

The strategic stakes in the Malvinas question

by Robyn Quijano, Latin America Editor

President Reagan was given a stiff warning April 30 of humiliations to come if he refuses to wield American might against the British colonialist invasion of the Malvinas Islands. Eighteen of 21 nations, the overwhelming majority of Latin America, voted up Argentina's request for consultations under the rubric of the Rio Treaty, the security pact that echoes the U.S. military obligations of the Monroe Doctrine to defend the Western Hemisphere from outside aggression.

As the United States abstained from the vote—part of a pitiful minority of three nations—British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym politely announced that it would hardly be fair to force President Reagan to *openly* back the British. Pym traveled to Washington April 22 as the British fleet approached the Western Hemisphere, to try to insure that any last thought the President might have of imposing the Monroe Doctrine against Britain's blatant colonial aggression would be put to rest—along with the remnants of the United States' status as a sovereign nation-state and a world power.

The invoking of the Rio Treaty at the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States called the question on the United States' supposedly neutral stand in the crisis. America's abstention made Secretary of State Alexander Haig's transparently one-sided shuttle diplomacy for the Queen official U.S. policy. With this first official capitulation to the Crown, the humiliation of the United States, its isolation and impotence to act as anything but "a cock boat in the wake of a British man of war," has begun.

The United States is on the verge of losing all influ-

ence among all the nations of Latin America; a shooting war is set to erupt between the British and the Argentines that would guarantee that result. And its consequences would go far beyond the Western Hemisphere, as Reagan is already being tested around the globe, beginning with the massive Israeli bombing of Lebanon on April 21.

As Lyndon LaRouche of the National Democratic Policy Committee analyzed this process on April 7, "During the period the United States and Britain are occupied with war in this hemisphere, it is nearly certain that a chain reaction will be unleashed in the Middle East. At some time beginning on or about April 26, Israel will invade Lebanon in force, acting under secret agreements reached earlier between Israel's government and President Hafez Assad of Syria."

LaRouche's warning that the world's hotspots would careen out of control is already being borne out.

Haig versus Latin America

The Argentines initiated procedures to invoke the Rio Treaty on April 19, while Alexander Haig was flying back to Washington after four days of negotiations in Buenos Aires. The Argentine action was widely recognized as a rebuff of Haig's shuttle diplomacy, and a warning to Washington that the Argentines would not agree to Haig's presentation of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's non-negotiable demand that "no first step can be taken until Argentinian withdrawal" from the islands. In invoking the Rio Treaty, the Argentine government sent a direct message to Presi-

dent Reagan that choosing so-called NATO treaty obligations to Great Britain over actual U.S. obligations to the Western Hemisphere would be costly.

According to Latin American press accounts, Argentina's President Galtieri spoke to President Reagan by phone before Haig arrived and during the negotiations. The Argentines considered Haig a "negotiator for Britain, especially when he made a reference to Anglo-American treaty obligations."

The Argentine government's desire to negotiate directly with Reagan was based on its understanding that Haig does not always represent the President. A rumor had circulated during Haig's shuttling that Reagan might ask for Haig's resignation because he had refused to follow presidential orders. Why, then, is Reagan apparently capitulating to the British now?

Prime Minister Thatcher is reported to have demanded that Reagan "be done with this even-handedness" and fall into line behind Britain, or else.

The "or else" was spelled out by the London *Sunday Telegraph*, which threatened that a U.S. failure to back Britain would force Western Europe to break militarily with the United States and form an independent power bloc. "America's refusal to defend Britain need not be as disastrous as it sounds if anti-Americanism can be transmuted into robust pro-Europeanism," wrote columnist Peregrine Worsthorne.

This is the threat that has been used to club Reagan into line. To make sure he gets the point, the British press has begun to attack the President personally as the captive of "narrow-minded, southern-dominated isolationists."

Meanwhile, the Eastern Establishment media in the United States have worked overtime in praise of the British monarchy. The *Washington Post* editorialized, "Now that Argentina has made American mediation pointless, the administration will be free to take a position based on alliance considerations"—that is, openly back the British.

Syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft, in a piece headlined "On Behalf of Britain," attacked the "totalitarian" Argentine government while fawning over the beauties of British colonialism. Writing the American Revolution against the British Crown out of world history, Kraft gushed, "So intimate are the connections, so ingrained the habits of cooperation, that even without trying, the United States and Britain work together."

But the mood is quite different in Latin American capitals. There NDPC demonstrations in the U.S. have been covered widely in the mass media as the action of "the Democratic Party faction supporting the Monroe Doctrine."

The Venezuelan daily *El Universal* reported April 14 "There is now emerging in the United States popular support for Argentina's cause. The influential politician

LaRouche has issued a declaration calling on the Reagan administration to apply the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 . . ." *Diario de Caracas*, another Venezuelan daily warned editorially that the United States has set a "nefarious precedent" by not applying the Monroe Doctrine to stop the British fleet from entering the Western Hemisphere, and will not be able to apply it if Soviet ships enter Caribbean waters.

Latin America demands sovereignty

The lineup of Latin American nations behind Argentina shows that these countries know precisely what Great Britain is up to, and remember well what the Monroe Doctrine should be—a guarantee of their national sovereignty against oligarchical intervention.

Despite the British railroads through the United Nations and OAS, all the major South American nations but Chile agree on Argentina's sovereignty over the Malvinas. Most vehement has been Venezuela, whose Foreign Minister Ambrano raised the Drago Doctrine in his speech to the United Nations. The Drago Doctrine, developed by an Argentine jurist to counter the so-called Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (Teddy Roosevelt's 1902 justification of U.S. military action in Venezuela to collect debt for Great Britain), states that no power can use force to attempt to collect foreign debt. The Drago Doctrine, like the Monroe Doctrine and the Rio treaty, is considered part of hemispheric international law.

Venezuela has also led a move within the Latin American Economic System to impose economic sanctions on Britain. This could include cancellation of oil concessions and plane purchases. On this flank, however, Argentina's Latin America allies and potential allies remain extremely vulnerable: and the economic warfare front is where Britain has pressed its attack.

After five days of what may have been the most intensive political pistol-whipping in the history of the European Community, all ten EC countries agreed on April 17 to a ban on all imports from Argentina. Britain is known to be spreading the word that these sanctions can be extended to those countries which aid Argentina, and that all such countries face potential cutoffs of credit.

Mexico and Brazil have been extremely cautious about what they say or do in support of the Argentines. Brazil is already behind on gathering the enormous \$17 billion in loans that it needs this year, with circles around Finance Minister Delfim Neto arguing that the only way to get the loans is to do Britain's bidding. Following the forced devaluation of its peso in March, Mexico now also faces the destruction of its development programs and political destabilization, at the hands of the same interests which have sent warships steaming into the South Atlantic.