

Clinton visit to Mexico defuses British confrontation scenario

by Valerie Rush

“Collaboration,” “partnership,” and “sovereignty” were the watchwords of President William Clinton’s three-day trip to Mexico, which helped solidify both a personal relationship between the two heads of state, and a mutual respect between their two countries. In various public appearances with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo throughout his visit, the U.S. President was emphatic that he intends to be a good friend and neighbor to Mexico and to its sovereign institutions. Clinton’s commitment to Mexico’s stability thwarted the intent of a British-backed campaign to provoke a violent confrontation between Mexico and the United States.

That campaign was launched earlier this year around the annual certification President Clinton is required by law to apply to the U.S.’s partners in the war on drugs. In the month preceding his Feb. 28 decision to certify Mexico, Mexico’s anti-drug official had been discovered to be an agent of one of the country’s leading drug cartels. Although he was promptly dismissed and jailed, the incident, coming as close as it did to Clinton’s certification ruling, provided grist for the mill of Mexico-bashers everywhere.

While important mouthpieces of the British financial oligarchy such as the London *Economist* were happily predicting that the United States and Mexico would come to blows—even outright warfare—over Mexico’s “narco-corruption,” their agents and dupes inside the U.S. Congress openly debated the overthrow of the Zedillo regime. Clinton resisted falling into the decertification trap, knowing full well that it would have triggered a wave of anti-Americanism inside Mexico, with disastrous consequences for U.S.-Mexican relations.

But the British did not give up, and mounted a drive for a first-ever Congressional override of President Clinton’s certi-

fication of Mexico, assisted by the British-backed U.S. media, which tried to smear the Zedillo government, Mexico’s political institutions, and its Armed Forces, as “hopelessly corrupt.” Only Clinton’s decisive personal intervention stemmed the tide of slander and accusations, which were threatening to trigger political explosions inside Mexico.

Thus, Bill Clinton’s May 5-7 visit to Mexico, with its repeated emphasis on friendship and cooperation, once again defeated the British oligarchy’s gameplan, which was to force a cancellation of the visit, or, failing that, to shape the environment with possibly violent protests against the American President. That scenario fizzled too, with only a few hundred leftist demonstrators making a pathetic showing to scream obscenities at Clinton.

Instead of “Yankee Go Home,” Clinton heard another voice from Mexico. On May 6, two of the country’s leading dailies published a paid advertisement appealing to Clinton to convoke a new “Bretton Woods conference” for reform of the international financial and monetary system. The open letter to Clinton, which bore the signatures of many prominent Mexicans, as well as other notables from around the world, was based on the proposed economic recovery program of U.S. statesman and economist Lyndon H. LaRouche. One day earlier, the widely read article of *Excelsior* columnist José Neme Salum greeted President Clinton upon his arrival with a call for the exoneration of LaRouche, a former political prisoner of the George Bush regime, as critical to the success of a new Bretton Woods conference (see below).

Sovereignty at issue

Among Clinton’s many activities during his three-day visit were ones designed to drive home a sense both of Mexi-

co's long-standing and proud cultural heritage, and its dignity as a sovereign nation. The first cathedral in the Americas, for example, was founded in 1537 by Spain's Hernán Cortés, in the lovely colonial city of Tlaxcala. On his last day in Mexico, Clinton toured Tlaxcala and was surrounded by hundreds of children anxious to meet and touch him. He insisted on visiting the cathedral and received a guided tour and blessing from several priests there.

During their state dinner at the National Palace, President Zedillo reminded Clinton that "the first printing press, the first mint, and the first university in the Americas" were just down the block from where they were dining. During that dinner, Zedillo praised Clinton's friendship with Mexico, and pointedly added that Mexicans "hold a great respect for [President Abraham] Lincoln because he knew how to reconcile protecting the legitimate interests of his country, while also protecting the dignity and sovereignty of Mexicans."

The issue of Mexican sovereignty surfaced repeatedly in the Clinton-Zedillo exchanges. Following the signing of a "Declaration of the Mexico-U.S. Alliance Against Drugs," Zedillo told the press that he was very pleased that a central principle of the document is "absolute respect for the sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction of both Mexico and the United States of America." Clinton's visit to the "Niños Héroes," a Mexico City monument paying homage to young Mexican cadets killed while resisting an 1847 invasion by U.S. troops, was the first by a U.S. President in 50 years. Clinton rejected press insinuations that he was "atoning" for that invasion of 150 years earlier: "I'm going there as a gesture of respect—not only respect for their lives, but respect for the patriotism and the integrity of the people who have served this country."

Two critical issues that were raised during the three days of meetings and speeches, were drugs and immigration. On drugs, the Declaration of the Mexican-U.S. Alliance Against Drugs which the two Presidents signed, is designed to set out a framework under which a collaborative fight against the narcotics trade will proceed. While the specifics remain to be elaborated, the common strategy to be hammered out will address all aspects of the threat, including supply and demand, money-laundering, arms-trafficking, and extradition.

On the highly contentious immigration issue, President Clinton defended the new U.S. immigration law as a necessary means of maintaining "safe and orderly migration" for legal immigrants, but acknowledged that it had to be balanced with "common sense and compassion." He pledged to "work with Congress to correct some aspects of the immigration law," and to come up with "a comprehensive view which is mutually beneficial and will make it possible to conserve family unity and to protect the dignity of human beings."

Free-trade subversion

Unfortunately, much of the formal agenda that dominated Clinton's trip centered around an embrace of the very discred-

ited British free-trade policies that have subverted Mexico's economy and turned the country into an operations center for some of the continent's most powerful drug cartels. Throughout his visit, Clinton repeatedly praised the North American Free Trade Agreement as a "success story," despite the fact that NAFTA is a carefully crafted declaration of war by the former Bush-Salinas governments *against* the national sovereignty of both Mexico and the United States.

President Zedillo, too, wholeheartedly embraced the neo-liberal free-trade model. During a joint press conference of the two Presidents on May 6, a journalist charged that the free-market economic reforms promoted by both governments were an evident failure, given the dramatic impoverishment of Mexico in recent years. Zedillo responded, "The long period of stagnation in our economy cannot be tied to, nor should it be tied in any way to the processes of economic liberalization. Quite the contrary. I think that, thanks to these policies of opening up toward foreign countries and the internal liberalization of our economies, and also adjusting the size of the Mexican government as far as the control of the economy is concerned, means that we will now be able to begin a period of sustained, dynamic growth."

It is no accident that the Inter-American Dialogue, the bankers' think-tank and a critical channel of British intelligence influence into U.S. policymaking circles which dominated every feature of George Bush's policy toward Ibero-America, has chosen this moment to intensify the pressure on Clinton for launching a Western Hemisphere Free Trade Agreement, on the model of NAFTA. Just prior to Clinton's departure for Mexico, a former Dialogue president and past National Security Council adviser on Latin America, Richard Feinberg, gave a press conference to urge that President Clinton ram through a "fast-track" approach to such a continent-wide agreement, or face the loss of his "credibility" in Ibero-America.

Another insidious pressure that threatened to undermine the success of Clinton's Mexico visit was the call for "democratic transition" in Mexico, coming from certain Washington circles, and echoed in Clinton's entourage. A major feature of the Inter-American Dialogue's campaign against Mexico has been to target both the ruling PRI party and the Armed Forces—a major bulwark of stability in the country—for dismantling. Upcoming July elections in Mexico have been chosen by the Dialogue and its Mexican non-governmental organization collaborators as the intended setting for a potentially fatal blow to the PRI, in the form of an opposition party's capture of the Mexico City mayoralty. President Clinton's unprecedented meetings with the heads of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN) opposition parties on May 6, were supposed to be a part of this scenario.

That, too, fizzled. Clinton's meetings with leaders of the opposition were relatively brief, and *pro forma*. More to the point, the entirety of his visit served as a strong, if implicit,

endorsement of Zedillo, his Presidency, and the national institutions of Mexico. Most revealing were the comments by “political commentator” Jorge Castañeda, who complained that Clinton’s policy toward Mexico “is absolutely clear, decisive, unequivocal; to try at all cost to keep the system in power.” Castañeda is a member of the San Angel Group of political dissidents, among whose members is Inter-American Dialogue notable Lorenzo Meyer.

Documentation

The president of the Mexican Democratic Party, Baltazar Valadez Montoya, who is also the party’s candidate in the upcoming July elections for mayor of Mexico City, sent a letter to President Clinton on April 30, requesting a meeting to discuss four critical strategic issues of the day. His letter, reported in several Mexican newspapers, read as follows:

In my capacity as head of the Mexican Democratic Party (PDM), and as candidate of the same for Mayor of the Federal District, I extend to you my most cordial welcome to our country. And I hope that your visit will be of the most possible benefit for both nations.

Informed, through the media, of your interest in meeting with leaders of opposition parties, *permit me to request a meeting*, to explain to you our viewpoints on strategic issues which affect our countries and humanity as a whole, among these, the following:

1. A New World Economic Order. The urgency of convoking a world monetary conference, to create a new Bretton Woods agreement, which would allow the replacement of the current bankrupt monetary system, by a new one which favors the establishment of a fixed parity, and trade agreements which would maintain true economic development of the nations of the world. Today, Mexico City and all Mexico suffer the disastrous consequences of the irrational conditionalities of the IMF [International Monetary Fund], translated into high rates of unemployment, extreme poverty, desperation, malnutrition, and the collapse of our industrial capacity, among other difficulties, which are the same as in the majority of nations. For this reason, I join the petition brought before you, on this theme, by hundreds of legislators of your own country, and of nations from all the continents of the world, as well as by prominent individuals and political leaders of all the continents requesting this. [List of petitioners attached.]

2. Cooperation to put a definitive end to drug trafficking. To redouble joint efforts and mutual cooperation, with due respect for national sovereignty, to definitively eradicate this crime against humanity, which is drug-trafficking. A fight which should include, an integral strategy to eliminate the phases of production, transport, distribution, consumption,

and money-laundering. The same aspects which have created an underground, illegal economy, and which seek to destroy the basic foundations of the nations involved, on behalf of an anti-human plan.

3. Cooperation for development, among the U.S., Mexico, and Latin America. The urgency of finding and developing new channels of economic integration among Mexico, Latin America, and your country, which favor economic growth, in the same spirit as the recent agreements—supported by your government—reached between China and Russia, which are part of the strategy of creating a “Eurasian Land-Bridge” which would ultimately link up with our continent across the Bering Strait. Latin America must be involved in this project which will bring prosperity to humanity.

4. Human rights and the perfecting of democracy: Aware of your great democratic spirit, permit me, respectfully, to put forward as a proposal for discussion, the human rights situation in your country. Both the matter of the treatment of undocumented Mexican migrants, as well as the violations which have occurred against the rights of ethnic minorities, and against U.S. politicians themselves, as in the world-renowned case of Mr. Lyndon H. LaRouche, whose prestige as a statesman and economist is recognized even by those who do not necessarily share his views, to the degree that personalities of great democratic courage from all parts of the world call for his immediate exoneration. . . .

The May 5 edition of Mexico’s leading daily, Excélsior, carried the widely read weekly financial column of José Neme Salum, who used the occasion of President Clinton’s arrival in Mexico that day, to address the strategic issues which the two Presidents face, to build what is required: “Mexico-U.S.: Cooperation.” Excerpts from Neme’s column follow:

History has granted Ernesto Zedillo and William Clinton an opportunity to begin, today, with the arrival of the President of the United States in Mexico, to serve as decisive factors in the future of humanity, either through what they agree to do in favor of a new international order, or what they fail to do concerning such a critical matter.

Conditions are more propitious than ever to turn both leaders into protagonists of the present moment, in which two distinct paths have been defined: a New Middle Age, where the global consortiums will be the new feudal lords, or to join in the construction of a New Economic Age for a New Civilization, through the integration of a multipolar world. . . .

President Zedillo is obligated to be the spokesman for the historic Mexican demand, shared by all developing sector nations, that the United States convoke a World Monetary Conference to create a New Bretton Woods, because it is urgent that the current bankrupt international financial system be replaced. The latter has become the greatest obstacle to any nation of the so-called Third World in achieving development and in looking to the future as a “beautiful place.” . . .

It would be a serious error if, for example, the Mexican

Democratic Party (PDM) were to remain at this historic moment as the only Mexican policy force with the nerve to propose to Clinton, in the interest of all Mexicans, the creation of a new international economic and political order.

The letter to the President of the United States, delivered to the U.S. Embassy by the PDM last April 30, synthesizes the most fervent hope that these old but unfulfilled dreams can finally be addressed, dreams for which the PRIistas [members of the ruling PRI party] were in former times the main proponents, and who, if they now want the decided support of the citizenry, must take up these issues once again, on pain of suffering defeat should they fail to do so. . . .

Clearly, it should be top priority on the Zedillo-Clinton agenda to agree to an integral strategy to combat drugs. And because it must be integral, it is obvious that such a strategy can only be successful if the Mexico-U.S. meetings lead to concrete bilateral agreements of cooperation and financial backing for railroad infrastructure, hydroelectric and nuclear power, and technology transfer to create here an industrial base for production of machine-tools, to allow the Mexican economy to escape its status of mere consumer of these, which is the real cause of its inability to pay truly remunerative wages to its workers.

Economic cooperation tending toward increases in investment in productive areas, not in the speculative money and

bond markets, also provides the means to solving the problem of undocumented workers.

For these, it is indispensable that Mexico win a commitment from Clinton that the human rights of our fellow countrymen be respected. The resident in the White House knows that a pronouncement here [in Mexico] against the violations suffered there [in the United States] by ethnic minorities, but also by U.S. politicians of the stature of Lyndon LaRouche—whose exoneration is a debt which the U.S. owes to the universal principles of justice and democracy—is a key factor in silencing conservative interests which seek, through virtually Nazi actions, to bring the two neighbors to blows.

A point of particular binational importance is the matter of the new United States ambassador in Mexico. It would be absurd and contradictory to a joint plan against drugs for the nomination for this post to fall to William Weld, just to do a favor for the people of Massachusetts—of which state he is still governor, having lost the election for senator after being accused of covering up for drug trafficking—and for the Kennedy family, by getting him out of there, as the *New York Post* recently commented.

If not even the Kennedys want Weld, the Mexicans want him even less, since he is linked to the clan of drug kingpin George Bush, whose associates in this country are the perverse Salinases.

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