

Can the era of ‘national security’ governments return in South America?

by Gretchen Small

The pieces of a new U.S. policy for Western hemispheric relations have been assembled in Washington by the British crowd. The word is being passed on: Congress and the White House are being stampeded; the “academics” and “Latin-Americanists” who update the profiles as policy is implemented are being advised; the press is being mobilized. A three-day seminar at Ditchley Park in London was convened the weekend of March 12 to hammer out final details; State Department officials William Luers and Ambassador Middendorf, Lord Jellico of Tate and Lyle, and others sat down with European and American “experts” in the area.

As an aide to U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick put it to *EIR* in early March, “We are returning to the era of ‘national security’ governments in Latin America. You know, like Brazil, 1964. It’s not going to be good for the democrats.”

The word has also been put out to Ibero-American nations: “You are either with the United States or against it. Fortress America is preparing for war, and if you want your debt renegotiated, you will sell your raw materials to the U.S. strategic reserve—at our prices.” Civilian governments who refuse to turn over their national wealth will be replaced by more pliable and cooperative military governments. Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela are the first targets of this policy.

The combined impact of the end-of-the-first-quarter payments crisis and the collapse of international oil markets has thrown the finances of every country in the region into turmoil, creating the preconditions for a wave of coups rivalling the sweep of the continent directed by Henry Kissinger in the early 1970s, when government after government was destabilized and toppled. The ripping up of present institutional governments on the continent is viewed by Kissinger’s friend George Shultz, and that eminent Hobbesian, Jeane Kirkpatrick, as the only way to prevent a continental rebellion against the banks in the form of a debtors’ cartel.

Can the “Western Hemisphere” policy work? Can the shape of Ibero-American nations be once again changed in

an across-the-board sweep? How much was learned by the continent’s national leaders, both civilian and military, during the Malvinas war may provide the answer to that question.

A Central American showdown

The anglophile faction within the U.S. administration plans to use a strategic showdown in Central America to force this British colonial policy upon the hemisphere. Ibero-American governments are being told that the defense of “right-wing” governments in Central America, such as that in El Salvador, is a matter of survival for Western civilization, and that they must support a U.S. intervention into Central America or be considered “pro-communist,” and they must be ready to acquiesce in their governments’ overthrow by right-wing factions of their own military establishments.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, his deputy Fred Iklé, and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders, among others, went before Congress in mid-March to demand full-scale U.S. commitment to war in Central America. Iklé, himself a member of a prominent oligarchic Swiss family, testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs that “the vitality of the Atlantic Alliance depends on this military thrust [of the Soviets] in Central America being halted.”

Iklé and Enders termed Central America a potential “Eastern Europe,” and warned that the United States considers any European interference against this military policy an attack upon the Atlantic Alliance. In the President’s speech requesting increased military aid for El Salvador, Reagan’s statement that “El Salvador is closer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts,” was read throughout the region. As the daily *El Universal* of Mexico City put it, “U.S. Borders Extend to El Salvador.”

Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is reported to be a key figure behind this new “national security” orientation infused in U.S. policy for Latin America. Washington insiders agree that Kirkpatrick is now run-

ning Ibero-American policy for the administration, with direct access to Shultz.

Sources close to Kirkpatrick report that the recent proposal aired by her for the establishment of a U.S. "Marshall Plan" for Latin America is part of the hemispheric realignment package. They report that Kirkpatrick, with Shultz, has convinced the administration to consider a several billion dollar bailout of the banks and the multilateral institutions by "pegging" the bailout to U.S. security. No Ibero-American nation will receive credit unless it 1) accepts a prearranged International Monetary Fund economic program, and 2) cooperates with U.S. "security" plans.

The Big Three threatened

The lead democracies in the Caribbean Basin are most immediately threatened by the "hemispheric" planners.

- Ending Venezuela's collaboration with Mexico and Colombia in efforts to end the civil wars in Central America, and getting Venezuela to cease its attempts to enter the Non-Aligned movement were among Kirkpatrick's goals during her late-February visit to Venezuela. Government circles privately emphasized that "la Jeane" got nowhere with her efforts, but immediately after she left, military leaders began taking a more aggressive public stance on local politics.

Last week, rumors swept Caracas that the military high command considers the government incompetent, and is planning a coup. Several versions of the rumors reported that a group of military officers had just met with retired General Alfonso Ravard, the head of the state-run oil company, Petróven, to request he head up a "national emergency government" after a coup.

- Colombia's military is in a virtual state of rebellion against President Belisario Betancur's efforts to eliminate criminal mafias such as the paramilitary MAS group, which have allies in the military. President Belisario tried to calm the situation March 13 with a radio and TV message warning that "you who speak with fear or a certain pleasure of a military coup, I'm going to disappoint you. Don't have any illusions, there won't be any coup d'état."

"The military has a lot more cards to play," the aide to Kirkpatrick stated this week, however. The Colombian military is coordinating "hook, line, and sinker" with covert U.S. operations in Central America, "and they don't like Belisario's peace orientation one bit." Lewis Tambs, the new U.S. ambassador to Colombia, who is expected in Bogotá shortly, is one of the architects of current administration strategy for prolonged war in El Salvador; he will try to strengthen the military's hand against President Belisario.

- Mexico's government is under increasing siege from a developing fascist movement led by the National Action Party (PAN), which is gaining support as the economic crisis worsens. PAN officials have led marches of thousands in the north of the country, in effect building a separatist movement in that area. Political turmoil will worsen as the oil multi-

nationals begin to give Mexico "the Nigeria treatment," and as a climate of panic against Mexico as a "security threat" is aroused in the United States.

Mexico and Venezuela are under particular pressure because of their oil. Plans for the creation of a "hemispheric reserve," in which Mexican and Venezuelan oil become strategic assets of U.S. "national security," have been put in high gear in the wake of the collapse of international oil markets.

The "hemispheric reserve" policy requires both countries to cut all ties with OPEC, increase oil production, and sell oil cheaply to the United States to pay their debt. But a closer collaboration by Mexico and Venezuela on oil policy has evolved in the past two months. Mexico has entered into informal alignment of its pricing and production policies with those of OPEC in the past two months, while both Venezuela, an OPEC member, and Mexico have announced that they will coordinate sales and prices of residual fuel to their common Eastern U.S. seaboard markets, to avoid cutthroat competition.

The Mexicans respond to Washington scenarios

Mexican government officials have answered the policy coming out of Washington sharply.

On March 9, the office of the Presidency issued a communiqué in the name of President de la Madrid which reads: "Mexico is very far from the risks which are attributed to us by prophets of other latitudes who wish to see us in similar problems as those which lamentably affect brother nations. Those who thus intend to destabilize us should remember that we are a people with a structure, laws and institutions. We Mexicans are those who will defend our country, and we assume the responsibility for maintaining it as a strong and united nation. The passing problems which affect us should worry no one. . . ."

Speaking March 11 in New Delhi as an observer at the Non-Aligned summit, Mexican Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepúlveda reiterated Mexican anger at foreign pressures: "There are voices which would have us believe that the revolutions in Central America will extend in a mechanical and automatic fashion to other countries in the region. This simplistic argument ignores the national essence of revolutions, and their profound economic and social causes which cannot be capriciously and arbitrarily transplanted. Those fallacious hypotheses ignore the history and identity of countries like Mexico. . . . Let no one try to take other countries as a pretext for illegitimate pressures in the different Central American areas."