

In Venezuela, the U.S. tries to keep dike from breaking

by Carlos Wesley

The *New York Times* on March 24 called for stepping up the creation of an "inter-American military force" to provide a cover for U.S. military interventions into Ibero-America.

The call came amidst frantic efforts to stop the nationalist revolution against International Monetary Fund free trade looting that began in Venezuela last Feb. 4, from gaining hold and spreading to the rest of the continent.

"There is little time to lose," says the *Times*, as it demands the establishment of "a hemispheric intervention force." "In Venezuela, military nationalists challenge democracy."

In order to stop this revolution from spreading, as *EIR* has repeatedly warned, the Anglo-American oligarchy is committed to the destruction of Ibero-America's armed forces. To provide a pretext to implement what has become widely known—thanks to *EIR*—as "The Bush Manual to Eliminate Ibero-America's Armed Forces," the *Times* lies that there is no difference between a nation's constitutionally prescribed armed forces and the narco-terrorists. "Shining Path guerrillas terrorize Peru." But, "Peru's own army, notorious for human rights abuses, has proven itself ineffective and a danger to democracy itself," it says.

"A hemispheric intervention force is more likely to be accepted if Washington maintains a low profile," it says. "The time has come to create a new inter-American military force that could intervene to protect democratic governments from hijacking by armed terrorists."

Fronting for Bush

The editorial reflects official policy. On March 24, the head of the Panama-based U.S. military Southern Command, Gen. George Joulwan, arrived unannounced in Argentina. Ostensibly, the three-day official visit by the U.S. top military official for Latin America, was to coordinate joint action "against drugs."

But the real purpose of Joulwan's trip, which came in the wake of the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, was to push President Carlos Menem to continue the policy of destroying any national purpose for Argentina's military.

Except as auxiliary forces, subordinated to a foreign

supranational command, similar to the colonial Gurkas employed by the British army, they are to cease to exist. Menem is fully committed to such a course; he was the only Latin American leader to provide troops to George Bush for the war against Iraq, and both he and his Foreign Minister, Guido Di Tella, have repeatedly offered to deploy troops whenever and wherever requested by Bush, under the umbrella of the United Nations or the Organization of America States (OAS).

Following Joulwan's visit, Menem told a meeting of the foreign ministers of the so-called Group of Rio in Buenos Aires on March 26, that the OAS should establish a Security Council to intervene in the countries of the hemisphere to "preserve democracy."

According to the Mexican daily *La Jornada* of March 27, Menem "reiterated his proposal for the OAS to have a multi-national force to intervene in case of coups d'état."

This reaffirmed Menem's earlier promises to the Bush administration. In February Joulwan's boss, U.S. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, during a visit to Argentina, as part of a five-nation tour of Latin America, called for deep cuts in their military budget and to give up sophisticated technology. "We think the military ought to be reduced," he said.

Regarding the attempted coup in Venezuela, Cheney said: "We hope that there are no repetitions, not only in Venezuela, but in any other country in the hemisphere. The U.S. will always support the democracies. It is important that leaders such as President Menem continue to have success with their plans, to avoid incidents such as the recent attempt in Venezuela."

Insane policy

The proposed "inter-American military force" is both insane and unworkable. It is one thing for Argentina, say, to send troops to the Gulf to serve as water boys to the British and the Americans, their former enemies in the Malvinas War.

But it's quite another to get soldiers from Argentina or from any other Ibero-American country to invade Venezuela on behalf of the Anglo-Americans. The OAS cover is only to provide a figleaf for U.S. intervention, with perhaps token

forces from other countries after the fact, as happened during the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic.

But, "there is a new anti-U.S. spirit among officers of the region," reported Venpress, the Venezuelan news agency, on March 25. Former Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet, who is the current head of Chile's Armed Forces, is organizing an anti-U.S. front among Ibero-American military. Pinochet, who in the past was isolated from his Ibero-American colleagues, showed up recently in Ecuador and Brazil.

Sen. Sergio Jarpa, the former Chilean foreign minister, said that Pinochet's visits were to coordinate a "response to U.S. hegemony, in the wake of the Gulf war and the collapse of the socialist bloc," according to a wire from EFE, the Spanish news agency. Pinochet "may undertake other trips, given the attitude of total military control that the U.S. government has assumed in Latin America," said Jarpa, according to the report, published in Peru on March 21.

In Brazil, Pinochet pointedly visited the installations of Avibras Aeroespacial, which manufactures the Astros II surface-to-surface rocket launcher. Those launchers are exported to a score of countries in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. It was this type of advanced military industry that Cheney particularly targeted for elimination during his South American trip last month.

"Chile's traditional ties with Great Britain have weakened in the political and military spheres," reported Argentina's *La Prensa* on March 25. This is because "London is in accord with Washington regarding the reduction of the armed forces of Latin America, Chile's included," it added. "This would explain the resurgence of political frictions between Pinochet and [Chilean] President Patricio Aylwin."

Backfire

The heavy-handed U.S. efforts to get the Ibero-Americans to submit to the new world order, are having quite the opposite effect. On March 14 the U.S. envoy to the OAS, Luigi Einaudi, who is known as Henry Kissinger's "Kissinger for Latin America," threatened in Caracas that Venezuela would be invaded if there is another uprising against President Carlos Andrés Pérez. (Longstanding U.S. plans to invade Venezuela and to seize its oil fields have just surfaced. See article, p. 60.)

Kissinger himself—who is paid a \$100,000 monthly retainer by the Venezuelan government to advise Pérez—descended on Caracas, where he held a press conference on March 19 with the Venezuelan President, whose resignation is being demanded by virtually all in Venezuela.

Several top Venezuelan military leaders angrily rejected Einaudi's interventionist threats. Even Defense Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich, a supporter of Pérez, was forced to state that the Venezuelan Armed Forces declare their "categorical rejection of the intervention of any foreign country in a situation in which some group, whether military

or civilian, comes to power by force." Gen. Alberto Mueller Rojas said that the threat from Einaudi, the U.S. diplomat, "constitutes nothing less than another example of the contempt with which the officials of that country view the people of Latin America. It is a reflection of the racism that inspires their policy and their behavior."

Meanwhile, under the pretext of "defending democracy," Pérez ordered Venezuelan police to continue to violently repress any protests. A student was shot in the town of Sucre, and in Valencia, 125 students were arrested while participating in a peaceful "March of Flags" to call for Pérez's resignation, it was reported on March 26.

Asked about the *New York Times* editorial and their response to a possible intervention, the leader of the Feb. 4 uprising, Col. Hugo Chávez, who has become a national hero in Venezuela, said: "were that to happen, we would wage another war of independence. We would fight on the side of the people. . . . Venezuela is neither Panama, nor Grenada," he said.

Chávez said that the employment of Kissinger as an adviser to Pérez, "is an insult to the great number of valuable men in Venezuela who could be providing advice to a popular and serious government. [Kissinger and his collaborators] are supportive of a government such as Pérez's . . . which has been listening to them all along. Surely the government will harden its stance because of the counsel of its advisers. But the people are not going to take much more," said Chávez, according to the Venezuelan daily *El Universal* of March 26.

The military leader rejected as pointless attempts to label his movement as "right-wing" or "leftist." The aim is to promote "participatory democracy" through a civic-military government. He blamed a media campaign to discredit his movement on the U.S. image maker, David Garth.

Col. Francisco Cárdenas, a co-leader of the rebellion, said that the Feb. 4 attempt could not be called a failure. "We will be a popular force on the side of the people fighting for freedom and participative democracy," he said. The government's apparent victory "will prove Pyrrhic" since "not even the American adviser—Kissinger—can resurrect the image of Pérez."

One, two, many Venezuelas

Venezuela is not an isolated instance, reported the Peruvian magazine *Oiga* on March 24, citing studies conducted by U.S. experts that were published in the Miami Spanish-language weekly *Exito*. Throughout Latin America, "the military are increasingly restless because of the painful economic modernization measures and charges of corruption and incompetence." According to one of the studies, there are 12 countries where a coup could soon take place: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela.