

Le Monde, March 3

“Argentina and Uruguay React Sharply to Washington’s Reduction of Military Aid,” by Jean-Pierre Clerc:

Considering the nature of their regimes, these two countries can’t afford to promote their quarrel with Washington. The hyper-liberal political economy which prevails on both sides of the Rio de la Plata necessitates good relations with the US, the main master of private investments and of the credit of international financing organisms. The reaction of Uruguay where the economic crisis is very deep is even less credible from this point of view.

...Washington knows the eternal and present limits of the latinos.

Carter Will No Longer Be Blamed For Southern Cone Repression

The following excerpts are from an interview with an American historian specializing in Brazilian military history.

Q: Doesn’t Carter’s move strengthen the right wing in Latin America, instead of promoting democracy?

A: The present strengthening of the right-wing should be viewed as part of a transitional situation of hysterical right-wing reaction to the United States. But they won’t be able to say any more that they are being supported by the United States...

Q: There appears to be coalescing an alliance of the Southern Cone governments against the United States. Is there any chance that they could be provoked so much as to break with US economic hegemony?

A: Yes, Brazil and Argentina are coming closer together against the United States. But it can’t last. Besides, if the United States doesn’t finance them, who will? Are they gonna get support from the Soviets? No, they can’t. They’re anti-communists.

Brazil Does Not Fear U.S. Economic Pressure

In the conservative daily O Estado de Sao Paulo Feb. 25, well-informed columnist Carlos Chagas quotes at length from an interview he had with “one of the most important presidential aides on the ministerial level.” The following statements from that interview are probably from Foreign Minister da Silveira or his immediate circle.

Brazil doesn’t believe, but most importantly, doesn’t fear whatever economic or financial pressures the United States might generate to try to change our position on the nuclear question...Before 1964, despite all the leftist and anti-American postures of the Brazilian government, we did not have the slightest real capacity to confront pressures. We were completely vulnerable. Today, things have changed, even though as members of the Western and capitalist system, we do not intend to get into fights with our neighbors in North America. We are now, however, in condition to protect our sovereignty and fight for our interests. The time for blind obedience has ended.

...the Brazilian government does not believe that the U.S. would start playing with economic pressures, which would be harmful not only to the relation between the two countries, but also for the entire Western community.

...In any case, the government does not fear attempts to freeze our credit or impede our financing from international credit institutions. It just happens that the World Bank, for example...does not do us any favors. They give us credit because we religiously meet our commitments to repay fully interest and principle. Therefore, why would financial entities associated with the World Bank want to get rid of such a good partner?

...The same reasoning applies to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The majority of its operations are with Brazil, one of the only countries on the continent in condition to contract large loans and repay them properly. To suspend operations with Brazil would result in the IDB’s stagnation and even endanger it.

Mass Strike Challenges World Bank Rule In Colombia

COLOMBIA

Colombia, long touted as one of the few remaining “democracies” in Latin America, is today rapidly heading toward full-scale militarization, Chile-style. In the past days, the Colombian government has assumed a deliberately intransigent position in the face of working class demands for wage increases and an end to inflation, thus forcing a mass strike wave which it intends to meet head on with full military force. The govern-

ment’s deliberate confrontation strategy marks the launching of Phase Two of Finance Minister Espinosa’s announced plans for the imposition of a world Bank-dictated “war economy:” i.e., *political* war against the working class.

The government’s provocative offer earlier this month of an 18 percent wage increase, in the face of an officially acknowledged two-year cost of living increase of 60 percent, has predictably touched off waves of protest in all sectors of the working class. A 100,000-strong protest march in the capital city of Bogota last week registered the rage of 7,000 oil workers from the state company Ecopetrol, over 200,000 teachers, 60,000 health workers, con-

struction and judicial workers, and a coalition of 60 state sector unions representing another 200,000 workers. In addition to a call for a 50 percent hike in the minimum wage, the demonstration demanded an end to the two-year state of siege and a solution to the soaring cost of living.

The first to walk off the job this week were 60,000 hospital workers demanding several months of unpaid wages due them. They were immediately followed by the 200,000 workers grouped in CITE, the Interunion Committee of State Employees. CITE has charged the government with deliberately attempting to destroy the union movement by doing away with the right to strike and to collective bargaining under the anti-labor "public employees code." Teachers in several departments around the country are also out demanding back wages and a wage increase to keep pace with the 30 percent yearly inflation rate. Steel, oil telecommunications, construction, judicial and other sectors are all poised to strike as well.

The economic crunch behind these workers' protests is emphasized in a report published last month in the Colombian journal *Sintesis Economica*, which said that one kilo of meat in Colombia now costs the equivalent of eight hours of labor, and a kilo of bread at least four hours! The government's decision to allow meat prices to rise 12-15 percent this week was taken by the angry workers as the ultimate provocation.

The same deliberate government provocation was evident in the public declarations this week of the director of Ecopetrol, the huge state-owned oil and petrochemical company. Despite weeks of open concern expressed in the press and elsewhere over the anticipated effects of a national oil workers' strike, Ecopetrol's director blithely declared that such a strike, were it to occur, "would not be very serious." He went on to assert that the leadership of the oil workers' union had been

seized by communist extremists who had forced a commitment to strike upon an unwilling rank-and-file. His implications were clear: any workers who go out on strike will automatically be considered communists, and treated to the same repressive measures currently meted out to communists in the rural areas of the country — brutal Chilean-style persecution, torture and assassination.

In preparation for the provoked strike confrontation, the government has ordered a full-scale military occupation of the city of Barrancabermeja, including stocking up on sufficient food, clothing and medicines to supply a strike-breaking force for 75 days. Maoist countergangs and agent provocateurs have heavily infiltrated the oil workers' union to insure the kind of anarchist provocations required to "justify" the planned military crack-down.

The government's "non-negotiable" stand on labor has already been demonstrated with the striking hospital workers. In several instances, combined assaults of security police and marines were ordered by the government to dislodge workers from hospitals they were occupying. Numerous arrests and extensive damage to the hospitals were all part of the violent scenario.

The government's undisguised strategy of full-scale war measures to impose a full-scale war economy is rapidly alienating the workers who constitute the base of the pro-government UTC and CTC labor confederation. In particular, the UTC and CTC leaderships fear a massive flight of their membership to the Communist Party-led CSTC, which has demonstrated both its capacity and willingness to fight against the austerity conditions. The UTC has already been threatened with a revolt from a majority opposition faction within its ranks which denounced the UTC executive committee for endorsing a political candidate who had "absolutely nothing to say about labor's concerns."

U.S. Reporters Find Cubans 'Outraged' By Carter Remarks On Human Rights

CUBA

Despite lip-service on the part of the Carter Administration to the idea of rapprochement with Cuba, every knowledgeable source indicates that Carter's Cuba diplomacy is working in exactly the opposite direction.

Benjamin Bradlee, a senior editor of the *Washington Post*, reported this week after returning from Cuba that President Castro and Cuban diplomats generally are "appalled" and "outraged" by President Carter's remarks about human rights and the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. In several hours of talks, President

Castro made it quite clear to Bradlee that Cuba feels it has nothing to learn about human rights from the country which perpetrated the Vietnam war and planned the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

President Castro was "steaming," Bradlee reports, about last month's provocative meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and several prominent anti-Castro Cuban exiles, including the commander of the Central Intelligence Agency's Bay of Pigs invasion. Castro emphasized to Bradlee that these individuals represent to Cubans everything that was corrupt about pre-revolutionary Cuba. Bradlee reported: "Castro said he could not imagine the names of three Americans whose consultations with the Cuban minister of foreign affairs would be comparably absurd."