

Argentina a battering ram against Brazil

by Cynthia R. Rush

After Argentine President Carlos Menem met with U.S. President Bill Clinton in June, both military and civilian sources in Brazil expressed the fear that their Southern Cone neighbor would be increasingly willing to serve as an instrument of Anglo-American geopolitical interests directed against their nation.

That has effectively happened, both through a series of provocative joint U.S.-Argentine military exercises on the Brazilian border, and a number of Argentine policy statements indicating the Menem government's increasing commitment to the United Nations' supranational agenda. In early August, U.S. and Argentine army personnel carried out military exercises in Misiones, the northeastern Argentine province which borders Paraguay and Brazil. On Sept. 3, eighty American troops arrived in Buenos Aires, prepared to participate in another round of joint maneuvers with Argentine Army troops, first in the province of Córdoba and then again in Misiones.

All of this is occurring at a time when the Clinton administration and international bankers are demanding that Brazil align itself with Anglo-American economic and strategic policies. In an attempt to dispel growing tensions between the two countries, President Menem traveled to Rio de Janeiro in early September to participate in official Independence Day celebrations, and both he and Brazilian President Itamar Franco emphasized the warmth of their relationship.

But statements made at almost the same time by Argentine Defense Minister Oscar Camilión, in an interview in the Sept. 4 issue of *Página 12*, provided scant reassurance of Argentine intentions. A former ambassador to Brazil as well as a member of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think-tank, Camilión underscored that Argentina "is aligned with the international system defined by the United Nations and with the guidelines drawn by the Security Council. I think that the real international options are to work . . . to elaborate a world system. . . . There is going to be a system in which the United Nations will play a very important role. . . . Argentina will have a contribution to make" to this system.

It is precisely this type of thinking which has caused Brazilian military leaders to warn of threats of the "internationalization" of the Amazon and of encirclement of the

country by U.S. military actions in neighboring countries.

Nor is Camilión alone in this policy orientation. In a commentary published in the Sept. 13 *La Prensa*, analyst Rodolfo Pandolfi rabidly attacked the Franco government for not adequately protecting the Amazon's Yanomami Indians, and warned that the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the U.N. expects to promulgate in 1995, will have "supra-constitutional" powers, provided that Brazil subscribes to it. That is, foreign powers will have the right to intervene in Brazil to enforce the U.N.'s resolutions. Pandolfi ranted that military charges of threats to the Amazon and foreign attempts to limit Brazil's sovereignty are "grotesque," and insisted that military leaders are only saying this in order to obtain a larger defense budget. To financially reward "those who are violating U.N. resolutions" on protecting indigenous populations would be tantamount to attacking the Indians themselves, Pandolfi concluded.

Rear Adm. Julio Juan Bardi (ret.) authored a similar commentary in the Sept. 13 *El Cronista*. Although he clothed his remarks in political science jargon, Bardi nonetheless warned Brazil's Armed Forces to "redefine their entire strategy in light of new international tendencies toward globalism of the economy, finances, the environment, security, and domestic and international peace."

What about sovereignty?

The domestic corollary to Argentina's destructive regional role is the fact that it has completely abdicated its own sovereignty in the area of technological development. Out of respect for what Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella calls the country's "carnal relations" with the United States, the Menem government shut down the Air Force's Condor II intermediate-range missile project and forcibly retired several highly trained physicists and engineers who worked on it, including top scientist Commodore Miguel Guerrero. Moreover, the government intends to make public all the files on the Condor project so that allegations that the Air Force illegally transferred technology to Iraq can be investigated.

Yet this groveling is not good enough for the Anglo-American crowd. In an interview in the Sept. 4 *Página 12*, former Bush administration National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, also of Kissinger Associates, thuggishly responded to remarks by former Air Force Chief of Staff Brig. Juan José Juliá, who suggested that the Air Force possessed the "human resources" which would allow it to relaunch the Condor at any time. "That's an unfortunate statement," Scowcroft said. "Argentina has made enormous efforts in recent years and Argentines should be proud of the way in which they changed their economic and political profile. That statement is a throwback to a time which Argentina has left behind."

In the past, Henry Kissinger has killed to punish nations or leaders who aspired to technological independence. Are his friends willing to do so again?