

Venezuelan President in Brazil, leads club of criminal fools

by Silvia Palacios

While George Bush's popularity is plummeting in the United States, the Ibero-American President who has most tied his political fortunes to the U.S. and its collapsing economy—Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, known as CAP—just concluded a state visit to Brazil on behalf of Bush's "new world order." Along with Argentina's Carlos Menem and Mexico's Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Pérez leads the "Club of Fools" of Ibero-American heads of state who think they can advance the Anglo-American establishment's agenda, and prop up the international banking system's failing institutions, without unleashing political, economic, and military upheaval in virtually every country. Even while CAP was doing Bush's bidding in Brazil, social conflict in Venezuela forced his own defense minister to deny rumors of a military coup.

If it were only a matter of foolish behavior, one might laugh at the pathetic CAP. But the Venezuelan President, together with Bush's other fawning admirers among Ibero-American heads of state, will kill millions of people before they are through. In Brazil, Pérez called on all Ibero-American governments to unite behind the International Monetary Fund's demand that they "pay the interest and principal on their foreign debts." He issued wildly provocative attacks on Brazil's armed forces, at a moment of extreme tension in that institution's relations with the Collor de Mello government; and he fully backed the environmentalist movement's offensive against Brazilian sovereignty, expressed in the organizing for next year's "Eco-92" conference in Rio.

Collor de Mello, who has often been forced to consider his country's national interests in making both domestic and foreign policy decisions, jumped with abandon into Pérez's Club of Fools. The final communiqué issued by the two Presidents bound their nations to U.S. policy for the region, which among other things, contemplates imposing "limited sovereignty" over the strategically important Amazon region. For the first time, Brazilian foreign policy doffed its previous studied ambiguity, and fully joined Bush and Pérez's latest initiative to transform the Organization of American States (OAS) into a supranational force to intervene anywhere on the continent, as recently threatened against Haiti.

The communiqué included statements supporting two concrete instances of "limited sovereignty": the Brazilian

government's decision to create an enormous reserve for the Stone Age Yanomami Indian tribe, which Brazil's own Army cannot enter even for purposes of national defense; and, second, a call to replace Surinam's Army commander, under implied threat of economic or military aggression by the OAS to back up the demand.

'Protecting' the Yanomami Indians

The joint communiqué affirmed that "President Carlos Andrés Pérez emphasized the importance of the Brazilian government's recent decision to create a reserve for the Yanomami Indians, in an area of 9.4 million hectares." Several times during his visit, Pérez said that he was establishing a "Yanomami park" in Venezuela as well, which, in a moment of unguarded demagoguery, he referred to as "the patrimony of humanity."

CAP also provocatively backed the Collor government's decision to deny the Brazilian armed forces' request that the border of the Yanomami reserve leave a 150 km strip along the Venezuelan border that could be patrolled to ensure the integrity of the borders—a request ignored by Collor. In a Nov. 20 press conference, Pérez said that "such a security strip is useless, it makes no sense," and denied that there was any danger to Brazil from foreign countries to "internationalize the Amazon." The Venezuelan President even boasted that while the concept of "national security" had once prevailed in his own country, it was now outmoded.

Pérez went out of his way to insult the military of both nations, labeling Venezuela's as a mere institution of force, which fortunately has learned the lessons of the new world order. "I believe that in Latin America everything has changed quickly and for the better. Venezuela today has great pride in its Armed Forces, which once were an obstacle to the development of democracy, but now are integrated into democratic development." In Brazil, CAP added, "the same thing is happening."

The Surinam scenario

Within the last several months, the possibility of a NATO invasion of an Ibero-American country—the first such action since the 1982 Malvinas War between Britain and Argentina—has reemerged, in threats from the United States and

Europe against the former Dutch colony of Surinam, which borders Brazil and Venezuela. The issue is the U.S. Justice Department's charge that Surinamese Army Commander Col. Desi Bouterse is involved in drug trafficking, and that Surinam is fast becoming a big drugs transshipment corridor. The matter was discussed privately between Bush and Collor in Washington in June, and it came up again during Pérez's visit.

As in Panama earlier and now in Haiti, the Bush administration is using the charge of drug trafficking as an excuse to demand the installation of a pro-IMF "democracy." The campaign against Colonel Bouterse has an additional target: Brazil's sovereignty over the Amazon. Last August, the Dutch newspaper *NCR Handelsblad* revealed parts of this "Surinam scenario." It reported that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is circulating a file in Holland linking Colonel Bouterse with Colombian cocaine trafficking, a report which could be used to justify a foreign military intervention much like the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama to kidnap Gen. Manuel Noriega.

According to *NCR Handelsblad*, Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek favors military intervention to restore "order and democracy" in Surinam, and a resolution calling for such action passed the Dutch parliament last May. (Van den Broek is so democratic that as EC "peace envoy" he has handed over democratic Croatia to slaughter by communist Serbia.) The Aug. 17 issue of *Jane's Defense Weekly* reported that former Surinam Vice President Andre Haakmart, in exile in Amsterdam, recently said that "a task force" of OAS nations, backed by Netherlands, must be sent to Surinam, as the only way to keep the country from becoming the main exporter of cocaine in the region.

The Nov. 4 *Washington Post* ran a propaganda piece claiming that Surinam has become one of the major drug-trafficking centers, an important transshipment point in the cocaine route to Europe and to the United States. The article ignored the fact that Surinam lacks the communications and transportation infrastructure necessary for such a volume of drug trafficking.

Once in Surinam, whose jungles are contiguous with Brazil's Amazon region, NATO will have an onshore military base from which to threaten Brazil's vast Amazon territory, which has been the object of a worldwide campaign to limit Brazil's sovereignty over it. This is where the Brazilian Armed Forces' concern for defending national borders, CAP's opposition to that, and his backing for "democracy" in Surinam, all come together.

The rebirth of nationalism

In the case of the tremendous pressures being exerted on Brazil, especially the "ecological" ones, the only support Collor got was from Pérez, the Anglo-American press, and the handful of environmentalists in the Brazilian government, who work for the British oligarchy.

Indeed, within Brazil, the decision on the Yanomami is a fighting matter for various nationalist groups. As soon as Collor made public his Nov. 15 decree setting aside the Yanomami reserve, the Armed Forces reiterated that they were utterly opposed. The military commander of the Amazon, Gen. Antenor de Santa Cruz, famous for having publicized last year the unanimous evaluation of the Armed Forces on the dangers of internationalization of the Amazon, posed the question, "Once demarcated, who is going to control this vast territory?" On Nov. 21, he said, "This is crazy. The Yanomami reserve is larger than the state of Pernambuco." He explained that the Army has no problems with the Indians, but only with their "self-appointed spokesmen." He pointed out that there exists "an extraordinary international interest in the Yanomami case"—an interest related to "the mineral riches of the region, gold, cassiterite, diamonds, and other strategic minerals."

The Brazilian press has churned out articles criticizing the Yanomami reserve and tracing it to Bush's new order. "It is incredible that Collor de Mello, in the name of protecting the Yanomami, has given them a reserve of 9.2 million hectares [22 million acres], an area twice the size of Holland or Belgium, in a region of abundant mineral deposits. . . . All of this is a well-thought-out plot, with the participation of our homegrown elites, together with the Council of the Americas of David Rockefeller, the Trilateral Commission, restructured by Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, for the purpose of bringing about the submission [of the continent] to the new order," said one commentary published in *Jornal do Comercio*.

Ombro a Ombro, the widest-circulation periodical among the Armed Forces, devoted its November editorial to a defense of nationalism: "The resurgence of military nationalism, so-called by the media which are apparently angry at the phenomenon . . . is the fruit of the recognition that Brazilian patrimony is at risk. Sometimes it is [provoked] by international greed over the Amazon, and other times by resentment over unacceptable privatization of state sector companies. It is the awakening of people's awareness that, over time, Brazilian sweat has been transformed into the liquor of the rich countries, [which are] getting richer all the time."

Sen. José Sarney, himself a former President, has sniffed the political winds blowing against Collor. According to press reports, Sarney said that since Collor took office, the Armed Forces have twice ordered large-scale alerts, presumably warnings to the government. He may have been referring to maneuvers ordered by the Armed Forces in two states not far from the Yanomami reserve, the day after Collor issued his decree. Sarney further took aim at the way in which the Collor government is seeking artificially to include Brazil in the "First World" (of industrialized countries). "For this," Sarney said, "you have to have a winning hand, but Brazil doesn't have one."