

Report from Rio by Lorenzo Carrasco

Lula and the Armed Forces

The Workers Party is using a "divide and conquer" strategy against the military, in hope of avoiding Allende's fate.

Falling for the myth that the "end of the Cold War" after the 1989 toppling of the Berlin Wall eliminated the danger of Marxist or communist "revolutionary movements," many top officials of the Brazilian Armed Forces have permitted, and even encouraged, a rapprochement between that institution and various leaders of the Workers Party (PT), whose leader, Luís Inácio "Lula" da Silva, is considered the front-runner in Brazil's presidential election in October.

From the point of view of these officials, including Adm. Mario Cesar Flores, secretary of strategic affairs and nominally in charge of the national intelligence services, this rapprochement is an accommodation to the demands of the post-Cold War "new world order," especially the demand that the military institutions be restricted in their field of action and be subordinate to the so-called democratic institutions and the political parties. By this means, the traditional role of the Armed Forces, and especially of the Army, as power broker—a role they have played since the establishment of the republic in 1889—would end.

To achieve this, the leaders of the Marxist PT have adopted the tactic of offering to quadruple the military budget, in exchange for which the Armed Forces would agree to limit their role to defense from foreign aggression and to supporting the "democratic institutions," even if these should become compromised by interests contrary to those of the Brazilian nation.

Thus, on Jan. 31, the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* interviewed the PT's leading military mentor, Col. Gerardo Cavagnari (ret.), who urged the removal from the Constitution of "those little words 'law and order.'" The Armed Forces should only be charged with defense of the country and the constitutional powers. . . . The reference to law and order allows for the Armed Forces to be used at any point there is a threat to the law."

PT Congressman José Genoïno Neto, closely tied to Admiral Flores, published an article on Jan. 12 in *Folha de São Paulo* pushing the same idea. "The wages question and demands for technological upgrading [of the military] must be determined within a democratic state of law and in accordance with the capabilities of the country, on the assumption that the former military tutelage over and autonomy from the legitimate public authority are eliminated, along with the military's oft-expressed belief that they are the saviors of the country."

Congressman Genoïno then made it clear that what he is talking about is neutralizing the Armed Forces vis-à-vis Lula's hoped-for electoral victory. "The necessity of a democratic dialogue of the Congress, the political parties, and other sectors of society, with the Armed Forces, has nothing to do with the military's tendency to political interventions, nor with political alliances. Neutrality with respect to politicians and political parties, and respect for the Constitution by the Armed Forces, is a principle for our

democratic construction."

The PT's biggest fear is that Lula might get the same reception that President Salvador Allende and his Popular Unity party did in Chile in 1973, when he was overthrown by a military coup. "Lula picks up where Allende left off. Nineteen ninety-four is not the year zero for the Latin American left. The overthrow of Popular Unity can be found precisely here, between ourselves and our future," a top PT leader wrote in 1993 in the PT's magazine *Theory and Debate*. "It was in its relations with the Armed Forces that the institutional bias of Popular Unity showed itself most tragically. The rigid respect for the [military] hierarchy, the concessions granted the coup-makers, the absence of the most minimal intelligence capability . . . were the consequences of choosing to preserve the unity and the hierarchy of the Armed Forces, in the vain hope of neutralizing them. . . . None of Popular Unity's political acumen even minimally translated into military capacity."

Some sectors of the Brazilian political scene recognize the danger of a PT victory. Former President José Sarney told the press that a victory for Lula would usher in a reign of terror, because the PT and its trade union arm, the CUT, "constitute a power structure which has infiltrated the state apparatus and the entire social life" of the nation. It is an intelligence system that operates in the church, in the universities, in the police apparatus, in the central bank. It "knows no parallel and has no scruples."

According to Sarney, "a surrealist situation has been created: Since Lula commands the polls, the PT and CUT feed off the expectation of power. If this doesn't happen, his power structure will opt for violence under the certain pretext that it was a victim of electoral fraud."