

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

More obedience, more punishment

Despite Brazil's submission to bankers' austerity dictates, it continues to get slammed by new sanctions.

The decision by U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills to include Brazil along with Japan and India on the list of countries to suffer U.S. trade sanctions, reflects an escalation in the United States' colonial diplomacy toward its most important trade and political ally in the hemisphere.

The unusual action against Brazil will actually have double the punishing effect, thanks to the insane new U.S. trade law approved in 1988. On the one hand, Brazil is punished because of restrictions imposed on its imports, a product of U.S. banks' demands that their usurious foreign debt charges be paid through trade "surpluses" gouged out of the country's suffocating economy. On the other hand, it is alleged that Brazil is refusing to respect the law of "intellectual property," thereby qualifying it for even greater trade reprisals.

President George Bush gave the green light for Brazil's inclusion on the black list, saying, "We oppose protectionism in any and all of its forms." Later, explaining why such poor nations as India and Brazil are being punished, Hills argued that this was the only way to encourage foreign investment. She added, "It is impossible to import any product into Brazil without a license, and then, getting licenses is so very difficult. . . . All this represents an enormous hindrance to trade."

As can be seen by the disproportionate sanction, Bush's entire diplomacy toward Brazil has been comprised of threats and blackmail. On May 28, Acting Foreign Minister Paulo Tarso Flecha de Lima said that Bra-

zil is practically under siege: "We are facing financial, trade, and ecological pressures."

Flecha de Lima was in Washington two weeks earlier for the purpose of trying to prevent the trade sanctions, while seeking the elaboration of what he called a "positive agenda" for bilateral relations between the two countries. All in vain.

In fact, the United States' aggressive response has left many perplexed. Even the daily *O Estado de São Paulo*, the traditional voice of the liberal oligarchy and the friends of Henry Kissinger, could no longer ignore Washington's offensive diplomacy. In a May 28 editorial, it commented:

"Why now, just when we are managing to abandon authoritarianism, are U.S. laws being invoked to penalize policies adopted on the basis of Brazilian laws? Is it that sovereignty cannot be exercised before a special date? Or are there perhaps hidden political and diplomatic interests inspiring the U.S. action? It were better for things to be made clear and for the United States to say once and for all what it is seeking."

The truth is that with Bush in the White House, the Eastern Establishment is rapidly returning to the turn-of-the-century interventionist policies of Theodore "Big Stick" Roosevelt. Not accidentally, Bush—like Roosevelt—came out of the intelligence networks which neither acknowledge nor respect the sovereign interests of other nations.

This clearly explains the U.S. ambassadorial nominations to such coun-

tries as West Germany, South Korea, Mexico, and now Brazil, all intended to form what Bush considers "his" national security group.

Take the case of Richard Melton, whom Secretary of State James Baker wants to impose as the new ambassador to Brazil. Melton is linked to the intelligence community, to the Iran-Contra scandal, and to former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and his corrupt Central America policy. Although the Brazilian foreign ministry initially wanted to veto Melton, whom it considers a model of U.S. "interventionist" diplomacy, it has not persisted.

The Bush administration's policies toward Brazil demonstrate an abandonment of the "soft cop" approach that characterized former U.S. Ambassador Gen. Vernon Walters. Although Walters claimed to view Brazil as a "powerful nation," 20 years of such Kissingerian diplomacy now reveal that Brazil was never seen as anything more than a "republiquette."

This latest escalation in trade sanctions against Brazil has further enraged already indignant nationalist circles—both military and civilian—who have observed that on the vital question of the foreign debt, the United States has treated its ally, Brazil, as "worse than an enemy." The most widespread commentary is that in transferring 5% of its GNP abroad, Brazil has only earned the imposition of war reparations comparable to those imposed on Weimar Germany. In only five years, Brazil has sent \$55 billion in liquid dollars abroad!

Perhaps this latest U.S. move will prove the last straw for the Sarney government, which has until now meekly accepted the Eastern Establishment's sadistic policy of *the greater the obedience, the greater the punishment*.