How Clinton's 'partnership with Africa' can work

by Linda de Hoyos

Perhaps no single initiative taken by President Bill Clinton in his tenure at the White House more vividly points to the necessity for the President to carry out economist Lyndon LaRouche's proposals for a New Bretton Woods and a global infrastructural development, than the President's March 23-April 3 six-nation tour of Africa.

Setting forth the themes of that tour during his first stop on March 23 in Accra, Ghana, President Clinton told 500,000 enthusiastic greeters: "My dream for this trip is that together we might do the things so that 100 years from now, your grandchildren and mine will look back and say this was the beginning of a new African renaissance. . . . We must build classrooms and companies, increase the food supply and save the environment, and prevent disease before deadly epidemics break out. The United States is ready to help you." And up through March 27, the President has called for a new "partnership between the United States and Africa."

In his speech, the President implied that the presence of the United States in Africa—a continent in which it has had very little economic or strategic interest, in general—would directly aid the process of finally freeing Africa from its colonialist past: "With a new century coming into view," Clinton said, "old patterns are fading away. The Cold War is gone, colonialism is gone, apartheid is gone. Remnants of past troubles remain, but surely there will come a time when everywhere reconciliation will replace recrimination. Now, nations and individuals finally are free to seek a newer world where democracy and peace and prosperity are not slogans but the essence of a new Africa. . . . For centuries, other nations exploited Africa's gold, Africa's diamonds, Africa's minerals. Now is the time for Africans to cultivate something more precious: the mind and heart of the people of Africa, through education."

But how can this possibly be achieved, unless the United States takes the lead in creating a new monetary system—this time dedicated to the purposes of *global* economic recovery, and thereby ending the "post-colonial" free-trade framework of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank that has so completely prohibited the development of African national economies?

Historic trip

With this trip, President Clinton becomes the first President to carry out an extensive tour of Africa (Jimmy Carter stopped briefly only in three countries). Clinton is visiting Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana, and Senegal.

The delegation accompanying the President is likewise unprecedented in size and scope, including three Cabinet members—Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor; William Daley, Secretary of Commerce; and Rodney Slater, Secretary of Transportation. Among the numerous administration officials also travelling are Samuel Berger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; Brian Atwood, head of the Agency for International Development; Jesse Jackson, Special Envoy for the President to Africa; Howard Wolpe, Special Envoy to the Great Lakes; Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Joe Wilson, National Security Council senior director for African Affairs; and David Leavy, NSC director Strategic Planning.

The Congressional delegates are Representatives Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), Donald Payne (D-N.J.), William Jefferson (D-La.), Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), Edward Royce (R-Calif.), John Conyers (D-Mich.), Corrine Brown (D-Fla.), Elizabeth Furse (D-Ore.), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Tex.), Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.), Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-Calif.), Harold Ford, Jr. (D-Tenn.), Jim Mc-

Dermott (D-Wash.), and Amory Houghton (R-N.Y.).

Other members of the delegation include John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO; Kweisi Mfume, head of the NAACP; Carl Ware of Coca-Cola; Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer; Denver Mayor Wellington Webb; the CEOs of Xerox Corporation, Cargill, CAMAC Holdings, National Urban Coalition, and the United Bank of Philadelphia.

The Clinton administration had prepared the way for the trip in the United States with its fight for the passage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which passed the House of Representatives on March 11. The bill seeks to encourge investment in sub-Saharan Africa by extending loan guarantees and creating equity and infrastructure funds, add to the list of African products entering the United States duty-free, and directs the President to negotiate trade agreements. The bill seeks to increase trade, but not at the expense of development aid, and cancellation of bilateral debt owed to the United States by the poorest African countries.

The President's trip is thus intended to usher in for Africa the aggressive investment and export drive to developing countries championed by the late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. Nine days after the House passage of AGOA, Transportation Secretary Slater, who has been charged with implementing Clinton's economic policy toward Africa, told the press that the President "wishes to reissue a proposal he first presented at the Summit of Eight meeting last June. That proposal was known as The Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa," which goes beyond AGOA. Slater listed as the key objectives of the Partnership: "1) debt reduction and forgiveness; 2) vast multilateral infrastructure enhancement; 3) promotion of private sector development and investment in the region; 4) trade promotion; and 5) increasing bilateral development assistance under existing Agency for International Development programs."

Arriving in Ghana on March 23, President Clinton placed the economic "partnership" in political context, outlining three goals for U.S. foreign policy for Africa:

"First, we want to work with Africa to nurture democracy, knowing it is never perfect or complete," Clinton said.

"Second, democracy must have prosperity. We have an African Growth and Opportunity Act now before Congress. Both parties' leadership are supporting it. By opening markets and building businesses and creating jobs, we can help and strengthen each other. By supporting the education of your people, we can strengthen your future and help each other."

However, the President's economic initiative has *gone beyond the limits set for developing countries by the onerous conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund*. The economic landscape of sub-Saharan Africa—where up to 90% of the population resides in the countryside and is engaged in agriculture, and where electricity consumption is one-sixteenth the world's average—cannot be changed without massive infrastructural projects which require the participation of governments.

Secondly, as the case of IMF darling Yoweri Museveni's Uganda shows, investment for purposes of export only results in profits being channeled only to debt repayment, repatriation of monies by foreign owners, and to the favored few in the country's elite. Without debt cancellation and ending IMF prohibitions on government investment in education, medical services, and infrastructure, the buying power of developing countries cannot expand. Either the Clinton administration breaks with the IMF system and creates a New Bretton Woods, or the U.S.-Africa Partnership becomes a dead letter.

London's wars a danger

"Third," the President stated in his Ghana address, "we must allow democracy and prosperity to take root without violence. We must work to resolve the war and genocide that still tear at the heart of Africa. We must help Africans to prevent future conflicts."

Given the mass death that has occurred in East Africa in particular since 1990 and the end of the Cold War, achieving this goal challenges the geopolitics of the Anglo-French imperialist framework. In particular, the President's stated desire for peace stands in stark contrast to the bellicose utterances of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Uganda in December, when she pledged U.S. backing to Uganda's military containment of Sudan.

In the days preceding the President's trip, reports have been circulating that the Ugandan, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Congolese, and Rwandan militaries are preparing for assaults on Sudan, on the Kivu province of Congo, and on Burundi. According to eyewitness reports, truck caravans of military equipment have been travelling from the port of Mombasa, Kenya, to northern Uganda, in preparation for invasion.

In Entebbe, Uganda on March 25, Clinton met with regional heads of state—including Museveni, Rwanda's Pasteur Bizimungu, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa, Congo's Laurent Kabila, and Kenya's Daniel arap Moi. With the exception of Moi and Mkapa, these leaders, with the addition of Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki, are the "new leadership" of African militarists first heralded in January 1997 by the London *Times*. War on behalf of British Commonwealth resource interests has been the major business of this grouping—in Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire—at the cost of millions of Africans' lives.

During his stopover in Kigali, Rwanda, a visit demanded two weeks before by warmonger Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee on Refugees, Clinton appeared to give backing to the Rwandan Patriotic Front, as if it had not been involved in both the bloodletting in Rwanda in 1994 and the murder of thousands of refugees in east Zaire.

The President's Partnership for Africa can be broken quickly, if the United States is perceived as backing endless wars of aggression in Africa. The President's goal of "preventing future conflicts" will require aggressive action *for peace*.