

Ibero-American governments ride roughshod over anti-war mood

by Dennis Small and Carlos Wesley

Despite the fact that recent opinion polls indicate that as much as 80% of Ibero-America's population is opposed to Bush's war against Iraq, and that a strong plurality supports Saddam Hussein outright, the governments of Ibero-America have given their full backing to Washington's Middle East policies. At a Jan. 28 meeting in Caracas, Venezuela of 13 foreign ministers representing the continent's major countries, the diplomats:

- endorsed Bush's "New World Order";
- called for the U.N. resolutions on the Persian Gulf to be fully implemented;
- criticized Iraq for launching Scud attacks against "non-belligerent" nation Israel;
- committed themselves to continue supplying Ibero-American oil to the U.S. war machine on a priority basis.

No steps were taken to protect Ibero-America from the disastrous economic effects of the war, despite the fact that the meeting had been urgently convoked with exactly this purpose, and despite the fact that the gathered ministers politely listened to two detailed technical presentations on precisely this subject. One was by the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), the other by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and both emphasized that Ibero-America as a whole in fact produces enough oil to be self-sufficient, although the major producers (Mexico and Venezuela) currently export the vast majority of their output outside the region. (A detailed picture of Ibero-America's oil production and trade patterns was presented in last week's issue of *EIR*, Feb. 8, p. 8.)

At the Caracas meeting, the gathered foreign ministers discussed the possibility of establishing a petroleum fund to help those nations most dependent on foreign imports—Brazil, Chile, and the nations of Central America. But when push came to shove, they could only agree to this in the most general terms, and added the explicit condition that this would be done only if it did not harm "existing commercial commitments." In other words, the priority of Mexico, Venezuela, and the other producers, is first to supply oil to satisfy

the U.S.'s war demands, and only then to see if anything is left over.

Some of the foreign ministers present were almost more hawkish than Bush. The Argentine and Venezuelan representatives presented a draft resolution calling for Iraq's unconditional surrender, but "moderates" in the group—Mexico and Brazil—reportedly weren't prepared to go that far. They counter-proposed their own resolution calling for a ceasefire and a negotiated solution to the crisis, but this too was voted down by the majority because "it would have angered [Argentine] Foreign Minister Domingo Cavallo," in the words of the Argentine daily *Ambito Financiero* of Jan. 29. Argentina and Honduras are the only two Ibero-American nations that have actually sent military forces to join the Coalition in the Persian Gulf: Honduras has 150 soldiers there, and Argentina has two navy ships anchored a safe distance from the fighting.

Ultimately all that the foreign ministers could concur on was a statement saying that they hoped to "make an effective contribution to bringing about a New Order of Peace" in the Middle East, by supporting the U.N. resolutions.

'This is the United Nations!'

The emphasis on the United Nations is not accidental. The governments of Ibero-America are deeply concerned that a growing percentage of their populations, and even significant factions of the ruling elites in a number of countries, are waking up to the reality of Bush's war: that it is a genocidal assault by the combined nations of the North, against a small nation of the South that dared to try to develop itself in a sovereign fashion.

The foreign minister of Venezuela, Reynaldo Figueredo, was most explicit. According to the Jan. 31 Mexican daily *Excelsior*, Figueredo said: "We have to insist on trying to avoid a feeling that might be growing among the population in general, consisting of the belief that what is happening there is a fight between a small country of 18 million inhabitants against 350 million. . . . That is not what is happening. This is not Iraq against the United States, not even close.

This is the United Nations.”

That's not the way most people in Ibero-America see it. In a recent poll in Colombia, a majority said they opposed the war, 42% said they were for Iraq's Saddam, and only 37% backed the U.S. The results showed that there is a “marked anti-Americanism among Colombians,” said the head of the polling company. Many thought that Bush simply had no moral authority to oppose Saddam, given the U.S. invasion of Panama a little over a year ago.

In Argentina, 80% of the population is against the decision by President Carlos Menem to send warships to serve the Anglo-Americans in the Gulf, said the London *Guardian* Feb. 1. Argentina's Federation of Jewish Cultural Entities, in a statement issued on Jan. 23, said that the war “does not serve any of the interests of the Argentinian people and it endangers the future of the nation.” The Argentinian Jewish organization called on Israel to take a lower profile regarding the war, and “a higher profile in the search for a just political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” Even Menem's estranged wife, Zulema Yoma de Menem, has demanded that he recall the warships from the Gulf. “It is inadmissible to remain indifferent to the massive and indiscriminate bombardments that are affecting unprotected civilians, Jews and Arabs alike,” she said.

Perhaps nowhere in Ibero-America is popular sentiment against the war so strong as in Venezuela. According to firsthand reports, the majority of Venezuelans are vocally in favor of Iraq. Venezuela was one of the founders of OPEC in 1973, and has always maintained extensive and excellent relations with the Arab world—a sentiment which the Venezuelan government has not been able to extirpate.

‘Kissinger Go Home!’

Venezuela is also one of the countries where there is a deep split in the ruling elite over Bush's war. Although the Carlos Andrés Pérez government has given Washington full backing, not so other layers of Venezuela's “Establishment.” When Henry Kissinger visited Caracas in late January at the invitation of the Pérez government, to give them his advice on world economic and political matters, the staid daily *Diario de Caracas* welcomed him with an editorial entitled “Kissinger Go Home!” In it, the daily favorably quoted the comments of former President Rafael Caldera, to the effect that Kissinger's visit “is worrisome, because he has been the most powerful adversary that OPEC has had throughout its existence, which is an organization which must continue to exist and cannot follow the advise of people like Kissinger.”

Another country where there is deep and growing opposition to the Gulf war, is Brazil. The military has led the ranks of those opposed to Bush's insanity from an intelligent strategic standpoint (see *Report from Rio*, page 61). But the hostility to the war is not limited to these circles, as reflected in a column by journalist Mauro Santayana in the Jan. 31 *Gazeta Mercantil*. Santayana, a respected journalist linked

to Brazil's diplomatic corps, suggested that Brazil may well be next after Iraq on Bush's hit-list, and warned that Brazil must reject all outside pressures to dismantle its armed forces. Brazil is “rich and much coveted,” he wrote, and in the past its military labored under the presumption that threats to its national security came from its neighbors, and its neighbors probably feared Brazil, “encouraged by more powerful and distant nations.” But today, the nations of Ibero-America must unite, wrote Santayana, citing former Argentinian President Juan Perón, “who in his oft-cited warning, said that the 21st century will either find us Latin Americans united, or under foreign domination.”

Opposition grows in Italy as war goes on

by Leonardo Servadio

The Persian Gulf war must be stopped immediately, independent of whether or not it be a “just war” or an “unjust war”: This is the message which the Italian Catholic Bishops put out at the end of January. There is no doubt, said Monsignor Tettamanzi, speaking on behalf of the Bishops' Conference during the press conference to prepare for the “Day of Life,” that “even a ‘just’ war is an absolute evil.”

The Day of Life was celebrated Sunday, Feb. 3. On that occasion Pope John Paul II said, “The divine law: ‘thou shall not kill’ regards every man and binds every man, independent of his religious belief, since it is written by the Creator in the conscience as a natural law.” The Pope condemned abortion as the worst of all crimes, since it is perpetrated against the “most defenseless” of all human beings. After denouncing genetic manipulations, euthanasia, the rejection of the weakest, racism, and homicidal violence of any kind, the Pope said: “We must proclaim the untouchability of the right to life . . . against war, against this war, which people keep fighting in the Persian Gulf, with increasing danger for the whole of humanity.”

The statements by the Pope and the Bishops, setting war and abortion on the same plane, have been interpreted by some as a way of distancing themselves from the Communist Party (renamed Democratic Party of the Left-PDS), which has been the most vocal supporter of the papal statements against war, but has used them in an “anti-American” way. Bologna's Cardinal Biffi explicitly criticized the professional “pacifists” who have always used pacifism as an instrument of war against the Atlantic Alliance. But in all the statements, the concern over the global consequences of this conflict