

## The Mayor of London Meets the President of Venezuela

extracted from William Shepherd's Blog - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2006

Ken Livingston was trained as a teacher but entered politics at an early age. After a successful coup in 1982 he took over the leadership of the *Labour Group* on the *Greater London Council*. Margaret Thatcher was so horrified that in 1986 she abolished his parliament and sold off *County Hall*...a stone's throw from the *Houses of Parliament*...to a *Japanese Hotel Consortium*. *The Sun* liked to refer to him as 'the most obnoxious man in Britain'.

*Red Ken* won the nomination to be the *Labour Party MP* for *Brent* one of the largest constituencies in *London*. Then in 2000 despite...or because of...being disowned by *Labour Party's* apparatchiks and thrown out of the *Labour Party* he became *Mayor of London*...effectively for the second time. *The Sun* is right. He is an old-style *Socialist*.



Hugo Chávez served in the military for seventeen years before his failed coup in 1992 put him in a *Venezuelan* jail for two years. An admirer of Fidel Castro his election to the *Presidency of Venezuela* in 1999 sent alarm bells ringing in *Washington*.

Over in *Outer Darkness* amidst the *Moral Majority*, the *TV Evangelist* and *Right-wing Republican* Pat Robertson suggested that the *CIA* should 'take out' Senor Chávez after his well-publicised remarks that 'Capitalism leads us straight to hell' and 'The USA brought 9/11 on itself with its imperial foreign policy'. These are hardly newsworthy utterances in a *South American* context. But then *Venezuela* has oil...and the *USA* has an *Oil Addiction*.

Our *Socialist London Mayor* believes that western foreign policy is responsible for breeding *Islamic Terrorism*. He is also on record as saying that 'worldwide capitalism kills more people every day than Hitler did'...qualified of late with the remark 'and he was crazy' to avoid inflaming the *Holocaust Defence League*.

The thing that really got Margaret Thatcher's goat was *Red Ken's* insistence that *London* needed to talk to the *IRA* because the *IRA* were bombing the place. Twenty years later he has taken the logic of this statement one stage further by exploring the idea of *Direct Barter* between *London* and *Venezuela*. And it looks like he may have got himself a deal with *Venezuela* supplying diesel to *London's* 8000 buses at 40% below market price...and *BP* or *Shell* responsible for delivery.

Earlier this week a two-page memo was leaked from the *London Mayor's Office* with some suggestions about the favours *Londoners* might trade in return for their cheap *Venezuelan* oil. It makes for interesting reading. Top of the list is access to *London's* *CCTV* and *Genetic Fingerprinting* expertise. Other ideas are how to operate a city's security and public order systems; how to integrate and manage overground traffic; how to route buses; how to limit carbon dioxide emissions and how to develop adult education programmes.

*This got me thinking so I drafted out a letter for Hugo Chávez to send to Ken Livingstone. It went like this..*

[http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk/2006/09/15/saturday\\_16th\\_september~1128199](http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk/2006/09/15/saturday_16th_september~1128199)

Dear Ken

Great to meet with you in London and get up to speed on English affairs. You asked me what you could do to help us here in Caracas. I've been watching Malcolm X movies so my initial reaction was to reply 'Not a lot!' But well-targeted trade boycotts are always helpful. They helped bring down apartheid although our brothers in the *African National Congress (ANC)* are not so sure. 'Hey, brother, we've got the state; where's the power?' is the latest one doing the rounds. So let's turn the question around.

I have a nice little swap going with Havana. They send me doctors and nurses and I pay them with a hundred thousand barrels of oil a day. But our problem is that your British economy is the same old imperial system it has been for the past three hundred years...ever since the *Bank of England Company* beat the shit out of the *South Sea Company*...so you go scouring sub-Saharan Africa for your doctors and go people-trafficking for nurses.

But what if I send some diesel fuel for those big six-wheeler scarlet-painted omnibuses of yours? When we chatted about this you liked the idea and took the line that London is one of the richest cities in the world so there must be lots of ways you could pay for it. Well, forgive my scepticism, but 'Like what?' I put some people on this and they came back with a 100-page report that says much the same thing. What to do?

In London we talked about cities and city economies. Any city with a catchment area of 25 million people should really have its own currency. Typically four out of five economic transactions are between a city's own citizens and companies. Of course it's true that London has know-how in finance and education. 'You name it, we've got it,' you said. 'There's nothing we can't do if we put our minds to it...and the price is right. If not we'll get it cheap from China. They make it, ship it and use the empty ships to take away London's rubbish.' There you go again. Frankly we can talk to China ourselves or through our Peruvian friends. But there is something.

One of the things we're trying to do here in Latin America is to build shock absorbers into our societies. You know the sort of things...less centralization, no foreign troops, no military bases, dispersed power and outsourcing, not to Iraq-style subsubsubsubcontractors, but to users. That's what the Polish were doing before the Chicago steamroller flattened them...cooperatives we call them. The sort of things the Americans did to you Brits a couple of hundred years ago. Unlike the free-market crusaders we're pretty quick learners.

Before you arrived the backroom boys set up a barter system we call the *Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA)*. Customers decide for themselves what something is worth instead of letting New York, London or Chicago set the prices. The young Turks think this'll lead to zones of economic calm and predictability. They tell me that this *Fair Trade* makes more sense than the *Free Trade* peddled by *The Chicago Boys*. Each country gives what it is best at delivering and gets back what it most needs...independent of global prices.

As you know one of the unstated aims of disaster capitalism...its most recent phase...is to make capitalism democracy-proof by a programme of Machiavellian economics, pre-emptive shocks and rolling coups. The side effects are the main effects and have shown us that central banking and corporate capitalism are incompatible with liberty and the pursuit of happiness except...and then arguably...for a tiny elite. Crisis opportunism and planned misery are integral to the idea of a *One World State* of serfs and castles. A good lesson for us.

You mentioned education and financial skills. My problem here is that we had a whole generation of our best and brightest destroyed by bundling them off to Milton Friedman indocumentation centres. Anyone who didn't get the message got disappeared. So I must ask you to stop enticing away our young people. You see we don't like people trafficking. And we want to improve our ability to block coups not foment them. We also graciously decline your offer of places in your torture training camps for our police and our military.

You talked about banks and financial institutions. You have a lot of them in London. Please keep them there. If you allow them to peddle their wares in our backyard then you'll find yourself even deeper in the *Kidnap & Ransom* business. Our Colombian friends tell us this is a growth business for *The City of London*.

There is some good news. The *IMF* is not the power it was. Its eighty billion dollar portfolio is down to ten billion. Only Turkey still borrows. Help us shut it down. Why not take the *IBRD* and the *WTO* with it. We don't need them in Latin America. Nobody needs them. But can you let go? South-east England is a financial disaster area causing economic mayhem around the world by poking its nose into places where it has no business to be. Why not stop it? Clean up your act by 2034. Have London designated a *World Transition Region*.

Get out of the gun-running, money laundering and bullshit business and into something more rewarding. Find something useful to do. Then perhaps you'll stop fucking us up. Take issue with idiots like Donald 'I see a boom market in plagues' Rumsfeld and Dick 'the real profits are in a future of war' Cheney. Stop them running amok. You'll find plenty of Americans...north and south of the Panama Canal...ready to help you.

Fraternally Yours  
Hugo Chávez