he took firm nationalist measures earlier this year to prevent the banking system from being further looted into insolvency by international financial thugs and their local henchmen. He imposed exchange controls to stop capital flight, set price controls, put seven leading banks in receivership, and then launched an aggressive policy of regional integration and development, as an alternative to International Monetary Fund (IMF) recipes for economic strangulation.

Needless to say, the City of London and Wall Street roared disapproval, and have launched everything to try to whip Caldera back into line. The *Financial Times* of Oct. 10 ran a lengthy article demanding that Caldera immediately end exchange and price controls, and triple domestic gasoline

prices as the IMF has urged.

Within Venezuela, the leftist Causa R party has been a major tool of the international banking crowd. Bolívar state Gov. Andrés Velásquez, ex-presidential candidate of the Causa R party (a member of the São Paulo Forum, a continental Castroite narco-terrorist group), insisted during the Third International Gold Symposium in Caracas the first week of October, that "the equilibrium of nature must be guaranteed." And on Oct. 10, the daily *El Nacional* published an ad paid for by Causa R completely rejecting Caldera's economic program, including its large-scale infrastructure projects.

The most important of these projects—of continental importance—was announced by Caldera during his recent visit to Brazil last Sept. 8. "An old idea is being reactivated, which is the possibility of opening a viable communication link, the interconnected waterway navigation of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers, the tributaries of the Amazon," Caldera announced at a press conference in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. "There exists a natural link via what is known as the Casiquiare Channel, but there also exist very attractive possibilities from the standpoint of constructing a canal, a short canal between the two river systems," he explained. "The idea of linking the Orinoco River, the Amazon River, the Paraná and the Plata, is one of the grand ideas for the future of Latin America, and without doubt, it is no longer a chimera to think of this possibility, but rather something we can start to take steps to achieving," he said.

But the Casiquiare Channel is located in the heart of the Upper Orinoco Biosphere Reserve, created in 1991 by presidential decree of the deposed former President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Although the use of this reserve has not yet been regulated, the environmentalist groups are preparing a campaign to apply the norms dictated by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The norms of this group absolutely prohibit any type of intervention "by the white man" in the core areas of the reserve, according to one green activist consulted here. This zone is inhabited by the Venezuelan Yanomami Indians, and is contiguous to a like reserve created the same year for the Brazilian Yanomamis by the now-deposed President Fernando Collor de Mello. Ironically, the environmentalists are complaining that the Yanomamis themselves are seeking to leave the reserve.

More explicitly, on Oct. 4, an activist from the Audubon Conservationist Society, Jorge Cruz Osorio, wrote an article in *El Diario de Caracas* entitled, "Bright Ideas that Are Undermining the Country," in which he called for a war against what he called "the conquest of the South" by the Venezuelan government, referring to the programs carried out by Caldera during his first term in office in the 1970s. "A new crusade is afloat against the environment: the Conquest of the South, which, as is quite clear, is an imposition of different rhythms of life, of destruction of forests, of huge infrastructure projects with their included other impacts on the environment," wrote Cruz Osorio.