

Report from Rio by Lorenzo Carrasco

'America 92,' diplomacy without dollars

Advocates of the Quayle plan would terminate Brazilian independence and its Ibero-American integration designs.

Vice President Dan Quayle launched his recent tour of several Ibero-American countries by announcing his "America 92" plan, whose fundamental thesis is achieving hemispheric integration, Teddy Roosevelt-style. That is, America for North Americans! According to the March 6 issue of the Brazilian daily *O Globo*, Quayle said: "We, the United States of America, are part of the Western Hemisphere. We are all Americans. When you think of the idea of Europe 92, why don't we see what the Americas should be doing in 1992? When I speak of America 92, I am speaking of all the Americas: North America and South America, of all the countries which are on this continent."

But history has a way of repeating itself, sometimes. Following the "Roosevelt Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine and its "big stick" diplomacy, Roosevelt's successor William H. Taft launched his famous "dollar diplomacy" to try to renew relations between the United States and its bruised Ibero-American neighbors. Just so, Quayle's statements sought to somehow soften the impact of the Panama invasion, which destroyed any notion of hemispheric order once and for all.

Nonetheless, there is a difference. George Bush's diplomacy is with a "big stick," but without dollars. In the midst of the worst economic and financial crisis of its history, the United States could not help Ibero-America's economies, exhausted by years of looting from usurious debt and high interest rates, even if it wanted to—which it doesn't.

In effect, Bush's "diplomacy without dollars" sells illusions to ingenuous Ibero-American governments, and real or threatened aggression to those who resist.

Despite this, "America 92" already has an adherent in Brazil: a faction of the Brazilian foreign ministry known as *universalists*. This grouping hopes to convince President Fernando Collor de Mello to reorient Brazil's foreign policy away from its relative independence, yoking it instead to Bush's "big stick without dollars" diplomacy. The "universalists" also hope to distance Brazil from "an eventual Latin American common market," placing it under the shadow of the Soviet-Anglo-American condominium instead.

The "universalist" faction headed by the current Brazilian ambassador to UNESCO José Guilherme Melquo is calling for the total opening of the economy, the broad acceptance of the rules and guidelines of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the removal of protectionist tariff barriers, and the destruction of Brazil's computer and pharmaceutical programs. The same faction is pushing for the abandonment of Brazilian foreign policy toward Africa and the Middle East, ratification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Tlatelolco Treaty and, finally, an end to the already seriously weakened efforts at Ibero-American integration, which are the only real means of successfully overcoming the economic crisis—and confronting the foreign aggressions—afflict-

ing the continent.

Retired diplomat and mouthpiece for the "universalists" Helio de Burgos Cabal offered the outlines of this "new diplomacy" in the daily *Jornal do Brasil* of March 2-3: "Realistic Brazilian tendencies tend to focus on the limitations of an eventual Latin American common market. The first (limitation) is the lack of transport and communications infrastructure among countries in the region, which would limit interchange. The second is the poverty of the market itself, which makes up only 4% of world trade, of which 50% of the region's Gross National Product comes from Brazil."

De Burgos Cabal proposes instead a Kissingerian "special relationship" or, as he puts it, "a new *entente* between Brazil and the United States, which—in addition to U.S. help in solving the foreign debt—could encompass projects in tune with the new government's own platform: a) joint ventures in space technology and defense; b) incentives for investment in minerals; opening up the stock exchanges to U.S. investment . . . d) exchanging credits for stocks; e) cooperation of the two leading agricultural export nations in reducing unbridled EC and Japanese protectionism; f) supporting mixed business commissions; and g) finally and most importantly: eliminating the U.S.-Brazil trade *differential* within a climate of understanding and cooperation to facilitate this new *entente*, and restructuring the Brazilian economy, the symbol of the new government."

The problem is that Collor de Mello should have already learned from the experience of his Argentine colleague Carlos Menem, that the application of such ultraliberal policies leads inexorably to total loss of credibility with one's population, to institutional crisis, and to social chaos.