

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Superpowers eying Amazon, too?

Brazilian elites are nervously considering the implications of the U.S. invasion of Panama.

Despite the fact that Brazil's official position condemning the U.S. invasion of Panama has been lukewarm, there is visible concern among civilian and military elites over the ominous consequences for already-deteriorated hemispheric relations. Above all, this is because there is an understanding in Brazil that the invasion was only made possible by the condominium pact between the superpowers, reaffirmed at the December 1989 summit in Malta.

The newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, which speaks unofficially for the Brazilian foreign ministry, revealed Jan. 11 that Brazilian diplomatic circles are dismayed by what they call the "world tendency to legitimize invasions à la Bush." For example, these circles note, "the case of French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, who defended the [potential] Soviet Army's invasion of Romania with the justification of defending human rights; later there occurred the recent threat of a naval blockade of Colombia. . . . Everything is possible, including an invasion under the pretext of defending the Amazon."

Similarly, there has been widespread discussion among political circles concerning Moscow's virtual silence on the U.S. troop deployment to the Central American isthmus.

Even a great admirer of Gorbachov and defender of "global government" expressed his shock at the barbarism of the superpower condominium. Influential professor Candido Mendes wrote in *Jornal do Brasil* Jan. 12: "Noriega's surrender to Miami justice [sic] postponed the test of the

survival of sovereignties outside the superpowers." World stability, Mendes added, is maintained by "the superpowers' self-vestiture to intervene *urbi et orbe* in defense of what they understand to be the values of justice. With the dissolution of the Romanian tyranny, international consensus tested the effort to symmetrically legitimize this new post-Cold War *modus vivendi*. . . . James Baker called for Soviet intervention in the Bucharest unrest."

Mendes concluded, "After the Panamanian invasion, there is theoretically no border that can impede the capture of an indictée of the Americans' courts, in the Bush government's view of the war against crime and of dissolved sovereignties, which is its corollary."

There exist serious reasons for the growing concern of the Brazilian establishment—and of the Foreign Ministry in particular—over the U.S.-U.S.S.R. pact. In nearly one year of government, George Bush has not had a single positive initiative toward Brazil. Instead, he has reduced relations to trade and ecological pressures, with the clear intention of imposing the principle of "limited sovereignty" on the Amazon region. For example, the World Bank cut off its credits to Brazil, citing an alleged failure to respect the environment. Moscow, for its part, has added to those pressures, making the post-Panama lesson clear.

On Jan. 11, syndicated columnist Carlos Chagas, considered a mouthpiece for the military sector, warned that the real problem is the opinion issued by U.S. Attorney General Rich-

ard Thornburgh, which permitted the U.S. troops to intervene as guardians of order outside U.S. borders. "Here is the danger, already presented to President Sarney by civilian and military authorities: If the United States inaugurates a new phase of its foreign strategy with Big Stick in hand, justifying the most absurd interventions to capture traffickers, or politicians accused of that, who can guarantee that tomorrow it won't mobilize its paratroops or its marines on the pretext of saving the lungs of the world, the internationalization of the Amazon region?"

Chagas added, "In the case of the Amazon, they can also count on the support of European public opinion, which is so concerned with 4,000 Ianomani Indians, but which shrugs its shoulders when it learns that there are 200,000 miserable inhabitants of the Rocinha slums."

Diplomat Mauro Santayana, the cultural attaché at the Brazilian embassy in Rome, wrote in *Gazeta Mercantil* Jan. 11 about what post-Panama relations with the United States will be like: "The coming years will be the most difficult in relations between the United States and its neighbors to the South. For the first time in their victorious history, they feel truly threatened."

Santayana issued a call for the new Brazilian government, which will be inaugurated on March 15, to mobilize the nation in the face of these coming hard times. "The scene that is beginning to take shape as this century draws to a close, requires that Brazil undertake an enormous patriotic effort. The vigilance and aggressiveness of its diplomatic services do not suffice. . . . The dimensions of the country, its population and its resources are not sufficient to make it a respectable partner in the world. Internal cohesion, which only democracy and social justice can assure, is required."