

Adopt Lilienthal's Infrastructure Plan!

by Maximiliano Londoño Penilla,
President, Lyndon LaRouche
Association of Colombia

The time has come to finally adopt the recommendations which “Mr. TVA,” David Lilienthal, made back in 1954 to the then-President of the Republic of Colombia, Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla: Get a great plan of infrastructure projects under way.

Lilienthal had served as director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the greatest hydraulic and related public works project carried out by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's government, which did away with the floods that, year after year, had devastated the seven states through which the Tennessee River flows. FDR built more than 45,000 infrastructure projects: dams, levees, tunnels, highways, railroads, aqueducts, hospitals, hydroelectric plants, irrigation districts, and so on. Among these, were 43 important hydroelectric projects and dams, as well as more than 450 small and medium-sized dams. In this way, FDR not only defeated the Great Depression of the 1930s, but also put an end to many “natural disasters,” like the floods that had been a curse to the crops and inhabitants along the river banks.

Invited to Colombia by Gen. Rojas Pinilla, Lilienthal proposed the use of the coffee bonanza (from the high coffee prices of the time), along with the creation of a public finance corporation able to issue bonds, to help finance the construction of great infrastructure projects. Lilienthal described these as “a kind of Second Liberation,” after the first accomplished by Simón Bolívar.

In a memorandum for General Rojas, Lilienthal proposed, among other things, that the Cauca and Sinú river valleys be made the axis of a pilot project for all Ibero-America, where the achievements of the TVA could be replicated.

Lilienthal observed: “General Bolívar won a victory over colonial oppression and thereby opened the door to political independence and freedom. The time may well be close at hand, indeed it may be here, for

another epochal series of events in Colombian life—and through her, for all of South America, a kind of Second Liberation.”

“The weapons of this Liberator,” Lilienthal explained, “will not be swords and cannon, nor will the price of this victory be exacted in the blood of Colombians, spilled for one's homeland on the field of battle. The arms of Liberation this time will be new highways and railroads, electrification, dams for irrigation and flood control and power, new schools and universities and hospitals, new and improved methods of raising coffee, sugar, cattle, rice. It may be said that the fruits of victory over ignorance and disease, over floodwaters, and soil erosion, and poor crops, can be as glorious as those won in the battles fought by Bolívar and his fellow patriots. The Colombians who lead their countrymen toward this 20th-Century Liberation will surely be as highly honored and as long-remembered as those who, following Bolívar more than 100 years ago, offered their lives to win their country's independence.”

Lilienthal established the mission as the transformation of Colombia into an agricultural and industrial power, endowed with the most modern infrastructure, and he explained with absolute clarity that, in this way, the unification of all Colombians would finally be achieved.

Let us heed him:

“Such a great forward surge in the physical development of a nation's resources as once can realistically envisage for Colombia in the next quarter century carries with it more than **physical** benefits alone. The very foundation of such a program can, in and of itself, serve as a center about which the whole people can unite and stand together, despite their economic or political differences. With so much constructive and creative work to be done, and so much improvement for everyone at stake, such a program may help to bring the entire nation together on the essentials of certain concrete tasks that need doing.”

If President Alvaro Uribe and/or those who seek to succeed him in the Presidency would adopt the infrastructure program which Lilienthal proposed to Colombia, then the basis for a lasting peace can be laid upon the foundation of stable and well-paid jobs for all Colombians of working age. This is the war which has to be won, the war against hunger and unemployment. And in the process, we would defeat the floods and their horrible consequences.