

Kirchner: Fight with Ideas, for the Future

by Cynthia R. Rush

On the occasion of Venezuela's official entry into the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) as its fifth permanent member—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay are the other four—Argentine President Néstor Kirchner urged six Presidents gathered in Caracas, Venezuela on July 4 to fight “audaciously” for a regional integration process that will lift their populations out of poverty.

South America, Kirchner said, “is at an inflection point.” Today, “we have the sense that we are taking big steps toward an effective South American integration . . . toward a Mercosur more focussed on production . . . with more initiatives on the development of infrastructure, and with more efficiency in financing productive regional products.” He expressed his conviction “that integration is the great enterprise of our time.”

Aside from Kirchner and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Brazilian President Lula da Silva, Uruguay's Tabaré Vázquez, and Paraguay's Nicanor Duarte were also at the summit. Bolivia's President Evo Morales attended as a special invited guest, although Bolivia is not a permanent member.

On the eve of Mercosur's annual summit July 20-21, when the same group of Presidents will meet in Córdoba, Argentina—there will be ten Presidents attending in all—Kirchner pointedly stated that “integration is much more than just liberalizing trade.” The “markets and free trade can't guarantee our development with inclusiveness,” he explained. Real integration “must set a goal of building a great political community which promotes production.” And remember, he added, integration is also “a battle of ideas, and as such, it has its adversaries.” Gone, he said, are the days of the Cold War when the United States expected and got “automatic alignment” from the nations of the hemisphere on every issue.

These words were not exactly music to the ears of synarchist financiers who are nervously monitoring the region from their perches on Wall Street or in the City of London. They are panicked that the accelerated unravelling of the global monetary system is leading to the formation of regional alliances—as in the case of Asia—to seek alternatives to the Cheney-Bush Administration's economic and geopolitical insanity. As statesman Lyndon LaRouche noted in his July 10 declaration on Mexico's recent elections (see accompanying

article), Néstor Kirchner's leadership within the informal “Club” of Ibero-American Presidents is key to the consolidation of an emerging South American alliance.

This is bad news enough from the financial predators' standpoint. They don't even want to contemplate how the region might shift in an even more dramatic fashion, should the current battle over the outcome of Mexico's July 2 elections result in a López Obrador Presidency.

‘Winds of Change Are Sweeping Across Latin America’

This explains the increasingly hysterical attacks on Kirchner, from synarchist financiers inside and outside Argentina. Addressing the continental situation, they charge that Kirchner is allying with Hugo Chávez to move Argentina further “to the left,” discrediting it in the eyes of “the international community” and discouraging foreign investment.

The reality is that Kirchner is working closely with Brazilian President Lula to rein in Chávez, urging him to refrain from behavior that could give the Cheney crowd an excuse to launch some lunatic action in the region. “Kirchner and I have talked a lot with Chávez,” Lula told London's *Financial Times* in an interview published July 13. “We have to take the tensions out of our relations. . . . In all our meetings we talk a lot.”

The “strategic alliance” that Kirchner and Chávez signed in Caracas, July 4, includes cooperation in trade, energy, and technological transfer, which is beneficial to both countries. But it also provides Kirchner a way to keep an eye on the Venezuelan, and keep his often provocative behavior in check.

Countering neo-conservative propaganda that accuses Bolivian President Evo Morales of taking orders from Chávez, Kirchner and Lula are also intervening to integrate that impoverished country more fully into Mercosur. During the July 2-4 Caracas summit, Lula invited Morales to become Mercosur's next permanent member, and Kirchner has signed several agreements with Morales for humanitarian assistance, as well as technological cooperation and joint infrastructure projects.

In his July 5 address before Venezuela's National Assembly, to which he was invited as the guest speaker on the 195th anniversary of that country's independence from Spain, Kirchner clearly defined the situation the region faces. “The winds of change are sweeping across Latin America,” he warned,” to enthusiastic applause. As Venezuela officially enters Mercosur, he explained, it is joining not just an economic bloc but a “political process” which “allows us to envision . . . that the *Patria Grande* (the South American Fatherland) and Latin American integration are absolutely possible.”

Mercosur members share a commitment to democracy, peace, and respect for the rule of law, he underscored. But that in no way contradicts the fact that “in this concert of Latin

American nations, we share today the conviction that our region cannot continue to be characterized as a group of countries that are potentially rich, but whose populations are impoverished.” As the nations of Ibero-America approach the bicentennial anniversaries in 2010 of their independence from Spain, he said, “we cannot wait another 200 years” to achieve real economic and political independence.

“It’s not good enough to take office with nationalist or progressive ideas,” he argued. “We must have the courage and boldness to carry them out, to make progressive decisions, and keep the promises we made to our people.”

As for “those who would stop history, compromising the current process because it restricts their privileges,” Kirchner issued a stern warning. Don’t resort to anachronistic or worn epithets to try to divide us by “classifying some leaders as populist.” Let it be understood, he said, that “waging the battle against social exclusion, against the poverty that afflicts our nations, against indigence and unemployment, or defending our natural wealth, cannot in any way be defined as populism.” Rather, he continued, “what you see in this process . . . is the defense of national interests.”

Fascists Go Berzerk

Inside Argentina, Kirchner’s forceful repudiation of the free-market and privatization policies of the 1990s, and insistence that the “intelligent State” play a regulatory role to defend the General Welfare from predatory financial interests, is driving local toadies of the synarchist international into fits of rug-chewing rage.

The proponents of unbridled economic looting are also incensed that instead of giving official press conferences, Kirchner prefers to go directly to the people, as did Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) in his “fireside chats.” In speeches either in the Presidential Palace—the Casa Rosada—or during very frequent visits to cities around the country, he informs citizens that the country is still “in hell,” but gives status reports on progress in reducing poverty and indigence, creating jobs, building needed infrastructure, and reindustrializing.

There is a great deal more to be done, he always notes, and expresses the hope that by the time he leaves office in 2007, the country will have at least climbed out of hell, and onto the first rungs of Purgatory.

He also names those who plunged the country into hell, beginning with the 1976 military coup that installed free-market madman José Martínez de Hoz as Finance Minister. De Hoz is emblematic of an entire treasonous apparatus whose economic policies and fascist repression combined to create “unprecedented catastrophe” for the nation, he warns. “We must never forget” what they did, he constantly repeats, to ensure that such destructive forces are never allowed to do this again.

Because he insists that “the market” can’t be allowed to ride roughshod over the country, such conservative dailies as

La Nación and *La Nueva Provincia* accuse him of being a “dictator,” of destroying national institutions, and usurping power from other branches of government to advance his “hegemonic” schemes. Wall Street attacked FDR in much the same way.

Exemplary is the virulent attack by “Cuban-Argentine” analyst Armando Ribas, published in *La Nueva Provincia* July 6 under the headline “The Fourth Reich.” A mouthpiece for the Mont Pelerin Society’s Atlas Foundation, the Washington, D.C. Heritage Foundation, and the University of Chicago-linked Argentine think-tank FIEL, Ribas charges that Kirchner is the “new Hitler,” because he violates “property rights” through agreements to control prices, “punishes” producers who speculate on beef prices by curtailing exports, and “publicly mistreats” such foreign multinationals as Shell Oil and Repsol-YPF, by regulating their activities.

Those who argue that the kidnappings, torture, and disappearances carried out by the 1976-83 military dictatorship were justified because the country was fighting a “just war” against “international communism,” also charge that Kirchner is “anti-military” because he is prosecuting officers who committed atrocities during that period. Well-known “Catholic” philosopher Antonio Caponnetto, a hard-core Nazi and LaRouche-hater who recently travelled to Madrid to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the founding of *Fuerza Nueva*, the fascist organization run by Francoite Blas Piñar, most frequently retails this line.

In a recent editorial in his flashy *Cabildo* magazine, Caponnetto suggested that since Kirchner’s government is run by former terrorists, the military has no reason to accept him as Commander-in-Chief. The Liberator General San Martín, would have “shot” Kirchner for such “treasonous” treatment of the Armed Forces, Caponnetto threatened.

Freeing the Armed Forces from the Synarchists

But the Argentine President is very clear on his military policy. During a July 6 speech at the annual Armed Forces Camaraderie Banquet, he told the gathered officers that since taking office in 2003, his government has attempted to build “a national defense policy, and *free* the Armed Forces from an ill-fated orientation” that violated its historic mission. His reference was to the synarchist worldview that captured the Armed Forces leadership in the 1960s and 1970s, and justified atrocities in the name of defending “Western Christian civilization.”

It would be unjust to both past history and to the future, Kirchner stated, to identify the institution as a whole with the “deviant behavior” of some. Separating out those responsible for the “aberrations committed during the last dictatorship” of 1976-83, is key to preserving the institution’s “strategic role” and its historic mission, he emphasized. “We definitely want our Armed Forces to belong to all Argentines,” and to play a positive role in rebuilding the country, he concluded.