

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

NGOs launch war of attrition

As the military nationalists expand their organizing, the "human rights" groups are being thrown against them.

Among the innumerable military groups that have been organizing themselves over the past year to defend against neo-colonial demilitarization plans, the manifesto of one of these, the Araucaria Group, based in the state of Paraná, has triggered a furious debate in the National Congress.

On June 4, the press published a declaration distributed by the group calling the Congress to account for its political decisions: "Resources are lacking for health, national and public security, culture, and salaries for federal workers, but there is an abundance of money for the National Congress, where laws are made to keep it at arms' length from that abstraction known as 'hunger.'"

The manifesto continues: "Ah, but not to worry, because democracy will solve it: In the next elections the people will bring about change. How naive! Everything will remain the same. What good is this democracy?"

Finally, the declaration reflects the growing disgust of the population with the political class: "The Araucaria Group will no longer tolerate bad Brazilian politicians; we will hold them responsible for the tragedy of mass unemployment, for the impunity and misery that generates violence, for the disappearance of patriotism."

Immediately, congressmen from various political persuasions, including the government's congressional leader Roberto Freire, responded with hysteria to the Araucaria Group's warnings, reflecting their fear of the so-called "Fujimorization" of Brazil. Freire declared of the group, "They

want to be the guardians of the country, but we are not going to allow it." The congressmen of the pro-communist Workers Party (PT) put on a show of disgust. Deputy José Genoïno tore up a copy of the military manifesto and trampled it under foot. Sen. Roman Tito of the PMDB declared that "the military seems to have forgotten the way it mismanaged the country."

The would-be demilitarizers are sending out their shock troops to try to control a situation that has all the characteristics of a volcano about to erupt. In particular, they have activated a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to enter the field of battle and carry out a war of attrition against the Armed Forces; their demands are in essence no different from those used in other South American countries: revoke the amnesties granted to the armies and do away with military courts.

The most visible NGO is Americas Watch, which issued a report accusing the São Paulo military police of being "one of the most violent in the world." The accusation gives de facto support to a bill recently submitted by PT Deputy Helio Bicudo, which seeks the total extinction of military justice in Brazil. Americas Watch is one of the leading "human rights" NGOs in Ibero-America. Its president, Peter Bell, is also co-chairman of the influential foreign policy entity inside the Clinton administration known as the Inter-American Dialogue.

On the Brazilian side of things, the force behind the Bicudo bill and the

movement to revoke the amnesty granted the military for its participation in the 1970s fight against the Marxist guerrillas, is the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies (INESC), the key lobby inside the Brazilian Congress of the international NGO apparatus and closely linked to the Anglo-Americans' Brazil Network. The network, in turn, is responsible for organizing ecological campaigns against Brazil. INESC is the transmission belt for every one of the demands of the new world order, which seeks to impose the concept of "limited sovereignty" in Brazil.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International is alerting its activists as to the near-term future it foresees for Brazil. Secretary General Pierre Sane commented from London that "a military solution" for Brazil is gaining increasing sympathy within the population.

In the strategic southern part of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul newspaper *Zero Hora*, a frequent mouthpiece of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), has redoubled its anti-military campaign in recent weeks. In late May, *Zero Hora* published a series of scandalous reports on the participation of the Brazilian Armed Forces in Operation Condor (a joint operation of Southern Cone armies against the guerrillas in the 1970s), which, according to the report, has just been confirmed through Paraguay.

The intention of *Zero Hora* and of the demilitarizers is to establish coordination among the groups supposedly fighting for human rights in southern Brazil, and in Paraguay and Uruguay. In Paraguay, in particular, these groups are aggressively working with a group of U.S. evangelical sects. In three months, they expect to complete their report on Operation Condor, and those they consider responsible for it.