

Van Cott wrote: "In virtually every country in Latin America, indigenous cultures are challenging the legitimacy of nation-states that exercise dominion over their ancestral territory. They challenge not just the state's disposition of their lands, languages, resources, and heritage, but the very concept of national identity and national culture. . . . In Bolivia and Ecuador, federations of Indian peoples have challenged the legitimacy of the Hispanicized state, demanding that their governments acknowledge the local autonomy and cultural separateness of the indigenous peoples. As these nations and others in Latin America struggle to consolidate recent democratic gains, they must also address the indigenous groups' assertion of a variety of nationalisms, an assertion that requires a more tolerant and pluralistic model of democracy."

U.S. military occupation of Ibero-America

The deployment of U.S. military forces themselves into the region is quietly increasing. The invasion of Panama, and preparations to stay beyond the year 2000, are only the most visible increase. U.S. Special Forces have been deployed into Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Honduras, and Guyana, under the cover of carrying out anti-drug activities and training. In this way, U.S. troops have received on-the-ground training in irregular warfare in the Amazon region.

Although generally small in numbers, each operation has allowed the testing of a regional capability of broader scope. Exemplary of this was the deployment of 120 U.S. soldiers into the departments of Beni and Pando in the Amazon region of Bolivia in July 1992. The U.S. has reportedly requested several times that the government allow the construction of a U.S. military base in Bolivia. The official reason for this deployment is to build a school and a series of latrines—a job which might require one foreman and 15 workmen, of whom Bolivia itself has more than enough seeking work.

The head of the U.S. troops in Bolivia admitted the real purpose of the military deployment: "They are seeking to perfect their training. . . . We have communications with the U.S., with Panama, La Paz and Santa Cruz, where there are troops supporting this project," he said. The troops deployed were themselves members of elite forces which had operated before in Honduras, in the invasion of Panama, and in the Gulf war. According to a Bolivian congressional investigation on-site, the troops were carrying out exercises in rapid disembarkation in the Amazon. They also found that in a period of days, almost 100 tons of freight had been brought in from U.S. military bases in Panama on a great number of Galaxy and C-140 transport planes, providing a test of the efficiency of transporting massive amounts equipment into the Amazon region.

The number and size of such jungle exercises has expanded. In May 1993, some 7,000 U.S. Special Forces soldiers were deployed into Guyana for three weeks of jungle survival-training exercises—right on Guyana's border with Brazil.

Interview: Gen. Francisco Visconti

The fall of Pérez vindicates our revolt

The following are excerpts of a telephone interview conducted by EIR Ibero-American Editor Dennis Small with Venezuelan Air Force Gen. Francisco Visconti, on Sept. 15, 1993. General Visconti was one of the leaders of the Nov. 27, 1992 military uprising against President Carlos Andrés Pérez, and is currently in exile in Lima, Peru.

EIR: General Visconti, Carlos Andrés Pérez fell. Apart from all of the legal, technical, and other immediate political reasons, why did he fall?

Visconti: Carlos Andrés Pérez fell as the result of a chain of events which began on Feb. 27, 1989 with the famous spontaneous explosion of Caracas residents, of the Venezuelan people, against his economic policies. Later came the events of Feb. 4, 1992, the first military rebellion of the Venezuelan Army . . . and then there was the military rebellion of Nov. 27, 1992. Then followed the election of governors, municipal councils, and mayors, where there was open and public fraud in certain states.

Finally, there was the Supreme Court decision of May 20, 1993, and now, the final decision of the Venezuelan National Congress on Aug. 31, 1993, which separated Pérez from the presidency.

This whole series of events formed a chain resulting from the Venezuelan people's reaction to the crisis the country was facing and to the level of intolerable corruption that the Pérez government had generated. . . .

EIR: In view of this chain of events, what would you say in retrospect regarding the actions you took on Nov. 27?

Visconti: I would say that as a result of the 1992 military uprisings, the Venezuelan people awakened from the lethargy in which rule by the parties had submerged them since 1958. . . . We have publicly and repeatedly stated that all of these events give legitimacy to our actions, to our decision, and vindicate our actions in the 1992 military rebellions. . . .

EIR: And now what is going to happen?

Visconti: Through May 20, the internal pressure in Venezuelan society was very strong. Anything, any kind of explosion or demonstration, peaceful or violent, could have hap-

pened. When the Supreme Court ruled that the indictment against Pérez had standing and that the trial against him could proceed, a kind of escape valve for Venezuelan society was opened up. That extremely intense pressure which we were facing was significantly lowered, and society began to hope that a process of change, to reorganize Venezuelan society and reconstruct the country, had begun.

Dr. Ramón J. Velásquez stepped into the presidency, a man who has the confidence of Venezuelan society, but who unfortunately has not been allowed to take decisive action in the national reconstruction process. And why not? Because even after Pérez's separation from the presidency, there remain within the Venezuelan government and within different sectors of the Venezuelan state officials who continue to represent the interests of the Pérez government. . . .

What happened on May 20 was the first step, with President Pérez's exit from the presidency of the Republic; what is still lacking is to begin to carry out the whole process of national reconstruction. Of course, we don't expect it could all be done by Dr. Velásquez in the bare six to eight months in which he will be President. But it is significant that he has been much slower than expected, because he is being blocked by the continued presence in the government of these people who still represent the interests of the Carlos Andrés Pérez government.

EIR: Carlos Andrés Pérez was also possibly Wall Street's leading spokesman for the "new order" in all of Ibero-America, and he constantly came out in favor of limited sovereignty, in favor of the policies of the International Monetary Fund. What significance does Pérez's fall have for the rest of the continent?

Visconti: There is no doubt that Pérez had not a Venezuelan, but a personal international agenda in terms of wanting to become a supposed Latin American leader. With that personal agenda, in his search for international acclaim, Carlos Andrés Pérez sacrificed the interests of the Venezuelan people. He committed the resources and the prestige of the nation to achieving this personal international fame, to the detriment of the national interest, and even reached the extreme of becoming one of the principal promoters of limiting our national sovereignties.

In my judgment, that is a very serious crime: to compromise and put limits on something as sacred under international law as one's sovereignty and one's right to self-determination. Pérez goes along with those political groups behind the "new world order" which are trying to limit the sovereignty of the Third World, and he has become one of the most important schemers for these interests within Latin America.

He even pushed the creation of a supranational agency within the Organization of American States, which would decide on the evolution of the internal political and economic life of our nations, something absolutely inadmissible. Any-

thing that promotes limits on our sovereignty and the negation of international law guaranteeing the self-determination of peoples, is a crime against the very existence of our nations.

EIR: Part of the supranational project that Pérez sponsored also had to do with the so-called demilitarization or reduction of the continent's armed forces.

Visconti: Yes, absolutely. We must not lose sight of the fact that some politicians are bothered to some extent by the presence of the armed forces. Our Latin American armed forces practically gave birth to our nations. So, the very existence of the nations is linked to that which today are our armed forces. There is a kind of symbiosis between the armed forces and the existence of our nations, the result of the formative and evolutionary historical process that our nations have undergone. Anything that goes against or seeks the destruction of the national states is at variance with the interests of our armed forces. Any political action which puts international interests above national interests is going to clash with our armed forces, because such action represents an assault against the very existence of our nations, something that our armed forces would not be prepared to accept.

EIR: Our magazine has just published a book on this matter. It is called *El Complot para Aniquilar a las Fuerzas Armadas y a las Naciones de Iberoamérica* and is currently circulating throughout the continent. What do you think about this book?

Visconti: I have already had the opportunity to read it. It seems to be a very interesting book, very objective in its ideas, with the courage to say things as they are on the continent. It describes in no uncertain terms the danger threatening our national sovereignties and our right to self-determination, and details the attempts to progressively eliminate one of the key pillars of our nationality, which are our armed forces.

Because of the boldness, the objectivity, and the realism with which it states the facts, I find it very interesting and very necessary that it be read by members of the armed forces of the Latin American countries and, of course, by progressive politicians who have a clear awareness of what nationalism means, without falling into chauvinism or the like. Nationalism is best understood as the guarantee of our sovereignty and of our self-determination, and that the political and economic performance of our nations must be directed toward guaranteeing the common good of our citizens.

From this standpoint, it were very positive for this book to be read by military and political men alike, so as to become aware of what is reality and what are the international interests at play which threaten the existence of our nations.