

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Technological stranglehold tightens

Brazil, on the defensive after the Gulf war, even offers to sacrifice its prized nuclear submarine project.

In the aftermath of the West Asian war, Washington is tightening its technological blockade against Brazil, in an effort to impose what Anglo-American analysts call their "technological apartheid" policy against those Third World nations which have reached respectable levels of development in several strategic technologies. This policy involves increasing prohibitions in areas vital for technological independence, such as the aerospace, nuclear energy, information, and chemicals. A key weapon in this policy is the use of ecological arguments to justify such prohibitions. In the case of Brazil, the Amazon region is particularly targeted for "limited sovereignty."

For instance, Prince Philip of Great Britain decided to pay Brazil an "ecological" visit at the beginning of March. Philip has distinguished himself by his devotion to the idea that the Amazon region is the "patrimony of humanity."

Along with the Prince, the European ecological apparatus directed from London through the umbrella of the Brazil Network organization, is fully activated around the case of a new "ecological martyr," the recently assassinated rural trade unionist, Expedito Ribeiro.

The assassination of Ribeiro was part of a pattern of events which makes clear that there is an effort to create cases in the Amazon that both attract international attention and maintain a state of permanent conflict in the area. This includes an attack on Feb. 26 by a column of 40 men from the Colombian Communist Party's

narco-terrorists, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), upon an outpost of the Brazilian Army located in an inhospitable region of the Amazon along their border. The FARC attack left three dead and nine wounded.

On the technology front per se, on March 1, the malthusian Minister of Science and Technology José Goldemberg and Foreign Relations Secretary General Marcos Azambuja reopened discussions in Washington on technology transfer around a list of products which Brazil seeks to obtain from the United States. The U.S. has shaped this round of negotiations with Brazil so that it follows the guidelines imposed by the White House last Dec. 14, when it announced imposition of stricter controls on exports which supposedly can be applied to the production of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons.

U.S. Special Trade Representative Carla Hills is insisting in these talks, however, that if Brazil hopes to obtain anything, it will have to recognize international pharmaceutical patents, a condition which until now the country has refused to accept. To increase pressure on this flank, on Feb. 24 a letter from Vice President Dan Quayle to President Fernando Collor de Mello, was made public. In the letter, Quayle, without any diplomatic prudence whatsoever, declared that the United States does not approve of the text of regulations for patents for the pharmaceutical industry published by the Brazilian executive, considering them as being too lenient.

For their parts, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank have joined the technological siege. According to the March 1 issue of *Folha de São Paulo*, these international agencies are now predicating their scientific and technological financial aid on having Brazil agree to recognize pharmaceutical patents.

It almost goes without saying these days, that in their negotiations over technology transfer, Washington has insisted on some kind of punishment being meted out against retired Air Force Brigadier Hugo Piva, for his participation in the development of Iraqi aerospace technology projects. In a campaign orchestrated by the CIA, Brigadier Piva has become the target of enormous pressures for his tenacious aspiration for his and other developing nations' economic development. On Feb. 22, *Folha de São Paulo* accused Piva of not only collaborating with Iraq, but also of offering Iran two long-range missile projects.

Brazil's Foreign Minister Francisco Rezek is backpeddling in the face of this pressure. In a March 3 interview with *O Estado de São Paulo*, he stated that, if Brazil had been an advanced-sector country, it would have joined the coalition to destroy Iraq. "We would have taken up arms to carry out by force what the U.N. Security Council had determined," he stated.

Worse still, Rezek announced that Brazil was willing to consider abandoning such prized projects as its nuclear submarine program. "If the U.S. government, whose favorable understanding of the Brazilian projects is important to our development of high technology, would react, let's say, to the nuclear submarine project, then we should negotiate, with even the possibility of discarding this idea not being excluded," Rezek stated.