

Brazilian military resists overthrow

by Silvia Palacios and Lorenzo Carrasco

Brazil has a land area bigger than the continental United States, a population of 130 million, vast wealth in mineral resources, and has recently closed the nuclear fuel cycle. For those reasons, there is a core of nationalists in the Brazilian military who are convinced that Brazil can become a great nation—and that is why the international bankers and their mullah-loving friends in the U.S. “secret government,” are out to undermine the Brazilian Armed Forces and render them politically impotent.

Moscow, of course, could not agree more with this goal.

The point was made recently by the new head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, Brig. Paulo Roberto Camarinha, to an Oct. 23 meeting of Brazilian industrialists: “Historically, Brazil has mounted a permanent battle to avoid being turned into a supplier of raw materials, to preserve the state oil monopoly, to preserve part of the computer market, and to exercise equality of rights in relation to access to technological dominion over the nuclear cycle and other areas of national development, versus the policies of groups and the great world powers.”

The concerns of Brazil’s enemies—at home and abroad—are centered around the fact that the Army command has moved away from the circle of “free enterprise” friends of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Vernon Walters, and drawn closer to the “legalist” faction which made the nation’s transition to democracy possible. That “legalist” faction has expressed its commitment to the technological modernization of Brazil, and especially to the modernization of the Armed Forces.

The signs of an effort to wreck the military, or provoke them into a coup, have come thick and fast:

- In its 999th edition, *Veja* magazine published the alleged statements of two army officials admitting to involvement in a supposed terrorist plot to bomb Rio de Janeiro military installations, in protest against inadequate wage policies. *Veja* is the propaganda outlet in Brazil for the policies of the U.S. “secret, parallel government” which ran the Iran/Contra affair.

- Immediately, the Eastern Military Command issued a communiqué: “Without a doubt, news of this sort only serves to create uneasiness in public opinion, and presents an absolutely untrue picture of the area of the Eastern Military Command.” Accompanying the communiqué were the sworn

statements of the two named army officials, denying any contact with the magazine *Veja*.

- At an impromptu press conference in front of the Planalto presidential palace on Oct. 27, Brazilian Army Minister Gen. Leonidas Pires Gonçalves denounced those forces—left, right, domestic, and foreign—“which are not interested in the democratic transition,” as responsible for the campaign of rumors and intrigues surrounding the Armed Forces. Among others, General Pires cited the magazine *Veja*.

- The Army Minister’s statements received the immediate backing of Ulises Guimaraes, president of the ruling PMDB party and president of the National Constituent Assembly, as well as of various senators and governors of the PMDB.

- Four days after his press declaration, Gen. Leonidas Pires received a show of support from 50 generals and 400 high-ranking military officials who met him at the Brasilia airport upon his departure on an official visit to Britain. The organizer of the gathering, Gen. Jorge Frederico Machado de Sant’Anna, declared that the goal was “to show our unity and cohesion at a time when our commander was unjustly criticized in a campaign to divide the army. I believe that this puts an end to the intrigues.”

- Another incident involved the statements of retired Colonel Geraldo Cavagnari, director of the Center of Strategic Studies of the University of Campinas, headquarters of the Pugwash Conferences in Brazil. Cavagnari had charged that Army Minister Gen. Leonidas Pires “doesn’t really have the troops under his control.” In his statement to the press, the minister responded: “The way to destabilize a service like ours is to go after its commanders, especially the number one commander, who is the Army Minister. You see someone, with the greatest impudence, coming out saying that the Army Minister doesn’t command the troops. I tell him . . . whomever wants to test if I command the troops or not, let him, because he is going to regret it.”

The next day, Colonel Cavagnari was arrested.

The only earlier incident in which the “command” of the Army Minister was tested, was during a reception given for former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, at the home of Brazilian businessman Israel Klabin. Kissinger provocatively asked the minister if the President of the Republic “heeded his opinions,” to which the minister dryly replied: “The President is who decides.” Later, the minister publicly commented that “this guy must think we are a republicquette.”

With his categorical response that “nothing is going to endanger the process of democratic transition,” Gen. Leonidas Pires on Oct. 27 called a halt to attempts to fragment the armed forces: “You can be sure of one thing: The armed forces are united, the army is united, the orders of the minister will be fully met, at the moment they are given. Whoever wants to test that may do so.”

Leonidas Pires denied rumors of a military coup: “This [rumor] of a coup is unfounded. . . . We live in an era of hurricanes. First in economics, then in politics. . . . Now it

is the military's turn. I think that the majority of these things that are happening were fabricated. . . . We must recognize [that] the behavior of the Armed Forces in the past two and a half years . . . has encouraged the ongoing political transition. . . . There are people who don't like this behavior, and who try—through domestic or foreign actions—to attack us.”

The “hurricane” in economics has not left Brazil's armed services unaffected. On Oct. 22, an army captain and 50 troops seized the town hall of Apucarana, in Parana state,

Brazil's enemies worry because the Army command has moved away from the “free enterprise” friends of Vernon Walters, and toward the “legalist” faction that made the transition to democracy possible.

1,000 kilometers south of Río. Captain Luis Fernando Walter de Almeida read a statement describing his action as a protest against the starvation wages the military troops have been receiving. Recent economic studies reveal that military officials' wages have been reduced by two-thirds over the past seven years.

President Sarney responded the next day with a 128% increase in military wages.

That incident reflects the fact that the military—like every other sector of Brazilian society—is suffering the impact of brutal austerity conditions imposed under creditor bank dictates. Within the military itself, there are still remnants of the pro-International Monetary Fund elements associated with Vernon Walters, the U. S. intelligence operative and “Brazil hand” who is now Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, and with former planning minister Delfim Netto and his President, General Figueiredo.

But the majority is dedicated to economic growth to assure the transition to democracy. Enemies of the military institution have seized on such real problems to fabricate crises.

The destabilizers' motives

It is no accident that *Veja* magazine has lent itself as the vehicle for destabilization of the Brazilian Armed Forces, given that its director Roberto Civita, together with intimate friends Henry Kissinger and Israel Klabin, are members of the so-called Inter-American Dialogue, the institution which, in tandem with the Soviet publication *América Latina* (see page 46), has promoted the weakening of Ibero-America's

armed forces.

The April 1986 report of the Inter-American Dialogue—which Civita helped prepare, along with such Trilateral Commission associates as McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and Robert McNamara, etc.—outlines specific policy recommendations which include:

1) “Selective legalization” of drugs, because “Waging war on drugs costs money. . . . More important, it will inevitably result in the loss of jobs, income, and foreign exchange that the drug trade provides.”

2) Formalizing the right of the Soviet Union to express itself on matters of the Western Hemisphere. Civita has taken this especially to heart, becoming the principal propagandist of Gorbachov's *perestroika* in Brazil.

3) Constructing a “democratic network” with sufficient power to “oppose the communists and the military,” whom the authors describe as equally enemies of “pluralist democracy.”

The Dialogue report clearly implies that the weakening of Ibero-America's militaries is a key component of the State Department's “democracy” strategy, at the same time that it encourages a permanent policy of U. S. consultation with the Soviets on matters pertaining to the Western Hemisphere.

On June 13, 1986, in a speech before the Inter-American Defense College entitled “A Democratic Vision of Security,” U. S. Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams had the same anti-military pitch: “Enlargement of military forces to protect democratic institutions can threaten those very institutions. . . .”

The execution of such an anti-military policy is prescribed in detail in Special Report No. 158 of the U. S. State Department: “Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Promise and the Challenge,” issued in March of this year: “The pervasiveness of hierarchical structures with deep historic and cultural roots has created ingrained authoritarian habits” in Ibero-America, which prevent “pluralist democracy.” Therefore, Report No. 158 demands that “religious and military institutions—the cross and the sword” of the Spanish conquest, and key pillars of traditional order ever since,” should be forced to yield ground.

It also specifies that “legal provisions prohibiting or limiting military participation in politics are more common, as are the arrangements increasing civilian participation in matters previously reserved to the military. . . . the genuine defense of democracy should be carried out without unnecessary or indiscriminate force.”

Another mouthpiece of the international banks in Brazil, *Jornal do Brasil*, stated this line of thinking rather succinctly in its Sept. 20, 1987 editorial: “Brazilian society was closely influenced by two driving forces, which are Catholic thought and the ideas disseminated by participation of the army since the proclamation of the Republic in the stratification of anti-liberal thinking. . . . Nationalization allowed the lay entities of the Church and of military thinking to guide themselves by prejudices against the market economy.”