

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Brazil appeases superpowers

The Collor government has sacrificed its longstanding relations with Iraq to satisfy demands of the superpowers.

Since President Fernando Collor de Mello assumed office last March, he has followed a script written by the superpower condominium in crucial areas of trade and ecology. But the Middle East crisis set the stage for Collor to destroy a years-long relationship with Iraq, in a public display of subservience to the condominium.

The independence of Brazilian foreign policy for the past 15 years has been reflected in its special relations with the Arab world, and particularly with Iraq, which until Aug. 2 was Brazil's chief supplier of oil. Since the 1974-79 government of Ernesto Geisel, Brazil and Iraq have woven very close ties, with Brazil providing military equipment, food, and services while its giant construction companies have built highways, rail lines, and irrigation projects.

On Aug. 4, after the current Middle East crisis first broke, U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Richard Melton ran to the Foreign Ministry to demand that Brazil adhere to the sanctions the Bush administration was planning to adopt against Iraq. The Collor government agreed, and on Aug. 6 embraced the total boycott of Iraq decreed by the U.N. "Brazil has no reason to act differently. Our bilateral trade with Iraq is not so large that it merits a unique position," explained Foreign Minister Francisco Rezek in announcing the Brazilian position.

Brazil's break with its historic allies began even before he took office, when his first meeting during a pre-inaugural visit to the United States was with World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman. Upon tak-

ing office, President Collor ordered a shutdown—for no apparent reason—of the lucrative trading company Interbras. Dependent on the state oil company Petrobras, Interbras was created for the single purpose of exchanging Brazilian products for Middle Eastern oil.

As the culmination of its shift in strategic position, Brazil concretized—just days prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait—a deal to buy 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil from the Iranians. Iraq, which used to be Brazil's major oil supplier at 250,000 bpd, will now sell only 150,000 bpd to Brazil.

In recent weeks, U.S. State Department pressures on Brazil to break relations with Iraq have been especially intense due to the role undertaken since last March by a group of top-level Brazilian technicians serving as advisers to the Iraqi government in the fabrication of missiles. The group is headed by Brigadier Hugo Piva, the former director of the Air Force's Technology Center. It is doubtful that Brigadier Piva "is working without the blessing of the Brazilian government, or at least of the Brazilian military establishment," State Department envoy Gary Milhollin told the July 29 *New York Times*.

Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project for Nuclear Arms Control, is demanding cancellation of the U.S. sale to Brazil of a supercomputer which would enable the Brazilian Aeronautics Co. (Embraer) to carry out sophisticated calculations of propulsion and aerodynamics. "Brazil has a policy of exporting weapons and

missiles which does not overly concern itself with the uses of its eventual clients, [and] which has not officially adhered to international patterns of nuclear technology use, nor permits inspection. . . . The connections with Iraq worsen the situation."

The supercomputer purchase had been hailed as a major Brazilian diplomatic triumph, following the announcement by U.S. Special Trade Representative Carla Hills that restrictions on such a sale were being lifted as a reward for Brazil's new trade "opening."

And yet, the Collor government still has to contend with forces at home which are increasingly disgusted by this abandonment of Brazilian national sovereignty. It is, therefore, no accident that representatives of Collor's Foreign Ministry were deployed to give speeches at leading policy study institutes of the Armed Forces which suggested that Brazilian foreign policy was returning to an independent stance vis-à-vis the Anglo-Soviet-American condominium power arrangements.

On July 23, Foreign Minister Francisco Rezek gave an extraordinary speech to the Superior War College, in which he analyzed the unfortunate consequences for Brazil of the superpower "condominium" with which the U.S.-U.S.S.R. axis "divides world power." According to the minister, a "select group of countries" has joined that condominium out of a desire to impose their will through "international corrective actions."

Speaking to the officers' school of the Army Chiefs of Staff, Foreign Policy Secretary Marcos Azambuja presented a similar view, asserting that "Brazil, Argentina, India, and several other developing countries have resisted the assaults of the two superpowers and their allies" out to prevent nuclear and aerospace development.