

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Will Brazil take the Fujimori route?

As society sinks deeper into misery, military and civilian leaders are considering the Peruvian solution.

The main topic of conversation in the nation's capital of Brasilia today is whether Brazil will follow the example of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori. In April of last year, with the backing of the Armed Forces, Fujimori took a series of drastic measures, including the closing of Congress, to forestall the disintegration of his country.

Discussions of such an option are spreading through Brazilian political and military circles in response to the perceived imminence of a social convulsion, due mainly to the dramatic collapse in living standards, which the economic measures announced at the end of April by President Itamar Franco have done nothing to alleviate.

Indicative of the mood, on April 28, the president of the influential Military Club, Gen. Nilton Cerqueira, sent a letter to Senate President Humberto Lucena denouncing their decision to raise their own wages by 367%. "It is lamentable," wrote General Cerqueira, "that in a period in which the legal order and social conditions are going through a grave crisis, the senators, from whom one expects the virtues of moderation and prudence, approve a measure that makes things worse in such fashion."

An organization of retired officers called Guararapes published an ad in the national press entitled "The Brazilian Nation Demands," calling for the resignation of the chairman of the Chamber of Deputies because of charges of irregularities in the managing of administrative expenditures by the chamber.

Newspaper commentators are

now frequently reporting rumors of meetings of military men to evaluate the pace of national deterioration—the levels of hunger, unemployment, and inflation that are fast approaching the extreme limits of misery.

Making the loudest warning of a possible repetition in Brazil of the Fujimori model have been the representatives of the liberal oligarchy of São Paulo. *O Estado de São Paulo*, the leading newspaper of the city, carried an editorial on May 3 which made no attempt to hide the fear this circle feels. Prior to his economic measures speech in April, the editorial said, Itamar Franco "received much advice, including proposals for nationalization of the banking system, freezing prices and closing the National Congress. These came from some of the 27,000 letters he receives every month." Franco has now floated the idea "that the people who are writing him want a dictatorship," the editorial added.

Similar indications of how Brazilians view things were suggested by the April 21 plebiscite on whether the country wanted to continue with a presidential system, switch to a parliamentary one, or restore a monarchy. Thousands of citizens voided their ballots by writing in their own choices, such as "dictatorship," or "strong government."

O Estado de São Paulo columnist Marcio Moreira Alves, a leading propagandist of the Marxist "Theology of Liberation" ideology, and an apologist for Anglo-American plans to dismantle the Brazilian Armed Forces, wrote an article recently, "Searching for Fujimori," in which he revealed

that a booklet produced by the Peruvian government and entitled "Peru, the Path of National Reconstruction with a Democracy Capable of Defending Itself," was circulating widely among Brazil's civilian and military intellectuals. This booklet states the reasons that led Fujimori to adopt his extraordinary measures, and how they have fared since.

Continuing, Moreira Alves nervously states that the ideas contained in the booklet have already made an impression among top military men and civilians alike. "It is a fact that, in the last few weeks, the number of politicians, businessmen and reserve officers who have entreated top active duty officers to design a solution à la Fujimori has grown. . . . What was unthinkable just a few months ago is now beginning to be discussed."

The situation is further complicated by the decision of Franco and some of his ministers to set themselves on a collision course with the Armed Forces. In an interview with the Mexican daily *Excelsior*, Franco absurdly blamed the nation's extremely high debt solely on the military, making no mention of either the International Monetary Fund or the international banks. Also, Justice Minister Mauricio Correa is seeking to indemnify the relatives of political prisoners "disappeared" during the 1970s when the country faced a threat from communist guerrillas.

All of this unnecessarily opens a wound, since the matter was resolved a decade ago with an amnesty for both sides. By insisting on reviving the issue, the ministry is opening the door for measures such as those implemented by Argentine President Raúl Alfonsín when he began trials against top officers of the Armed Forces, accusing them of violating human rights, an action which merely served to divide the nation.