

Ibero-America Briefs

New Colombian President Readies ‘Decarb’ Campaign with Soros-Ally Stiglitz

Much talk is heard about how Ibero-America’s growing rebellion against neoliberal, free market economics will be strengthened when leftist Gustavo Petro assumes the Presidency in Colombia Aug. 7. Not so. Petro gave the game away in his exclusive interview with Spain’s *El Pais* daily, published June 27: He intends to line up Ibero-America behind Prince Charles’ Malthusian “Great Reset,” calling it “progressive.”

El Pais asked: “There is talk about a new progressive axis in Latin America, formed by the presidents of Mexico, Argentina, Chile, now Colombia and in the future perhaps Brazil. Do you relate to this?” Petro answered:

“I would say there are two phases. A first based on fossil fuels, which we could call the Chávez phase. It was like a golden age of social welfare, but it was unsustainable, because it was based on oil. All of that collapsed. Now, it’s time to abandon the fossil fuel economy, disassociate ourselves from oil, coal and gas, and build development on the basis of production and knowledge. No progressive vision of society can be built on the fossil economy, because the fossil economy is death. We must consider a new model of development in Latin America.”

Then on June 30, Petro named Yale-trained economist José Antonio Ocampo as his Finance Minister. For more than a decade, Ocampo has been co-President with Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University’s Initiative for Policy Dialogue, generously funded by George Soros’s Open Society Institute.

Stiglitz fanatically advocates deindustrializing the developing sector by denying it the use of modern forms of power—nuclear or fossil. In his 2006 book, *Making Globalization Work*, he wrote:

[To stop the imagined climate crisis] “have all the countries of the world impose a common tax on carbon emissions, or, equivalently, a tax on oil, coal, and gas at rates reflecting the emissions they generate when burned. Firms and households would respond to this tax by reducing usage, and thereby emissions.”

In 2009, Stiglitz, Ocampo, and the Open Society Institute’s Financial Markets Program Director, Stephanie Griffith-Jones, led a “Workshop on Climate Change” promoting decarbonization in the UK, co-sponsored by the Initiative for Policy Dialogue, and the Sustainable Consumption Institute and Brooks World Poverty Institute, both at the University of Manchester. Griffith-Jones, still working at the Institute, is also an economic advisor to Chile’s young President, Gabriel Boric, a “progressive” president targeted by Stiglitz, Petro, et al., for the financial oligarchy’s deindustrialization agenda.

Stiglitz Group Takes a Hit with Resignation of Argentine Finance Minister

Joe Stiglitz’s efforts to influence the policy orientation of “progressive” Ibero-American nations took a hit July 2 when his protégé, Argentine Finance Minister Martin Guzman, suddenly resigned, complaining via Twitter that he was forced out because attacks on his policies prevented him from doing his job. This was an undisguised reference to Vice President and former

two-term President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who has repeatedly attacked the \$44 billion Extended Fund Facility program Guzman negotiated with the IMF last March, charging that its neoliberal policies were counterproductive to reviving the nation’s economy.

For 10 years prior to being named Finance Minister in December 2019, Guzman worked under Stiglitz’s tutelage, directing the “Debt Restructuring Program” at the latter’s Initiative for Policy Dialogue. In remarks quoted by Reuters July 3, a disgruntled Stiglitz complained that Guzman’s “deep principles made it impossible for him to continue in office without a commitment of the government to a united, integrated and coordinated approach to the enormous challenges facing the economy.”

This was a pointed reference to the divisions that have roiled the ruling Front for All (*Frente de Todos*) in recent months over economic policy as President Alberto Fernández, not a decisive leader, firmly backed Guzman and the IMF program while Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her allies attacked it. Until Guzman’s resignation, the President and Fernández de Kirchner had not been on speaking terms; they’ve since met to discuss how to move forward to deal with Argentina’s profound economic crisis. Guzman’s resignation unleashed chaos in the country’s already turbulent financial markets.

On July 5, President Fernández named economist Silvina Batakis, former finance minister in the Buenos Aires provincial government, as the new Finance Minister. Batakis is said to be close to Fernández de Kirchner’s thinking on economics. Though yet to define a clear policy path, Batakis has come under fierce attack from London

and Wall Street financial commentators who shriek that the “radical left” (the “Kirchneristas”) have taken over economic policymaking. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has warned her not to deviate from the IMF program.

Bolivia, Paraguay: Honor War Dead with Joint Development, Integration

On June 14 in Bolivia’s southeastern province of Tarija, Bolivian President Luis Arce and his Paraguayan counterpart, Mario Abdo Benitez, met to commemorate the 87th anniversary of the June 12, 1935, end of the 1932–1935 [Chaco War](#), a fratricidal conflict orchestrated by Anglo-Dutch financier interests that sought control over oil wealth in the Chaco region of both nations. More than 100,000 Paraguayans and Bolivians died in this brutal conflict.

During the ceremony in Villamontes, the two Presidents determined that the best way to pay homage to the war dead was to promote binational and regional development. Abdo invited Bolivia to join the multimodal “*Capricornio*” bi-oceanic corridor that will connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, from Brazil’s port of Santos traversing Brazilian, Paraguayan, and Argentine territory, and connecting to two terminus points in the Chilean cities of Iquique and Antofagasta.

Bolivia’s opposition parties had charged recently that Bolivia would be excluded from this project. But Abdo told Arce:

“In homage to our fallen, we are building infrastructure projects that will allow our region to become a great logistical corridor, not just for our nations but also for the region. [The bi-oceanic route] will allow the connectivity between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans running through the Chaco, and Bolivia must be part of the bi-oceanic corridor, dear President.”

Arce readily accepted Abdo’s offer,

noting that this project “will unite our two countries and from here, from the Chaco, we’ll join the route which will undoubtedly benefit the whole continent.”

The Paraguayan President described his optimistic vision of joint development plans and called for establishing a common agenda to jointly develop the potential that each nation offers. He outlined his plan to turn the Paraguayan Chaco, bordering Bolivia’s Chaco, into a “growth pole,” and proposed that the two nations adopt a common agricultural policy. “We want to strengthen our cooperation programs,” he said. Paraguay, for example, is anxious for Bolivia to extend its natural gas pipeline to Paraguay’s capital of Asunción.

Bolivia Optimistic About Bi-Oceanic Rail Corridor

After three years of relative inaction, due to the November 2019 coup against President Evo Morales and the economic wreckage left behind by the illegal 2019-2020 government installed after Morales was forced to resign, the current Bolivian government has now officially relaunched the Bi-Oceanic Rail Integration Corridor, which also includes Brazil, Paraguay and Peru.

While it is not intended to exclude other proposed bi-oceanic corridors—of which there are many in Ibero-America—Public Works Minister Edgar Montaño emphasizes that from Bolivia’s standpoint, the route through his country makes the most sense, going through “the heart of South America,” and can integrate the entire continent. On June 27, Montaño met virtually with his Paraguayan, Brazilian and Peruvian counterparts and their technical teams, known as the Bi-Oceanic Rail Corridor Operative Group, to discuss work to be done to move the project forward.

That meeting established a working group for each country to examine

financial, strategic, regulatory, construction and other matters, and designated Bolivia as the Coordinator of the Executive Committee of the Operative Group for 2022-2023. The groups will focus on seven distinct areas of study as well as on a timeframe and tasks to be completed in the second half of 2022. The Operative Group will meet in person in November to report back on the findings of the working groups.

Beijing Formally Backs Argentina’s BRICS Entry

In his July 7 meeting with Argentine Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero in Bali, Indonesia, where both attended the G20 foreign ministers’ meeting, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi offered Beijing’s official backing for Argentina’s entry into the BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Argentina’s foreign ministry issued a press release to this effect, and Cafiero told the state news agency Telam that, “China chairs the BRICS this year, and its support and commitment to nominating our country to join is fundamental.” Wang stressed the importance of President Alberto Fernandez having attended the BRICS-Plus meeting June 24 and Argentina having formally entered the Belt and Road Initiative in February.

Telam observed that membership in the BRICS could help Argentina free itself from the dollar-based financial system and its restrictions on the country’s macroeconomic development. Argentina needs new sources of financing for its large infrastructure projects, Telam adds, noting that the BRICS is playing a crucial role in promoting a new international financial architecture through its New Development Bank. That Bank, Cafiero emphasized, “plays a key role in international financial cooperation and in promoting the agenda of the Global South and the structural changes it demands.”