

Mad Madeleine Pushes for War in South America

by Gretchen Small

In a mere five-day tour of five South American countries from August 15-19, the much-despised U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright managed to push policies which so threaten the continued existence of those countries as sovereign nations, that she has succeeded in placing the United States on a collision course with the entire South American continent. The confrontation threatens to blow up in the United States' face, possibly as soon as Aug. 31-Sept. 1, when the Presidents of the 12 nations of South America meet in Brasilia for their first-ever summit.

The policy of limited sovereignty and regionwide war which Albright seeks to impose on Ibero-America in the name of "democracy," is so dangerous, that she has forced even the hitherto largely compliant governments of Ibero-America, to begin rethinking their entire relationship to "globalization," the Anglo-Americans' would-be world empire. In this regard, what is emerging in Ibero-America is not unlike the growing rebellion in Asia, Russia, and elsewhere, against the insane policies of the Anglo-American oligarchy. Made desperate by the disintegration of the global financial system on which their power rests, that oligarchy is brandishing policies which threaten the very existence of entire nations and their populations. And growing numbers of such nation-states are waking up to this fact, and are preparing to fight, rather than vanish.

Supranational Plans Exposed

Albright's trip followed upon the State Department-led attempt to overthrow Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori during Peru's two-round Presidential elections this past April 9 and May 28. Despite nasty pressure upon the governments of the region, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of American States (OAS), led by Brazil, refused to go along with that attack on sovereignty, and the attempt backfired.

Undaunted, Albright used her trip not only to insist on the

urgency of driving President Fujimori out of office, but she had the arrogant stupidity to propose to the five countries she visited—Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Ecuador—that they allow their territory and/or troops and supplies to be used for a supranational military operation into Colombia, which is being prepared under cover of the State Department's "Plan Colombia" program.

While the smaller four countries she visited were careful to offer no public opposition (and the Argentine government of Fernando de la Rúa appears willing to accept Albright's proposals, whatever they may be), this was not the case in Brazil, South America's largest nation in territory, population, and economy. It was on the two points demanded—multilateral efforts to drive Fujimori from office, and multilateral military action on Colombia—that Brazil was forced to take a stand. When Albright and Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia came out of their meetings to hold a joint press conference on Aug. 15, Lampreia issued a sharp statement asserting Brazil's right to maintain its own, independent policies, and warned that Brazil will have nothing to do with proposals for multilateral action in Colombia.

According to diplomatic sources in Brasilia cited by Argentina's *Clarín* daily on Aug. 22, Albright asked President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to permit use of Brazil's military bases in the Amazon for Plan Colombia operations. Genilson Gonzaga of Brazil's *Jornal do Commercio* reported that Albright had asked Cardoso for Brazil to participate in an international "peacekeeping force" to be sent into Colombia.

Brazil's *Folha de São Paulo* daily reported on Aug. 20, that the Brazilian government rejects any direct involvement into Colombia, whether it be by providing soldiers for a hypothetical international force to defend the Colombian government, or by providing its air bases and radar for logistical support for operations inside Colombia, or by giving the

strong public support for Plan Colombia which Albright requested last week. *Folha's* sources say, however, that the United States will continue to insist that Brazil join in, citing U.S. intelligence reports which show that it is almost impossible to control the Colombian Amazon without the support of Brazilian radar and air bases.

Brazil Says 'No'!

Only a desperado would ask the Cardoso government to use Brazil's Amazon bases for a multilateral action at this time. As anyone knows who has the most minimal familiarity with the mind of the Brazilian military and nationalist elite today, that is not something which Cardoso could deliver and survive in office, even should he wish to comply.

It has not been admitted by any official, U.S. or foreign, that any such request was made. But only such a request, or something very similar, could have produced the uncharacteristic, vehement public response which Brazilian Foreign Minister Lampreia delivered, with the U.S. Secretary of State standing at his side.

Lampreia delivered a careful, but very sharp statement distancing Brazil from even the appearance of adopting a subordinate policy vis-à-vis the United States. A reporter asked Lampreia if Brazil had demonstrated any interest in participating in joint plans with the United States as regards other countries in the region. Lampreia replied that he must preface his answer by explaining that the United States and Brazil share important values, and their positions at many times coincide. He then continued: "However, it is also very important to explain that both Brazil and the U.S. also should have their own independent, autonomous position, because that is their national interest and their convictions. And there shouldn't be, between our two countries, any relation that is different from autonomous independent decisions that may converge—or not—depending on the situation.

"Now, your question about plans or possible common action programs: no, I would say that we do not have the same degree of commitment with the drug-trafficking program of President Pastrana or his Peace Plan. But, that said, we've told President Pastrana that we will review with interest, and, of course, within our possibilities, we will try to answer positively to any request from Colombia to try to help their development and their peace process, *but we have no intention of participating in any common or concerted international action in the country.*

"Another important case is Peru. Regarding the Peruvian issue, we have had different—slightly different—views. . . . In other words, we will not participate in any specific programs or plans, but very often our views coincide and our actions converge with those of the U.S. in order to promote our shared values."

Coming from the Brazilian Foreign Minister, these are very harsh, undiplomatic words.

The extent of distrust towards the United States which Albright provoked with her trip was captured in an article

signed by the editorial board of *Folha*. "There is a second question which troubles many Brazilians about a greater U.S. involvement in Colombia: the possibility that it be merely a smokescreen to seize control of the Amazon," *Folha* wrote. "There is a widespread sensitivit on this," admits, for example, Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia. He himself is the first to doubt that there is 'a deliberate plan' of the U.S. government to interfere in the Amazon region. 'But, as for whether here are things that are not clear and which should cause concern, there are,' Lampreia states, referring to the concern for the environment and the international greed over the minerals and timber of the Amazon."

Plan Colombia: A Monstrous Fraud

Brazil, like other nations in the region, is girding for war, as a spillover from the Colombia fiasco. The government has announced that it is establishing a "crisis command center" to coordinate defense of its 1,640-kilometer border with Colombia from drug traffickers and guerrillas attempting to cross over into the largely unpopulated Brazilian Amazon region. Named "Operation Cobra" (abbreviating Colombia and Brazil), the command will be headquartered in Tabatinga, just across the border from Leticia, Colombia. Officials from the Defense Ministry, Itamaraty, the Army, the Air Force, the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN), and the Federal Police are to be posted there. Smaller bases will be established in seven municipalities along the border; eight new helicopters for the Army, appropriate for operations in this terrain, have been ordered; and increased air surveillance of the region for signs of spreading deforestation, possibly indicating an increase in coca plantings inside Brazil, will begin.

The State Department's effort to depict any country which fails to line up behind its so-called Plan Colombia as soft on the drug trade, is worse than lying. The issue under dispute is not over whether the accelerating disintegration of the nation of Colombia at the hands of competing narco-terrorist armies constitutes a threat to the hemisphere as a whole, nor whether other nations can and should aid their neighbor. What is being fought out, is what is a viable strategy to accomplish the task, before the entire region is overwhelmed.

President Bill Clinton's anti-drug czar, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), originally rang the alarm bells on Colombia, and launched the fight for the United States to provide emergency aid to Colombia so that it could defend itself. But the policy finally elaborated under State Department direction as the much-heralded Plan Colombia, is a monstrous fraud intentionally designed to fail, much as the Vietnam War was a deliberate plan for destruction, not victory.

Plan Colombia is premised on three pillars which, together, will lead to conflagration across the region:

- 1) The Fujimori government in Peru, the one government which demonstrated that narco-terrorists can be defeated and peace restored by the mobilization of the entire resources of a sovereign state, is to be isolated and driven from office.
- 2) The Colombian state is not to be permitted to defeat

the narco-terrorists, but must instead limit its efforts to forcing them to the negotiating table. To ensure this, U.S. policy has focussed on taking down the Colombian Armed Forces, while the State Department actively builds up the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the leading narco-terrorist murderers and kidnapers terrorizing the country. The State Department is openly encouraging and facilitating international delegations to engage in direct talks with FARC leaders, for the express purpose of arranging new international financing for the FARC, be it from Wall Street or from governments allied with the United States.

3) Simultaneously, as the Albright trip revealed, preparations have begun for an eventual supranational military intervention into Colombia — with as much chance for success as NATO’s destructive, failed Kosovo war of 1999 — to impose a peace with the narco-terrorists which the Colombian people do not want, and which is inherently impossible to enforce.

Sovereignty Can End the War

When U.S. policy towards Colombia was battled out a year ago, President Fujimori warned against any attempt to resolve the crisis through foreign intervention, as opposed to coordinated actions by sovereign nations. In a Lima press conference with Brazil’s President Cardoso in July 1999, Fujimori reported that both Presidents agreed upon the need for a coordinated regional security strategy against narco-terror-

ism to be developed. Other Ibero-American nations must help defend the human rights of Colombians to live free of attacks from the narco-terrorists, but this can and must be done without foreign intervention, Fujimori specified.

A year later, on Aug. 21, as Albright was concluding her waltz around South America, Fujimori reiterated that warning, in a press conference called to announce that Peru’s National Intelligence Service (SIN), in an operation under the direction of Vladamiro Montesinos, had dismantled an international arms-trafficking ring supplying the FARC. The ring had already supplied 10,000 sophisticated Russian-made assault rifles to the FARC, and was preparing a fourth shipment, which was stopped when Peruvian authorities arrested six members of the trafficking ring.

These are the kind of concrete measures, carried out by cooperating national intelligence services of different countries, which Colombia needs, Fujimori emphasized. This is how to defend regional security. From that standpoint, he noted how “very peculiar” Madeleine Albright’s trip was to South America, in which “she skirted Peru, as if we were an island.” It is the FARC which threatens democracy in the region, not Peru, he pointed out. Had she come to Peru, the Peruvian government could have informed her directly about the arms trafficking to the FARC, “but regional security lies elsewhere” for her, he noted.

Plan Colombia, on the other hand, is a matter for concern.

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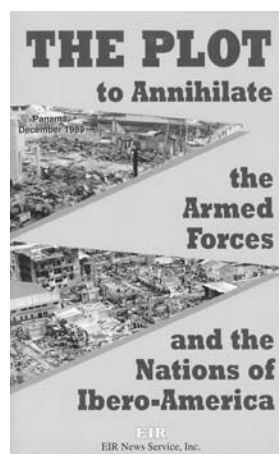
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Fujimori warned that, while he did not know all its details, he feared it would only prolong the conflict, not win it, and become “the beginning of a new Vietnam.” “I cannot conceive that, in a South American country, there could be a force which is foreign to that country, and that it is invaded, or advised, by foreign agents,” he said.

Colombia’s former Army Commander, Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) echoed President Fujimori’s warning, in interviews given to several Peruvian radio and television stations after the announcement that the Peruvians had broken up the FARC arms ring. The FARC and the international drug mafia which it supplies is a threat to the entire Amazon region, General Bedoya emphasized, but Plan Colombia is absurd. How could it be otherwise, when it is based on the Colombian government giving “political rights” to this group of drug traffickers and terrorists, while the military aid it provides—30 refurbished Vietnam-era helicopters now, and 30 modern helicopters two years from now—is insufficient, except to prolong the war.

South America for the South Americans

It is in this heightened state of regional crisis that the 12 heads of state of South America will gather for their first ever summit in Brasilia. The official agenda of the summit, from which a final declaration is expected to be issued, covers everything from democracy and fighting drugs, to integrating transport infrastructure, communications, and energy generation and distribution in the region.

Wall Street and the State Department have been nervous about this summit since the Cardoso government began organizing it earlier this year. They are suspicious that it, along with Brazil’s drive to create a South American free-trade zone by unifying Mercosur (whose members are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and the Andean Pact (most of the rest of South America), are part of a Brazilian strategy to set up an independent body, under its own sphere of influence, separate from, and perhaps counterposed to the North American Free Trade Agreement bloc.

Despite its free-trade parameters, the upcoming South American Summit has become a wild-card, under today’s crisis conditions. President Cardoso briefed Albright that the goal of the summit is to intensify relations between the 12 South American countries, by going outside bureaucratic procedures and by increasing the number of agreements on common infrastructure and transportation projects. Foreign Minister Lampreia has said they will seek the physical integration of the subcontinent, “which would have political effects upon the cohesion of South America in any international negotiation,” according to the report by Clovis Rossi, *Folha de São Paulo*’s senior journalist and member of the editorial board.

The concept taking shape, according to Argentina’s *Clarín*, is that it is Brasilia’s intention to argue at the summit that the best formula to resolve conflicts in the region, is “South America for the South Americans.”

Venezuela

Chávez: a Circus Abroad and Vote Theft at Home

by David Ramonet

The U.S. State Department, along with much of the international news media, made a great deal of fuss over the visit of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frías to Iraq in August, where he met with President Saddam Hussein and invited him to an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) summit that will be held in Caracas in September.

Less concerned about that are the Venezuelan people, who are more worried about the economic and political disaster over which Chávez is presiding at home, and in particular, his shameless theft of votes in the July 30 national elections. There already exist multiple legal suits, as well as opposition street protests—with at least one person dead so far—against the “cynical and arrogant electoral fraud” through which Chávez was legitimized in the Presidency.

Despite notable irregularities in the electoral process, and the flagrant dirty tricks by means of which the Chávez forces claimed victory not only for the Presidency, but also for 16 of 23 state governorships and 60% of the 165 seats in the National Assembly, it appears that neither former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, nor the observers from the Organization of American States, nor the outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, John Maisto, could discover any hints of illegality.

It is worth contrasting this silence with the worldwide scandal that the U.S. State Department raised around the recent Presidential elections in Peru, after which the Venezuelan elections had to be postponed from their original May 28 date, because National Electoral Council directors could not conceal the mountain of irregularities that existed then, and which continued to exist at the time of the election.

One returns then to the question that is circulating in political layers throughout the Andean region: What does Chávez have that Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori doesn’t, that the U.S. State Department is so conciliatory toward the one, and so opposed to the other? What comes to the mind of any sharp observer is that Chávez, all his radical hyperbole aside, feels very comfortable with globalization, and in particular with the ongoing dialogue that the State Department has approved with Colombia’s FARC narco-terrorists, while Fujimori defends the sovereign nation-state against that same narco-terrorist threat.