

Report from Rio by Geraldo Lino

The Brazil that can say yes

President Collor was prepared to concede everything on his recent visit to Washington—if the nationalists at home had let him.

Just as the Brazilian edition of the book *The Japan That Can Say No*, by Shintaro Ishihara, was arriving in local bookstores, in which the author calls for his country to seek greater independence from the U.S., the visit of Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello to Washington, from June 17-20, demonstrated that this country's foreign policy is based on an exactly opposite principle.

The Collor administration's willingness to align itself fully with Washington was clear in the preparations for the presidential trip, when the orders from Itamaraty, Brazil's Foreign Ministry, were that all obstacles were to be removed that might complicate an understanding between the two governments, or get in the way of Brazil's obtaining U.S. support on the two agenda items deemed fundamental by Brasilia: the negotiation of the foreign debt and the transfer of advanced technologies.

From the other side, Washington's own extensive list of items on the bilateral agenda ranged from Brazil's immediate conclusion of a foreign debt agreement with its creditor banks, to the speeding up of the "privatization" of state sector companies, to the signing of a new U.S.-Brazil "military cooperation" agreement, to the immediate recognition of international pharmaceutical patents and the total opening of Brazil's computer market to foreigners.

But the intention of the inner core of the Collor government was spoiled by nationalist groupings in the military and the national Congress, which

blocked a number of the government's projects, including an immediate signing of a debt accord and the idea of a new U.S.-Brazil military pact. Deprived of the main goodies in its market basket of concessions, the Collor agenda in the U.S. was looking very weak, which even led Itamaraty to consider canceling the trip. But the trip wasn't canceled. And although the delicate issue of a military pact was never raised—the Brazilian Armed Forces are violently hostile to the idea—Washington made progress on the issue of Brazil's foreign debt arrears. The Collor government agreed to a July 1, first installment of \$900 million on these back monies due.

Analyst Martin Westlake, former managing editor of *South* magazine, emphasized the importance of Brazil within the Anglo-American new world order, in an article published in the June 25 issue of the British *Guardian*. "Brazil is the swing country of the silent revolution which has been unfolding in Latin America," he asserted. "From the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, nations have been undertaking economic policy reforms that in many cases are as deep-seated and far-reaching as the dismantling of communism in Eastern Europe." Westlake quotes one unnamed banker who says that without Brazil, "Latin America will only have experienced half a revolution."

Upon his arrival in Washington, Collor got a taste of how he would be treated by his hosts. Having landed a half-hour early, the presidential delegation discovered that there was no

one to greet them at Andrews Air Force Base. Somewhat later, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and Assistant Secretary Bernard Aronson, lower-level officials, showed up to greet the Brazilian President. Brazilian journalists reported that the early arrival was due to the fact that during the flight, Collor took over the plane's controls and accelerated well beyond the cruising speed.

The following day at dinner, Bush gave Collor the "paternal" treatment. Referring to the Brazilian President's sports fetish and his piloting skills, Bush greeted Collor as "Indiana Jones" and "Captain Collor," thanking him for "not making any pirouettes over the White House." As the *Washington Post* reported, Bush expressed regret that he had never piloted Air Force One.

On June 19, during a luncheon organized by members of the U.S. establishment, the Brazilian President witnessed the "subtlety" with which the leaders of the new world order deal with their interests. Among those invited was Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose presence contrasted with the fact that no Brazilian military officer of similar rank was present. Aware of Collor's habit of jogging on Sundays wearing flamboyant T-shirts, Powell offered him one with the inscription "Operation Desert Storm," which the President promised to wear in Brasilia.

The next afternoon, Collor had the most secretive meeting of the whole trip—with leaders of the U.S. Jewish community. While the Brazilian media hasn't said a word about the event, it is almost certain that it was organized by Edgar Bronfman, who was Collor's interlocutor during his first trip abroad, as President-elect in January 1990.