

Latin America on Brink of Second 'War of Pacific'

Exclusive to NSIPS

Major U.S. media this week issued a sudden burst of coverage on the rising tensions in Latin America's southern Pacific region which have brought Peru, Chile, and Bolivia to the brink of war. The purpose of this coverage is to prepare the U.S. population for the intervention of U.S. "peacekeeping" forces into Latin America should a Second "War of the Pacific" break out, as the following report makes clear.

CBS television news Dec. 31 featured a lengthy filmed report from Arica, Chile — heart of the disputed territory — detailing the history of the feud between Peru and Chile, and the most recent incidents that have brought the region to the point of a possible "Second War of the Pacific." *Time* magazine, in a feature this week entitled, "Girding for a Bloody Anniversary," identified the region as "another entry to the list of potential troublespots around the world." Placing the blame on "nationalism" and Peruvian revanchism, *Time* nearly predicted a bloody war before the 1979 100th anniversary of the original War of the Pacific (1879-1883).

The unresolved territorial hostilities between Peru and Chile have simmered for a century, flaring up periodically and particularly around Bolivia's century-long petition for an access corridor to the Pacific Ocean lost to Chile in the 1879 war. The mutual angry rejection by both Chile and Peru of the other's proposals for a settlement of the "Bolivia access" question during November have set the two nations on a collision course. Both Peru and Chile have launched highly publicized campaigns to mobilize their populations behind the respective, intransigent positions, and in the last month both national press have engaged in a vituperative mudslinging exchange. While both governments officially express their continued and lasting friendship and desire for peace, both are, according to a range of reliable sources, taking "precautionary" measures in preparation for possible war.

The "Rand Scenario" — Trilateral War Policy

The CBS and *Time* coverage is less an innocent reflection of a dangerous situation — as it may appear — than a statement of intent by the Rockefeller-led Trilateral Commission and Rand Corporation thinktank to promote war in the southern cone. The Rand Corporation's profile of the historical proclivity for regional wars in Latin America has been the basis of U.S.

policy toward Latin America for at least the past two years under Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and the mechanism for the exercise of continued, indirect U.S. political control of the continent. In a policy paper written expressly for the first Linowitz Commission in 1974, Rand staffer David Ronfeldt identified the 1970s as a period of renewed emphasis on "external defense against neighbors," detailing a scenario for nationalist military conflicts across the continent. Ronfeldt concluded by recommending that the U.S. end all restrictions on sales of military equipment to Latin America, and offer weaponry on a strictly "commercial" basis — a policy which, by his own definition, would feed the "Rand Scenario" for regional war. Any war, he notes, would be short — "a week or two, about the time it would take to arrange international mediation to restore order."

The policymakers behind the Trilateral Commission-stacked Carter Administration, who openly espouse a policy of seeking early confrontation with the USSR, are equally committed to employing Rand's scenario. One of the recommendations to the Carter Administration of the second so-called "Linowitz Report" issued Dec. 20, 1976, is the 1974 Ronfeldt arms sales policy. The Brookings Institution's comprehensive policy document "Setting National Priorities: The Next Ten Years" is more explicit. Citing the danger of conflicts within the Third World, Brookings recommends that: "In Latin America we should be prepared to join any action by the OAS that may be agreed on in response to uses of force that extend across national frontiers, leaving it largely up to the Latin American countries to decide what that response should be; and we should be prepared to provide military assistance to threatened governments."

A second War of the Pacific — or near-war — would provide the rationale for a U.S.-OAS "peacekeeping" intervention in the region, using as a cornerstone the U.S. continental surrogate, Brazil.

Target: Peru

The Rand scenario for regional wars has been used most effectively against Peru, particularly against the pro-development regime of President Juan Velasco Alvarado, deposed in August 1975.

The threat of a provoked war has functioned as a key bludgeon against remaining pro-development military opposition to Peru's right-wing turn over the past year.

The right wing turn in Peru over the last year itself tends to greatly increase the potential for a war. With the right-wing military, the primary source of revanchist hatred for Chile, now effectively in control in Peru, that country can play out the "aggressor" role assigned it by Rand and Brookings, and built up in *Time* this week. According to *Time* and commentaries in the U.S. and Chilean press concerning the Peruvian purchase of 36 Soviet fighter bombers last fall, Chile is now the "underdog" in any conflict situation, rendered militarily inferior by the Congressional cut off of arms sales to the repressive Pinochet regime.

Closer to the Brink

Time magazine, faithfully portraying the Rand scenario, noted that a Peru-Chile conflict "could tempt other countries on the continent into similar action. Potentially volatile territorial disputes...simmer between Venezuela and both Guyana and Colombia, and also between Peru and Ecuador."

All the elements are in place for setting the "War of the Pacific" tinderbox aflame.

* According to both *Time* and the Bolivian nationalist Institute of Geopolitical Studies, which has cautioned repeatedly against Bolivian involvement in an arms race and war which that country is sure to lose, both Peru and Chile have begun serious "precautionary" buildups and fortification of their border troops. The Institute described Dec. 1 "a complete defensive apparatus...on both sides of the so-called "line of concord" (Peru-Chile border — ed.) which, because of the bunkers, parapets, artillery, tanks at the ready and military aviation permanently overflying the borders on observation...looked rather like the type of 'Maginot Line' which France built against Nazi Germany."

* Bolivia, traditionally at the mercy of Peru and Chile, assumed last week a markedly more aggressive attitude. Bolivian Army commander Gen. Raul Alvarez Penarandas called Dec. 30 on the population to "prepare

militarily in order to guarantee our national security and (territorial) sovereignty." "Despite our pacifist nature we were involved in conflicts before...without being militarily prepared," Alvarez declared, referring to the defeat and territorial losses of Bolivia and Peru to Chile in the 1879-83 War of the Pacific. "The errors of history should not be repeated." Bolivia's turnabout, and entry into the so-called "Andean arms race," intensifies the sense of inevitability of war in the region.

* Complementing the Bolivian twist to the Rand scenario, is the continuing right-wing cabinet takeover in Ecuador, Peru's northern neighbor and historical secondary geopolitical foe. Army chief and junta member Gen. Duran Arcentales is fanning old border tensions with Peru as a means of offsetting the challenge of a significant nationalist faction within the Army. Renewed Ecuadorian right-wing claims on Peruvian territory — awarded to Peru following the defeat of Ecuador in a short 1941 border war — have raised the spectre of a potential "second front" against Peru.

* For the first time in over a year, Argentina and Brazil — the two "big powers" in Latin America and traditional rivals for geopolitical hegemony — have been drawn into the dispute. Argentine Foreign Minister Admiral Cesar Guzzetti, the first cabinet member to officially comment on the war danger, characterized Bolivia as a "zone of expectant conflict." In statements reported in the Buenos Aires daily *El Cronista Comercial* Jan. 4, Guzzetti added that Bolivia deserves Argentina's "confident solidarity." Brazil has not yet officially responded to the "hot spot," but has quietly demonstrated its support for the Banzer government which Brazilian troops helped to install in 1973. Bolivian Army chief Alvarez met with the Brazilian War Minister and other top officers in Brasilia in early December, and signed a deal to purchase Brazilian military equipment and weaponry. Upon return, Alvarez publicly emphasized the Brazilian military's "full agreement" with the political ideas of the Banzer government.

Venezuela The Key to Latin America's Future

In his New Year's address to the nation, Venezuela's President Carlos Andres Perez presented what is in effect the defining political groundwork behind his November tour of Western Europe and the Soviet Union on behalf of the Third World demand for a new international economic order. These state visits, particularly to Rome, London and Moscow, and their consequent trade agreements, have firmly tied the Perez government to the expanding three-way commercial flows involving the EEC, the Comecon, and OPEC, a development that represents increasing independence from dollar-sector trade credits and oil supplies.

The remarkable feature of Perez's appended speech, beyond his reaffirmation of the determination to achieve the new order and the willingness to use oil for leverage, is that it locates the process through which the emerging de facto economic order internationally is turned into the high-technology industrialization that the Third World needs locally. That process is the development of labor power.

President Perez is only too acquainted with the effects of economic backwardness on the cognitive powers of the Venezuelan population, and his call for arresting the appalling malnutrition among children, coupled with a