

U.S. Arrogance Behind Ouster of UN's Bustani

by Silvia Palacios and Lorenzo Carrasco

The summary dismissal on April 22 of Brazilian Ambassador José Mauricio Bustani as Director General of the United Nations Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), displays the diplomatic stupidity of a Washington obsessed with launching a military attack against Iraq as soon as possible.

Since 1998, Bustani had been engaged in a diplomatic initiative to convince Iraq to join the OPCW. Since membership in the multilateral body requires acceptance of international inspectors, Iraqi membership would remove the pretext sought by the United States to justify a military attack. This, therefore, provoked the ire of the neo-conservative faction within the U.S. State Department. The seriousness and independence with which Bustani carried out his job had earned him unanimous re-election as head of the agency less than a year ago, with personal congratulations from Secretary of State Colin Powell. Through his personal effort, Bustani increased the number of countries accepting membership in OPCW from 87 to 145, including Iran and Sudan—the latter the victim of a U.S. military attack in 1998 against an alleged chemical weapons installation (which turned out to be a pharmaceuticals factory).

The U.S. official responsible for orchestrating Bustani's ouster on fabricated charges of "administrative mismanagement," was John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Matters. Bolton was Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations in George H.W. Bush's administration—a key post in orchestrating U.S. interests at the United Nations during the 1991 Gulf War. Bolton is a member of the American Enterprise Institute, and his career has been zealously nurtured by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

In an April 7 interview with the Brazilian daily *Folha de São Paulo*, Bustani described Bolton's confrontation with him. On March 1, Bolton appeared in his office in The Hague, the Netherlands, after travelling all night from Washington: "We want you to resign tomorrow, before the meeting with the Executive Council of the organization." Bustani replied: "It is obvious that you don't know me. I see no reason to resign." Bolton: "So be it. We are going to prevail, regardless."

After Bolton's threats had been fulfilled, Bustani commented on the arrogant attitude of the Bush government, in an interview in the May 1 issue of *Veja* magazine: "Unfortu-

nately, this is one of the forms of thinking which prevails in Washington. The world cannot be made this way. . . . It is impossible to impose the will of one country upon the rest of the world. The great empires ended up being destroyed because of this."

'Supremacism' in Washington

Despite the State Department's attempts to smooth over relations with Brazil around the Bustani case, the wounds are still open. The case is not seen as isolated from Washington's diplomatic chaos, especially toward the Western Hemisphere. The operation against Bustani occurred parallel to the putsch which tried to overthrow the mentally unbalanced Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in early April, and U.S. complicity with the fascist actions of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's regime against the the Palestinian people. The influential, usually pro-American newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* editorialized on April 21: "Even the reluctance to work to put an end to the Middle East conflict reflects an assumed attitude, which seeks to be compatible with the dominant view of what American interests are in the region, in this case, the automatic alignment with Israel. In reality, the American superpower acts in coherence with the arrogant worldview of the neo-conservatives in power in Washington, the policy of what could be called 'supremacism.'

"We are dealing with the affirmation of an imperial-style hegemony, however disagreeable that may be to some," the editorial continued. "For the Republican establishment, for example, the criticism of the role played by the United States in the Venezuelan crisis is of little importance. . . . The planned ouster of Brazilian diplomat José Bustani is also supremacism. The United States accused him of partiality. But it is because he was not a 'yes-man' that the Americans orchestrated his overthrow. . . . Then, the Americans ask why they are so little loved in the world."

Another message from the Brazilian establishment was delivered by journalist Miriam Leitão—known as an unofficial spokesman of the Presidential Palace—in her *O Globo* column of April 28. She criticized U.S. policy, saying that "so far, the region has been either relegated to oblivion, or handed over to the logic of the anti-Castro Cubans, who hold various key posts. As if this vast region, with its potentials, differences, and dilemmas, were merely the island which for 40 years has been the stone in the U.S. government's shoe. . . . In the case of Bustani, the Americans had to do their dirty work right to the end. They had to be explicit in their authoritarianism. . . . Brazil wants to look forward, but it is doubtful that it will be possible to have a more tranquil relationship with the United States of George W. Bush, which has surpassed itself in its ability to create problems."

By anti-Castro Cubans, Leitão was referring to Otto Reich and Lino Gutiérrez, the two leading officials in the State Department, both Iran-Contra veterans, who participated in the machinations for the Venezuelan coup.