

Event in Paris links debtors of Africa, Ibero-America

by Mary Lalevee and Vin Berg

It has been one of the greater fears of the forces of international usury, over a period of recent months, that their debtor victims in Ibero-America would not only themselves coalesce around a common program of debt renegotiation, but unite with desperate indebted nations of Africa. Now, an extraordinary conference of the Schiller Institute in Paris has established just such an Ibero-American/African link.

On Feb. 2, more than 500 people representing five continents and 30 nations, including most Ibero-American countries and almost all African countries, convened to discuss: "The Creation of a North-South Action Committee for a New World Economic Order and Against the International Monetary Fund (IMF)." The two leading reference points for the conference were the program of Peruvian President Alan García in defiance of the IMF, and the efforts of Senegalese President Abdou Diouf, chairman of the Organization of African Unity, for an all-African conference on the continent's foreign debt.

Numerous officials, from nations as disparate as Vietnam and Argentina, raised the call for a coordination of Ibero-American and African efforts against the genocidal policies of the IMF.

Argentine labor leader Alberto Campos encapsulated this thrust in his statement to the conference. Addressing himself to "the heroic French people and to those African brothers who are suffering as we are, and even much more," he celebrated the memory of Charles de Gaulle, remembering those years when he organized pro-de Gaulle demonstrations on the occasion of the French leader's visit, shouting: "De Gaulle, Perón, Un Solo Corazón" (De Gaulle, Perón, Only One Heart).

Today, said Campos, "It is time to act, to bring to life the time of the people [*la hora de los pueblos*], advancing de-

mocracy to more advanced stages, bringing the peoples of the world together with the concept of a more just world economic order." He cited Peru's García as a man of moral courage fighting against the drug traffic, against terrorism, and against the IMF, as a single fight.

Denunciations of IMF policies

"The fight of our Schiller Institute for the true development of Africa, is a hard but exalting, long, and passionate fight," declared Tunisian member of parliament and publisher Ahmed Kedidi, in a message to the Paris conference. Kedidi, unable to attend because he was touring Africa with Tunisian President Bourguiba, sent his message from Dakar, Senegal, and stressed that the aim of the conference, under the sponsorship of "Lyndon and Helga Zepp-LaRouche, is a fight for a really independent Africa, its second independence, meaning to take up the challenge and unite against international financial institutions. In such a fight, Africa is not alone. . . . President García has led the fight to free Peru from the humiliating conditions of the IMF."

His Excellency P. L. Udoh, Nigerian ambassador to Paris, made an official declaration to the conference in Paris on his own country's rejection of IMF conditionalities.

Speaking after Dr. Moustapha Kasse, who represented French-speaking Senegal, he declared that his English-speaking country supports a South-South alliance of states to change the present conditions of debt payment. "The size of our debt is of about \$11 billion to \$22 billion. We don't know the exact figures because most of these are in trade debts, trade debts of which a lot are fraudulent. . . . Also a lot of Nigerian money, about \$6 billion, was siphoned away without material equivalent in exports or imports. . . . All this is being investigated. In the last few years, we diverted more

than 40%, and as a matter of fact, 43% last year alone, of our exports in payment of our foreign debt. . . . Our government had to step in to introduce something, because such debt payment prevented our development. In our current budget of 1986, our President has imposed a limit of 30% of our exports in payment of our foreign debt. This has worried some of our trade partners, but it is absolutely impossible to do more than that. Without our limitation, we would have had to pay this year up to 50% of our exports in foreign debt. Our net earnings of oil in the meantime have fallen from \$22 billion to half of that or even less. So, if we had to repay all of our debt, we would only be paying debt interest, with almost nothing left to import. . . .”

“All other conditionalities of the IMF we had to refuse, because they were totally unacceptable. Some of our friends keep asking us why, if we have met most of the conditions of the IMF, are we so foolish as to refuse the IMF loan. The reason for this is not hard to see, for example, in the matter of devaluation. The IMF conditionalities would have imposed nearly a 60% devaluation in one shot, which would only make matters worse; the export of oil would not expand if we devalued our foreign currency by 60% at once; and this would only lead to more troubles and riots in the streets and many, many things like that.”

He concluded by stressing, “It has been found that most Nigerians are against taking the IMF loan with its appended conditionalities. . . . By and large, Nigerians prefer a regime of discipline which is self-imposed, even if rigorous, to one much worse imposed by an outside institution. . . .”

Many observers in the room noted the convergence of Nigeria and Senegal against the IMF conditionalities. Senegal's Prof. Moustapha Kasse, director of the Centre des recherches économiques appliquées (Center for Applied Economic Research), delivered one of the strongest denunciations of the policies of the International Monetary Fund to date by an African leader, and a plea for new strategies for real industrial development.

“The countries of our sub-region,” Mr. Kasse stated, “are going through a very deep economic and financial crisis with social consequences which could be disastrous. The development efforts of working populations as well as the perspectives for economic growth are compromised and ruined by the deadlines of a foreign debt repayment which is very large relative to the characteristic aggregates of productive reality.”

He cited his President, Abdou Diouf, in calling for an all-African conference on debt.

It was clear to all participants, after these speeches, that “after Ibero-America,” as one put it, “Africa is now the second pillar of the anti-IMF mobilization.”

Support from Italy

The influential Italian Senator Vincenzo Carollo, vice-president of the Christian Democrat Group of the Italian Senate, extended his support to the efforts of the Africans

and Ibero-Americans. Senator Carollo declared: “The evil [of the debt problem] does not strike only the poor countries, but also the countries with a high level of economic development. . . . All peoples, rich or poor, must act according to one mutual and general solidarity, because only thus can the salvation of all be assured.”

Mr. Carollo then violently attacked the so-called “democratic regimes supported by the Soviet Union,” saying: “International communist solidarity didn't provide resources to the 2.5 million poor, to the 20 million starving Ethiopians. They furnished them with weapons in order for the expansion of the power of Marxism-Leninism to become more important than that of wealth—Libya, an operational Soviet military base in the Mediterranean, doesn't think it is its duty to help the poor people of Kenya or Chad. . . . If the situation remains this way, world communism's capacity for destabilization will increase.”

He concluded, “It is necessary to transform the operative content of the IMF, and consequently eventual formal modifications are not enough. Rather, [we need] an operative awareness of solidarity in the developed countries in favor of the developing countries. The formulas, the institutions can change their juridical point of view: but they must not change by diminishing and replacing the content, of the political will to help the growth and strength of democracy, freedom, and sovereignty of peoples, of peace in the world built on respect for all men, and not on the authority of feudal despotism, which is ready to promise, but unable to fulfill people's aspirations.”

Other speakers included Jacques Cheminade, president of the Schiller Institute of France, who called for a “war on usury,” and M. Henri Gaulandeau, president of the French Federation of Agriculture (FFA), who attacked the IMF for bankrupting Third World nations, and the “Malthusianism” of the policymakers of the European Community bureaucracy, who are destroying European production potential.

The Institute's own alternative for African development was presented by Uwe Friesecke of Germany, who called for massive development projects: East-West and North-South rail and canal transport systems, large water projects, continental communications systems, and the development of nuclear power. Said Friesecke, “The children and grandchildren of this generation of Africans must be able to look back, one or two generations from now, on their parents as giants who pulled African countries out of a genocidal holocaust into modern nationhood.”

In France itself, where African affairs figure prominently in ongoing legislative election campaigns, the conference has had a political shock effect on the government and all political parties. Most revealing was not only a complete press blackout, but the fact that the French news media, of all political persuasions, refused to publish an advertisement announcing the convening of the conference—making a sham of the many electoral expressions of concern by all parties for the plight of Africa.