

New Opium War To Balkanize Continent

by Gretchen Small

South America enters 2008 closer to national fragmentation, “regime change,” fratricidal, war and/or multinational intervention than ever in recent history, after the Dec. 31 collapse of the multinational “humanitarian” operation mounted by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez for the release of three hostages held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

That is not what the governments of South America had planned, when they jumped head-first into the Chávez-led operation which aimed to foster conditions for de facto regional negotiations with the FARC, with the delusion that by so doing, they could secure peace in terrorist-torn Colombia, cool out the historic Venezuelan-Colombian conflict, and thereby cut off one of the Bush-Cheney Administration’s footholds for war on the continent.

That the operation would fail was foreseeable. The FARC is the largest cocaine cartel in South America, and the drug trade is run, top-down, from the City of London, as it has been since Britain’s 19th-Century Opium Wars against China and India. The leaders of the nations of South America walked, in other words, straight into a British trap.

Back in the 1970s, Britain’s Dope, Inc. established Colombia, situated at the entrance to South America through which any transcontinental railroad uniting the Americas with Eurasia must pass, as a center for its vastly expanded global drug empire. Precisely ten years ago, in its Jan. 23, 1998 issue, *EIR* exposed the British oligarchy’s plans to use what they themselves had imposed on Colombia, to fragment this nation, and create in the region a conflict as enormous as that between the Israelis and Palestinians, as Viscount Waverly so baldly put it at the time. Colombia still stands, as *EIR* wrote then, as “a classic case of how London manufactures ‘failed states,’ assaulting the institutions of a nation until they disintegrate, and then demanding that supranational institutions move in to pick up the pieces.”

Should the FARC “humanitarian” trap not be recognized for what it is, and flanked, Colombia could be rapidly driven into generalized war again. Under current global breakdown conditions, any expansion of conflict in any part of the continent, can rapidly spread into generalized left-vs.-right conflagration.

The trap worked—thus far—because key leaders in the region are blindsided by the prevalent romanticism that Jaco-

binism is an “anti-imperialist” social force, rather than the anti-nation-state head-chopping operation it actually is, descended from the Dantons and Robespierres created and deployed in France by the British East India Company’s Lord Shelburne and Jeremy Bentham, to stop the spread of the American Revolution into Europe.

The ‘Club of Presidents’

The British imperial strategy is to break Ibero-America’s historic and deeply embedded commitment to the principle of national sovereignty, which has kept the nations of the region intact, despite assault by successive waves of horror under more than three decades of globalization. Once that principle is eliminated, the nation-states can be broken up and eliminated with dispatch.

The principle of national sovereignty is, however, still an effective force in South America. On Dec. 9, in Buenos Aires, seven South American Presidents signed the founding document for the Bank of the South, an independent regional bank under the control of sovereign nations, conceived as an instrument for integration and the development of their peoples. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela initiated the bank, with Colombia hesitating, but expressing interest in joining down the line, and Chile participating as an observer.

The Presidents of the seven initiating countries, plus those of Colombia and Chile, were in Argentina for the Dec. 10 inauguration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who succeeded her husband, Néstor Kirchner, as President of that nation.

Neither the founding of the bank nor Fernández’s inauguration pleased London. Labeling the Bank of the South potentially “the biggest threat” since the 1980s debt defaults, London’s *Financial Times* had admitted on March 23, 2007 that “with the money of Venezuela and political will of Argentina and Brazil, this is a bank that could have lots of money and a different political approach. No one will say this publicly, but we don’t like it.”

Two days before the *Financial Times*’ declaration, then-First Lady Fernández had given a detailed address to 300 government officials and policymakers in Quito, Ecuador, on how her husband’s government revived an economy that had imploded in 2001, by repudiating the International Monetary Fund’s “system of ideas” in favor of a policy modeled on Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal and public works projects. Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa met with Fernández during that visit, and declared afterwards that their governments saw eye-to-eye on many issues of economic policy. What made this remark all the more interesting, was that then-economist Correa had detailed in an article published before he became President, how the United States developed under a protectionist system, and Americans historically understood that free trade is “part of the British imperialist system.” In that same article, he forecast that U.S. submission to neoliberal globalization, will not last forever (*EIR*, April 13, 2007).



Foto ANCOL/Fernando Ruiz

As the FARC hostage release farce played itself out, a soap-opera sub-plot was covered widely in the media, with calls for DNA testing to establish the true identity of a child, also scheduled to be released, who had been born to hostage Clara Rojas and purportedly fathered by a FARC guerrilla. Perhaps the DNA testing should be done on FARC top commander Raul Reyes and Richard Grasso, then the head of the New York Stock exchange, here pictured in their June 1999 “Grasso Abraço” in the steamy jungles of Colombia, where the strategic alliance between the FARC and British-directed Wall Street financial interests was on public display.

Typically in recent years, South American summits and Presidential inaugurations have functioned as an informal “Presidents’ Club,” where the principles for resolving regional problems are hashed out among the sovereign nations. Thus, the Dec. 9-10 Buenos Aires meetings took up the two then-hottest conflicts with the potential to blow up the region: the threat of separatism and civil and race war in Bolivia, and the nasty brawl between Venezuelan President Chávez and Colombia’s Alvaro Uribe, over incidents during Chávez’s first attempts at mediating a hostage release with the FARC. Chávez had gone so far as to talk about breaking diplomatic relations with Colombia.

The nine Presidents present offered their support to the people and government of Bolivia, urging dialogue. Five days later, Brazilian President Lula da Silva and Chile’s Michelle Bachelet travelled to Bolivia, to meet with President Evo Morales, and sign an agreement to build a bi-oceanic corridor through all three countries, to foster economic development.

Chávez would have nothing to do with efforts to mediate between himself and Uribe, declaring that he would hear nothing of Colombia’s President. Under particular pressure from French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s representative, various governments then committed themselves to trying to secure the release of at least some of the hundreds of hostages held by the FARC cartel, particularly the French-Colombian former Presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, whom the FARC had kidnapped, along with her Vice Presidential candidate Clara Rojas, in 2002, as they headed to the demilitarized zone then controlled by the FARC, with the idea of furthering negotiations.

Who Pulled Chávez’s String?

For at least six years, the British-run Bush-Cheney regime has tried to force Ibero-America to line up in support of efforts to impose “regime change”—that is, coups and chaos—upon Venezuela, with the argument that the Chávez regime was a destabilizing force in the region.

Repeatedly, South American leaders rejected the pressure, responding with cooperation on economic integration. Exemplary of the effectiveness of this approach, was the March 29, 2005 summit in Venezuela of Chávez, Uribe, Lula da Silva, and Spain’s José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, organized when Colombia and Venezuela were then, too, heading towards the point of war. At that summit, Uribe, the supposed “Washington man” in the region, and Washington’s “bogeyman” Chávez, put aside mutual recriminations, and agreed upon an infrastructure integration strategy, centered on opening bi-oceanic corridors which would permit South American participation in Eurasia’s vast economic development.

Now, however, at the point of decision over whether sovereign governments or private interests determine who controls the post-crash world, the British managed to pull the string on the volatile Chávez.

Chávez should beware: This is the quickest route to setting himself up for assassination, by the British chaos strategists who often view their assets as more useful dead than alive. His assassination is a surefire way to set off mass upheaval and killings across the continent, all under the political cover of it being carried out by his “regional” opponents.

The Venezuelan President and his allies have gone into flight-forward, pushing precisely the British-Cheney strategy

NAFTA Final Stage Blows Up U.S.-Mexican Border

On Jan. 1, 2008, the final stage of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—the flagship agreement of British free-trade policies among the United States, Mexico, and Canada—went into effect. As of that date, Mexico was forced to end all tariff protection of its most essential food production, including corn, beans, sugar, and powdered milk.

This will lead to mass unemployment and starvation in a country already ravaged by globalization and free-trade economics; and it will drive millions more Mexicans to attempt to cross the U.S. border in desperation, at exactly the time that about a million per year are now being *expelled* from the U.S. back to Mexico, and anti-Mexican hysteria

and even lynch mobs are being whipped up in U.S. border states.

Six million Mexicans left the countryside in the first 14 years of NAFTA's implementation, as 5 million jobs in agriculture were wiped out, even before this final blow. Poverty became concentrated in communities where only the elderly, women, and children now live, since the men went to the United States in search of jobs. One peasant a day loses his life trying to cross the border. And hundreds of thousands of others are being driven into the waiting arms of the drug cartels, which today control entire sections of the country, especially along the border.

Starvation is looming, because Mexico already imports 40% of the food its people eat. In 1997, Mexico produced 250,000 tons of beans, but only 50,000 in 2007. And in 2008, the prices of basic necessities are expected to rise by at least 30%, because of the scheduled increase in diesel fuel, gasoline, and electricity rates.—*Dennis Small*

of “regime change”—this time, against his neighbor Colombia. Compare three statements issued on Dec. 18:

- As the Heads of State of the Southern Cone Market of the South (Mercosur) meeting in Montevideo issued a measured statement urging calm in Bolivia, rejecting “all violent actions, which seek to harm the stability of the government and other entities elected by the people,” Chávez declared that the United States should not force “us” [!] to make a “violent revolution” in Bolivia.

- The FARC issued a communiqué declaring the Uribe government “illegitimate,” and stating their willingness to reach a humanitarian agreement to release hostages—whom they have held for years in concentration camp-like conditions in the jungle—on the condition that the government pull out of two municipalities in Colombia, and if negotiations center on the dismantling of the current regime—i.e., regime change. The same communiqué stated that the FARC would free Clara Rojas and her son, Emmanuel, conceived with a FARC guerrilla and born in captivity, and former Senator Consuelo González Perdomo, who had been held even longer than Rojas, if they would be received by Chávez or his representative.

- Lining up with Chávez, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega called FARC chief Manuel Marulanda his “brother,” and declared Colombia to be an “occupied” country, and the Uribe government to be “neo-imperialist.”

That was followed by Chávez's Dec. 26 press conference announcing that his government had worked out elaborate arrangements with the FARC for the release of the three specified hostages by the end of the year: Venezuelan aircraft,

painted with Red Cross insignia for the occasion, would fly representatives of the Red Cross and seven countries serving as “guarantors,” plus media, into Colombia. The FARC would then provide the coordinates of where in the jungle the hostages would be released, to be flown to Venezuela, and received by Chavez, personally.

The guarantors for the operation assembled, with Argentina's ex-President Néstor Kirchner at the head of the delegation. Others included a top aide of Brazil's Lula da Silva, Marco Aurelio Garcia; Bolivia's Vice Minister of Coordination with Social Movements, Sacha Llorenti; a former minister sent by Ecuador's Rafael Correa; the ambassadors of France and Cuba to Venezuela; and a former interior minister of Venezuela. Switzerland joined the operation later. The Colombian government was represented by its Peace Coordinator.

After four days of such theater, the FARC conveyed to Chávez the news that the release was off. Chávez echoed the FARC's charge that the Colombian government was responsible for the failure, and the international guarantors traipsed back to their respective countries, attempting to put a good spin on their participation in the farce, as recriminations between Colombia and Venezuela rose to new heights.

Only a few days later, was the Dec. 24 letter from commander Marulanda to the FARC made public, telling his troops to prepare for a general offensive, and confidently asserting that soon, Uribe would have an even harder time preventing “certain governments” from recognizing the FARC as a legitimate belligerent force—thus triggering the long-sought formal division of Colombia.