

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

The return of the Empire

The Bragança family is plotting to get back its throne, with the help of the schism in the Catholic Church—and parliamentary idiocy.

The excommunication on June 30 of French Archbishop Marcel Lefèbvre and of his principal representative in South America, Brazilian Bishop Antônio Castro Mayer will have profound repercussions in Brazil, due to the close links between Lefèbvre's "traditionalist" movement and the Bragança family, which ruled the Brazilian Empire from Independence in 1822 until Brazil became a republic in 1889. Pope John Paul II excommunicated them after they ordained four bishops, breaking an agreement they had made with the Vatican in May.

The Bragança family, part of Europe's black nobility, has sponsored the "traditionalist" religious movement as part of its medium-term strategy for reestablishing the monarchy in Brazil. They also created the Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) gnostic sect, to broaden their base of political support. During the past few years, the Braganças erected, and today control, the most aggressive bastion of "traditionalism" on the continent and perhaps the world.

The paramilitary TFP movement became embarrassing for the Braganças in the early 1980s, when the Brazilian weekly *Manchete* ran photos which it said showed TFP members using a photograph of Pope John Paul II for target practice.

After the Brazilian Catholic Church hierarchy explicitly condemned TFP, the Bragança family, which portrays itself as devout Catholics, created, for public consumption, an apparent separation between

the Lefèbvrism movement and the TFP.

But, in reality, they never stopped giving full support to Tradition, Family, and Property. Thus, in 1984, Bishop Castro Mayer, a TFP founder, broke with the group. He left it under the control of his colleague Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, another of its founders. During this time, TFP has kept Prince Luiz Orleans e Bragança as its most prominent member. He considers himself in line for the dynastic succession to the Brazilian throne, in the hypothetical future.

Now that Lefèbvre's excommunication has been consummated, the façade of supposed differences will fall and TFP and the Lefèbvrism movement will once again be seen in impudent embrace. One indication of this was the editorial in the daily *O Estado de São Paulo* July 2. It defended Lefèbvre and blamed Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II as representatives of the "modernist heresy." "Monsignor Lefèbvre, in the company of only Dom Antônio Castro Mayer, refused to join in the new theological festival . . . while all the members of the world bishopry came to point to him as the one responsible for the division of the Church, accusing him for the schism that they themselves caused."

That daily represents the rotten old São Paulo coffee baron oligarchy, and is the mouthpiece of TFP founder Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira.

Also joining in bashing the Pope for excommunicating Lefèbvre was *Veja* magazine. This may seem a little strange. Its owner, Roberto Civita,

also publishes the Brazilian edition of *Playboy*, hardly the public fare of Brazil's traditionalists. Civita has his own reasons for wanting to destroy the moral power of the Catholic Church. He is a member of the Inter-American Dialogue, whose latest annual conference called for selective legalization of narcotics and for destroying the Catholic Church.

Although the excommunication of Lefèbvre and Castro Mayer seems to be a sharp blow to the Braganças' hopes for the restoration of the monarchy, they are far from being defeated. Castro Mayer has 23 loyal priests and 40,000 faithful. The TFP continues to increase its influence in the Brazilian countryside.

The imperial family's aspirations were given their biggest boost on June 2 by the Constitutional Convention. It approved holding a plebiscite in 1993 on whether Brazil should remain a republic or become a monarchy. The free radio and television time preceding the vote would permit the monarchists to campaign for "a parliamentary monarchy as the most viable alternative for all the country's crises," as Prince Luiz Orleans e Bragança put it to the daily *O Globo* June 7. "The crisis will help our victory," declared Aldo Campagnola, the general secretary of the Brazilian Institute of Monarchical Studies, who claims to have 2 million sympathizers in the far south of Brazil alone.

Never before have the rotten European oligarchy and their despicable Bragança brethren gotten so far in their attempts to reverse the republican triumph of 1889 and put themselves back on the throne of the Brazilian Empire. That empire, it may be recalled, was created in 1822 by the Holy Alliance, under the personal supervision of Prince Metternich, Henry Kissinger's intellectual model.