

Presidents put on servile display at first Ibero-American summit

by Carlos Cota Meza and Carlos Méndez

On July 18 and 19, the city of Guadalajara, Mexico hosted the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, which brought together for the first time ever the leaders of the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world. Although the international press and the participants indulged in a melodramatic show centered around Fidel Castro and the attendant rhetoric of freedom and democracy, the essence of the summit was revealed by the utter servility of the participating heads of state toward the free-trade dictates of the George Bush government and of British imperialism.

What Ibero-America's rulers would not admit at the summit is that these free-trade policies—cloaked in various guises such as “modernization,” “liberalization” or “economic opening”—are what have created the basis for the epidemic of cholera that is now sweeping the continent.

And yet, despite their best efforts to keep the issue from coming up, the cholera question was present both within and outside the summit halls. Tens of thousands of a leaflet published by the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSI), circulated simultaneously in Guadalajara, throughout Mexico, and in numerous other Ibero-American countries during the summit proceedings. The leaflet, entitled “They brought cholera: do they think they can get away with it? Ibero-America's Presidents, guilty of genocide,” charges that the cholera epidemic “was deliberately provoked” by economic measures, and that “this situation did not occur for lack of alternatives,” nor of warnings, but because of the servility and complicity of Ibero-America's rulers (see box).

The disease, too, was present, for it was precisely during the days of the summit that Mexico's health authorities were forced to admit that there were at least 37 confirmed cases of cholera in the country.

Inside the meeting itself, the cholera issue was raised, thanks to a document circulated by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) warning the heads of state of the gravity of the epidemic, and also thanks to the efforts of Honduran President Rafael Callejas, who publicly insisted that the cholera epidemic must be addressed as part of the summit agenda.

In its document, PAHO declared that “the high infection and mortality rates caused by diarrheal diseases, exacerbated by the cholera epidemic, reveal the high level of fecal contamination of the water . . . in the majority of Ibero-American countries.” The document described the situation as a

“health disaster.”

PAHO proposed an Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Control of Cholera, to be launched in August and to continue through the next three years, at a cost of \$1 billion, although a more realistic estimate was offered of \$200 billion to be invested in basic sanitation over the medium and long term.

Even assuming the best of intentions, it became clear when the proposed source of funding was outlined, that this minimal PAHO program would never be carried out:

a) Investment of an amount equivalent to 1.5% of annual GNP toward health, potable water, and basic sanitation. The problem here is that the majority of the economies of the countries participating in the summit are currently suffering *negative* growth of their GNP, and increasing portions of that are allocated to payment of the foreign debt.

b) At least 20% of foreign financing will be assigned to investment in health, potable water, and basic sanitation. Does anyone know of a single international financial institution lending money to rebuild what it itself has destroyed?

c) Swap of foreign debt for investment in health, potable water and basic sanitation, in a proportion approximately equal to 35% of the foreign debt swaps these countries are now conducting. No comment.

d) Channeling voluntary contributions of the international community to health, potable water, and basic sanitation. That is, Ibero-America's leaders hope to fight cholera by means of “voluntary international assistance,” so as to leave intact the “profound readjustment of their economies.”

Unconditional surrender

Although the leaders state in their final declaration that they are “aware of the high-risk conditions created by epidemic outbreaks like cholera, which magnitude has created an emergency condition,” the agreements they ultimately reached guarantee that cholera will devastate the Ibero-American population. For example, point 9 of the 24-point declaration states: “We are committed to a process of profound readjustment of our economies, with the objective of efficiently achieving recovery and growth. Our countries have made significant advances in their modernization processes, by means of reform of the State and of economic liberalization. . . .”

They also commit themselves to “contribute to the success of the Uruguay Round of GATT” (General Agreement

on Tariffs and Trade), which is one of President Bush's key objectives, and which was one of the central agreements of the recent Group of Seven meeting in London.

In their final statement, the Ibero-American leaders also support another aim of Bush and the British, in declaring that "the United Nations' Conference on the Environment and Development constitutes a unique opportunity to broaden international cooperation for development, and to reverse the global process of the degradation of nature."

While their people are dying from hunger and disease, Ibero-America's rulers shamelessly declare in point 18 that "in the face of poverty, war, intolerance, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and ignorance, we propose a new culture of international cooperation as the only way to a just and stable world."

More infamy

Measured by the press coverage and the statements of the participants, the Guadalajara summit was a brazen display of shamelessness, of egoism, and of inflamed self-praise.

Alberto Fujimori of Peru, whose country is destroyed by

cholera and by the narco-terrorism of Shining Path, blamed the region's underdevelopment on "the absurd policy of earmarking a large portion of our scarce resources to military expenses. . . . The arms race is the main enemy of our people's development."

Carlos Menem of Argentina dared to praise George Bush's Enterprise for the Americas initiative.

Carlos Salinas of Mexico said that "the population dynamic, a challenge of quantity, diminishes our efforts such that the crisis leaves us as an added legacy a reduction in the quality of what has already been built up by previous generations."

Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil outshone the others with a photographic exposition that he presented in the hotel where he was hosted: 54 full-color photographs, all of himself in different poses.

Carlos Andrés Pérez of Venezuela limited himself to sticking his nose into everyone else's conversations, and to insisting on the disappearance of the concept of national sovereignty through "a revision of the old and anachronistic formulas of the first principles of international relations."

'Ibero-American Presidents guilty of genocide'

"Ibero-American heads of state, who are meeting mid-July in Guadalajara, Mexico, boast that this is the first time the Presidents of the region have met together without the U.S. government being present. But why need there be an official representative of Washington present, if all these rulers are nothing more than puppets and servants of the White House?" asks the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSI) in a leaflet which was circulated from Mexico to South America during the summit.

Entitled "They Brought Us Cholera. Do They Think They Can Get Away with It? Ibero-America's Presidents, Guilty of Genocide," the leaflet charges that "on orders of their boss, George Bush, these heads of state—who exchange smiles, embraces, and speeches in the name of democracy—have committed hideous crimes against humanity." It warns: "Everything indicates that they will discuss how to continue the annihilation of our nations to satisfy the desires of the usurious banks and merciless bureaucracy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"The cholera epidemic, which advances unchecked across the region, was deliberately provoked. How? By economic measures," the leaflet charges. "The satanic circles which invented the IMF's 'adjustments' and 'con-

ditionalities,' have known from the beginning that one of the results of their measures, sooner or later, would be the resurgence of cholera and other once-eradicated diseases. Malnutrition, combined with the disappearance of health and sanitary services, leads to all sorts of epidemic diseases. Not only do the Ibero-American heads of state and the bankers whom they obey give less importance to human life than they do money. They are guilty of an even more heinous sin: *the deliberate intent to eliminate millions of human beings.*"

After documenting these charges, the MSI concluded: "We have not reached this situation for lack of an alternative. In 1974, the U.S. economist Lyndon LaRouche, today a political prisoner in his own country," directed a study "into the worldwide consequences for public health which would be created by the austerity measures of the IMF and similar agencies. That study . . . concluded that after a period of time, a series of different epidemics and pandemics would erupt, resulting in genocide 100 times worse than that committed by Adolf Hitler. Not only that. Since 1975, our movement has been proposing a program for accelerated economic development. . . . In such works as *Operación Juárez*, by Lyndon LaRouche, and the book *Ibero-American Integration*, it has been shown that, even under conditions of economic blockade imposed by the great powers, Ibero-America could survive better by integrating its economies—through a debtors' club and an Ibero-American Common Market—than in the claws of malthusian usury."