
President of Brazil's Senate

'Our nation is opposed to all vestiges of colonialism'

On April 19 EIR Latin America Editor Dennis Small talked with the President of the Senate of Brazil, Mr. Jarbas Passarinho, in his offices in Brasília. Excerpts of that interview are printed below.

Small: Senator Passarinho, I would be interested in knowing your views of the current crisis in the South Atlantic and what this means for the future of inter-American relations.

Passarinho: I am very concerned about this. As a Brazilian, as a politician, and as the President of the federal Senate in Brazil. Personally, I disapprove of violent actions, because violence breeds violence, but in this case, as a Brazilian, it is impossible to avoid saying that we are opposed to all vestiges of colonialism in Latin America and South America especially. So, for me, it is very difficult to understand why Great Britain is so interested in keeping a position in the Falklands, as they call it, or the Malvinas, as the Argentines say. I would like to have an agreement, a solution by an arbiter. We are putting our hopes in Secretary Haig's efforts, but as the battleships come closer and closer, we ask ourselves if a diplomatic solution is possible.

Small: There are those who believe that the British position is completely intransigent on the sovereignty condition because they wish to maintain the colonial relationship not only with the Falkland Islands but with Argentina generally, and to maintain Argentina's financial and other dependencies on Great Britain.

Passarinho: Are you speaking about the threats of today, or are you speaking about the history? If you are speaking about the historical matters, since the middle of the last century, for example, you know that Argentina had sovereignty in that part of the world [Malvinas—ed.]. Great Britain, however, maintains that the first one

to arrive there was a British gentleman. For me, this is not important.

Small: Brazil is of course in a very delicate position with regard to the Malvinas question. On the one hand, you have very close commercial and other relations with Argentina; on the other hand, you have a tremendous financial and economic dependence on Great Britain. How is Brazil going to handle this situation? What do you see as the options available to Brazil?

Passarinho: I do not understand well what you consider our tremendous economic dependence on the British.

Small: What I am saying is that the Brazilian economy depends on financial circles with great power in the City of London. The fact that you are the largest debtor in the world, that your Minister of Planning Delfim Netto is over in London right now, should affect the situation.

Passarinho: Yes, I was afraid that I misunderstood, but I see that I did not. I do not consider that Brazil is so dependent on the British financially. As you know, we are facing a terrible problem because we have to pay more than half of our total exports just to pay our oil bill, and this has made Brazil dependent on foreign capital in order to balance our current account. But today Great Britain is not significant to us. The nation first in importance is the United States; the second is West Germany; the third is Japan; the fourth is Canada; and after this we have British industries in Brazil.

The point is that this year we need to have about \$13 billion in order to guarantee our balance, and this makes us in a certain way dependent upon the world financial people. They are not in London formally, but trilaterally in London, Europe, and Japan. On the other hand, we have no special reason to involve ourselves directly in this problem [the Malvinas—ed.].

I call your attention to the question of the British, Dutch, and French Guyanas, for example. British Guyana, after decolonization, is now facing a probable war with Venezuela. Dutch Guyana, today Surinam, after decolonization, is almost a Cuban satellite. So the problem is not only to decolonize, but to provide conditions to new nations to live under democratic rule. This is very difficult, not only in Latin America, but also in other places in the world as well.

To summarize our opinion, I don't look with happiness upon the remnants of colonialism in this part of the world. I am against it. Secondly, we have to try to solve the problem by pacific means, and not by violence.

Small: And if the situation should get to a military confrontation, what do you think will happen in terms of Latin America's approach to Great Britain generally, and, in particular, where will Brazil stand?

Passarinho: It is very difficult to answer that. We are rooting for peace. But in the event of war, we will have to reconsider the case.

Small: Just reconsider?

Passarinho: Yes, reconsider the situation.

Small: In the United States, there is great concern that if it gets to a fighting situation, and the United States backs Great Britain, as the forces around Alexander Haig favor, that this will destroy America's relationship with Latin America. In particular, Sen. Jesse Helms has issued a public statement saying that the Malvinas are Argentine and that the United States should ask the British to withdraw, mentioning the Monroe Doctrine. What is your opinion of Senator Helms' statement, and in particular, of the possible use of the Monroe Doctrine in the current circumstances?

Passarinho: I suppose it is a little early to make judgments about this. First of all, we have to wait for facts. And it is obvious that the United States is openly in favor of the British position against Argentina. Probably you *will* have problems in North American-Latin American relations. Another thing that is especially important and makes us concerned—more than concerned, worried—is the presence of Soviet interests in the South Atlantic. After the colonization of Angola, Cape Verde, and the Azores, the Soviet Union has many bases at her disposal in order to support and help extend its navy in the South Atlantic. This is a completely new threat for us. And now, as some Argentine diplomats have said very clearly, the Soviet Union is in a certain way related to the threats, trying to support Argentina. I am afraid of this new factor, I would call it a perturbing factor.

Small: The Monroe Doctrine would apply, of course, not only to the British, but to the Soviet Union. Don't

you think that would be advantageous all the way around—Central America, South America?

Passarinho: You see, we are very suspicious about the Monroe Doctrine. In Brazil, as in other parts of South America, it is viewed as stating not that America belongs to the Americans, but to the North Americans.

Small: What are your hopes and expectations for the trip to the United States of Brazilian President Figueiredo?

Passarinho: Not much more than the usual. It's a signal of friendship. You see, we have a dependent economy like almost every other nation in the world. Even the United States and the Soviet Union depend in certain ways on raw materials and bilateral contracts and so on. Now we are trying to solve our problems, that tremendous burden that is on our shoulders. We used to pay \$600 million dollars for 800,000 barrels a day of oil before 1973, and we reached the top of our efficiency in the economy. Today we are importing a little less than 800,000 barrels a day. Instead of \$600 million, we are paying \$10 billion. We suffered the first shock and that produced a second shock. We paid our oil bill using 7 percent of the total of our exports. Today we are paying 50 percent of exports.

Who took advantage of this? The nations that produce oil. Secondly, the United States, Europe, and Japan because of the petrodollars. We did not receive petrodollars in Brazilian private banks. But you received them in the United States, in England, and in Japan. And as you know, the business of a bank is to get deposits and to manage the money in order to produce profits. After this, we had inflation.

But the result: a little recession in the industrialized nations; and we paid for that. Because when we bought industrialized items we had to pay for the internal inflation of those nations. When we sold our raw materials, they bought this for less than the normal price. You have to sell many more tons in order to receive the same amount of money.

Small: In addition to the oil, the other big difference is high interest rates. Will there be any protests, or discussions of Mr. Volcker's high interest rates policy?

Passarinho: We pay our accounts. The only solution is to try to develop ourselves, not in order to subject others, but in order to have conditions to talk—not in equal positions, but in better positions that we have today. And some people say that that's the real reason why the Malvinas are in a pre-war dispute, because they say that it is not a question of only having a landing strip in the South Atlantic, but because of the mineral resources and the other riches that many people think exist there.

Small: Thank you, Senator Passarinho.