

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Brazil-U.S. relations crumble

The Bush administration has no policy but confrontation and threats for South America's largest power.

Three months after assuming the presidency of the United States, George Bush has yet to show a single concrete foreign policy initiative toward Brazil, except for a slew of escalating pressures ranging from ecological and trade matters to technology transfer limits.

In the first week in May, the White House trade office released its "Annual Report on Foreign Trade Barriers," in which it envisions new trade sanctions against Brazil by openly criticizing the country's new Constitution for the preferential treatment it gives to telecommunications companies under majority Brazilian ownership.

The U.S. administration's colonialist intentions toward Brazil were demonstrated early in the game, when President Bush employed ecological justifications during his February trip to Tokyo to argue that Brazil should abandon sovereign control over its Amazon territory. Bush hinted that financial pressures would be employed to achieve that goal, and tried to get the Japanese government to cancel a loan to the Brazilians for construction of a Brazil-Peru highway.

Now, the U.S. State Department has moved to tighten the technological limitations imposed on Brazil, and especially against its nuclear and aerospace programs. The Kissinger boys at State are apparently determined to enforce the former secretary of state's arrogant claim that "history will never begin in the South."

On April 27, the *Wall Street Journal* published a report emphasizing that the United States would not permit any transfer of technology for space

soundings that would guide satellite launchings. The restrictions are to be extended now to certain kinds of supercomputers used in meteorology. The article cites State Department sources using the same old blackmail line that things could change if only Brazil would sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Brazil has opposed the treaty, viewing it as a threat to its sovereign right to develop nuclear technology.

At the same time, the group Nuclear Scientists is escalating its campaign against the Brazilian nuclear program. Spokesman David Albright charged that when the Aramar Research Center, run by the Brazilian Navy, brings 2-3,000 centrifuges on line, Brazil "will have the capacity to produce the bomb." According to Albright, Brazil is one of the few countries able to produce the super-hard steel necessary for fabricating the centrifuges used to refine uranium. Our greatest concern, says Albright, is that at that point, Brazil will have achieved full nuclear independence, since it will have sufficient uranium to supply the Aramar center without help from abroad.

Albright also attacked the Brazil-Argentina nuclear cooperation treaty. He warned that under a Peronist government, Argentina would revive and expand its nuclear program, and that the joint efforts of the two nations would turn them into nuclear powers in their own right.

The response to such pressures from abroad has been unequivocal. The president of Brazil's National Nuclear Energy Commission, Rex Nazareth, declared, "As long as I am alive,

the national interests will be safeguarded. The United States will not inspect our centrifuges." Rear Adm. Othon Pinheiro, one of the brains behind the Navy's nuclear project, charged that ever since Brazil achieved a full nuclear cycle, the United States has been upping the pressure into what is now a full-scale "nuclear blockade." But, declared Pinheiro, "We will pay them back by continuing the program and building here what we cannot get from the outside."

Over the course of the next few weeks, the general secretary of Brazil's foreign ministry, Paulo Tarso Flecha de Lima, will begin talks with Kissinger protégé and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, supposedly to establish a "positive agenda" between their two countries. However, it would appear that the only "positive agenda" from the Bush administration's viewpoint would be complete Brazilian submission.

This was demonstrated by the statements of Kissinger's lawyer, William D. Rogers, in a recent interview with the Brazilian magazine *Veja*. Employing the traditional cynicism of his patron, Rogers admitted that the Brady Plan was never intended to solve the foreign debt problem, but was merely a political instrument for subjecting nations, especially those which will have "major elections this year"—Brazil and Argentina—to the will of the banks.

"The international financial climate could become so intolerable that the debtors will have no other choice but moratoria," said Rogers. Asked what the consequences would be, Rogers responded, "The debtors would remain isolated, expelled from the financial system. Their credit would be cut, and financing for transactions on the international market would disappear."