

Report from Rio by Lorenzo Carrasco

Kissinger's 'special relationship'

Brazil is a battlefield between British geopolitics and the possibility of Ibero-American integration.

In the space of 30 days, São Paulo was the site of two events that were contradictory and even mutually exclusive, as far as Brazil's foreign policy is concerned.

The first of these concerned the visit by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and the trail of pestilence he left behind him at the private gathering in April of the Brazilian chapter of the Council of Latin American Businessmen. It was here that he proposed to revive the "special relationship" between Brazil and the United States, modeled on the U.S. relationship with Great Britain, to ensure effective control of the Western Hemisphere.

Speaking more candidly than he often does in his articles for the international press, Kissinger reported, "when I was here, it was in 1975 as secretary of state; we signed an agreement in which we announced, not to the enthusiasm of your neighbors, a special relationship between Brazil and the United States, which in our mind, was similar to the special relationship we had with Great Britain. . . . What we meant [was] that on important issues, before we did anything on a Western Hemisphere basis, we would consult with Brazil. And that, to the maximum extent possible, we would try to coordinate our foreign policies, and economic policies to a lesser extent, with those of Brazil. It was a formally signed document, which I suppose still technically exists, though it has not been observed all that much in recent years."

With this "special relationship" in

mind, Kissinger continued, "I have repeatedly argued that the next creative phase of the United States foreign policy should be to create a Western Hemisphere economic system and Western Hemisphere trading system. And I therefore strongly supported NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] when it was out for ratification. . . . Now, under the impact of the Mexican crisis, I don't believe that the United States can go forward with NAFTA for the next two years. . . . So, obviously what is going to happen is that the Mercosur [Southern Cone Common Market] will develop faster in these next few years than NAFTA." Kissinger implies here that the Mercosur must operate according to the norms of economic globalization.

It is clear that this British geopolitical view was what guided Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's recent trips to the United States and England, which occurred immediately after Kissinger's visit to Brazil. Cardoso met privately with the former secretary of state at the latter's home in New York.

It was also in São Paulo during the second week of May, that an opposing view of Brazil's role was put forward in the "Mercosur-Venezuela Seminar" sponsored by the Venezuelan embassy in Brazil, the Latin American Parliament, and with at least the tacit approval of Brazil's Foreign Ministry. During the event, it was announced that President Cardoso will make a state visit to Venezuela on the occasion of that country's Independence Day celebration on July 5.

This will be the first time that a foreign head of state has been invited to participate in Venezuela's Independence Day celebration, and on that date, Cardoso and Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera will launch one of the most ambitious efforts ever to achieve the economic integration of the Ibero-American continent. Among the projects to be announced is the electrical interconnection of the two countries, including plans to build hydroelectric plants in the basins of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers—plans opposed by the Anglo-American ecology apparatus. Also to be announced is the formation of a new binational oil firm, Petro-America, joining the two nations' state oil companies, PDVSA and Petrobras.

This is undoubtedly why Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampraia stated during the seminar at the Venezuelan embassy that "we have arrived at a point of political will and technical and financial viability, to be able to effectively contemplate a series of projects for the integration of highways, energy, and trade in fuel and technologies, which constitute not only economic integration but a much deeper one as well."

In support of this view, Venezuela's ambassador to Brazil, Alfredo Toro Hardy, authored an article in the Caracas daily *El Universal* attacking the economic globalization so strongly defended by Kissinger. "The crisis of Mexico and the case of Barings Bank have sowed profound doubts about the relevance of the globalizing process," he wrote. "Those [countries] which today assume the gigantic costs of economic reconversion at the service of a globalized economy, may very quickly be left with no floor under their feet. . . . To gamble or bet your future on globalization, is as absurd as it is unnecessary. This is a matter of common sense."