

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Moscow dazzles Brazil

Samney's visit to the Soviet Union was marked by unusual Russian fanfare; what does Gorbachov have up his sleeve?

Soviet diplomacy outdid itself in the unusual red-carpet treatment it gave visiting Brazilian President José Sarney and his entourage, during his official tour Oct. 19-21. This is the first time in this century that a Brazilian head of state has visited the Soviet Union; the last time was by the Braganza Emperor Pedro II.

During the entire visit, Russian treatment of the Ibero-American President was conspicuously purged of the standard trappings of Communism, Marxism-Leninism, "Third Worldists of the world unite!" and all the other slogans regularly employed in its foreign policy by the Muscovite caste, most assuredly to impress the Brazilian military men in the entourage. They were not even taken on the obligatory tour of Lenin's Tomb. Rather, the Soviets revealed themselves in all their imperial splendor, as the intended masters of the Third Rome.

The imperial salons of the Kremlin were opened to receive their South American guests; the most splendid were chosen to celebrate the official ceremonies, the same ones used by the czars to receive their special invitees; a military ceremony to honor the Unknown Soldier demonstrated a well-disciplined, arrogant army.

In sum, it was the *Russian* soul, and not its "proletarian" one, which dominated the trip that opened a new era in Brazilian-Soviet relations. President Sarney described it as "the end of any kind of ideological trappings in Brazil's relations with any other na-

tion of the world." According to the *Washington Post*, Sarney was "so effusive in his praise of Gorbachov that the Soviet leader felt compelled to cut him short."

The Sarney-Gorbachov meetings ended with the issuance of a joint political declaration, a triumph of Russian diplomacy entitled "Declaration on the Principles of Interaction in Favor of Peace and International Cooperation." And although it specifies that it is not directed "against anyone," it overwhelmingly targets the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Both nations declare their recognition of "the imperative of the non-militarization of outer space."

Suffused with pacifism, the joint declaration commits both the Soviet Union and Brazil to "a policy of political consultation," to exchange evaluations on the most pressing contemporary issues. To begin that process of interchange of ideas, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has arranged for a return trip to Moscow next year for his Brazilian counterpart, Roberto Abreu Sodre.

Independent of the handful of vague trade treaties signed during the visit, the unmistakable conclusion is that the Brazilian government agreed to serve as Moscow's interlocutor in South America.

Some of the agreements that were reached included:

- exchange of military attachés;
- creation of a reciprocal credit line to finance imports and exports to

the tune of \$20 million;

- cooperation in space, specifically research into rocket propulsion. In the meeting between foreign ministers, the Brazilian insisted that Brazil urgently needs Soviet technology for rocket motors;

- establishment of consulates in Leningrad and Rio de Janeiro.

Throughout the Sarney visit, what Soviet diplomacy—and the Gorbachov couple—did was to consciously manipulate the imperial remnants that underly Itamaraty (Brazil's foreign ministry), responsible for orchestrating the Sarney trip to Moscow.

Throwing an interesting light on the Sarney trip vis-à-vis Soviet official policy toward Ibero-America was Victor Volski, director of the Latin American Institute, who preceded Sarney's trip to Moscow by addressing a seminar on *perestroika* in Rio de Janeiro, where he confessed that his country's priority in international relations was with the United States, and only secondarily with Latin America. The question then is why this special treatment for Brazil?

The answer is not difficult to discern if one reads for oneself the texts of Russian foreign policy, such as the magazine *América Latina*. In this year's August issue, Boris Martinov, considered an expert on such figures of Brazilian imperial policy from the past century as the Baron de Rio Branco, writes that what is important about the civilian government that was inaugurated in Brazil in 1985, is that Itamaraty was finally freed of the "marriage" it was forced to maintain with the "pragmatic military" over the course of 20 years of military rule in the country. Now, says Martinov, it is finally possible to "bring the greatest country of the continent out of the periphery and toward a new level of presence in world politics."