

and possible replacement by a government less sympathetic to the present administration. This in turn could bode poorly for Washington's objectives in the area, which already face considerable opposition throughout Europe.

However, by taking up the British cause, the US significantly undercut its own position as the dominant regional power in the Inter-American system. Forced to take sides (or risk alienating both), the Reagan administration opted for Britain, perhaps in the belief that, if necessary, Latin American right-wing allies would be more immediately replaceable, and hence more expendable, than their British counterparts. However, continental dominance always entails the perils of continental dominos: the United States cannot impose sanctions against its Latin American clients and simultaneously maintain the Rio Treaty, the Monroe Doctrine, in short, Pax Americana.

Argentina "betrayed"

Argentina particularly illustrates this dilemma. As a strong anti-communist presence in the Southern Cone, and more recently, as the profferer of military assistance to right-wing regimes in Central America, the Junta has demonstrated an unswerving "friendliness" towards Washington. Indeed, contrary to the more prevalent trend in Third World countries, the Argentine generals have dismissed the notion of "rich" exploitative nations versus a "poor" underdeveloped world. Instead, they have firmly aligned themselves (like South Africa and Brazil) with the Reagan administration's own "Communist versus free world" position. Consequently, US support for Britain has been the source of great acrimonies. As General Galtieri put it in an interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci:

I feel much bitterness towards them, I must say, tremendous deception. Because the Americans know very well that also as a Commander-in-Chief of the Army, that is, before I was President, I tried very hard to be near them and their administration . . . In the future, more than in the present, having good relations [is] more than indispensable. And indeed the rapport I had personally established with the Reagan administration was excellent. The same could be said for all the Argentine officials. We got along really well. We were supposed to do many things together in this continent . . . Indeed, both the Argentines and I see this as a betrayal.

Not only was such a move regarded as a blatant let-down, it was also perceived as having distinctly racist overtones, with the Anglo-American-European bloc indicating their apparent contempt for the Latin world. For the generals it is difficult to accept that Washington, after encouraging precisely the kind of "friendly authoritarian regime" they have built in that country, has not even remained neutral vis-à-vis Britain. Moreover, the only face-saving explanation for their defeat is the myth that they lost against the combined might of two superpowers — Britain and the US. Thus, at least in the short run and for as long as the Junta does not wish to add a "professional" failure to its already tarnished record, they will not be able to normalize relations with the US by puncturing that myth. In the long run, however, the survival of the dictatorship and that of the military establishment still depends upon Washington's support. The realities of Latin American politics may well prove to be stronger than bruised egos and "military honor."

These resentments are not limited solely to the Argen-

tine leadership. In most countries in the region — even those traditionally hostile to Argentina — there has been an overwhelming show of solidarity with the Junta. To some extent, this support may be based on similar self-centred territorial landclaims, such as Guatemala's assertions with regard to Belize, which the regime would likewise like to settle by force. But by and large, it reflects the more generalized antipathy in the region (and the Third World as a whole) towards anything associated with imperialism.

Latin America rethinks

This sensitivity is not purely a mass phenomenon. Even right wing, largely unpopular, dependent regimes in Latin America (whose own existence, ironically, requires perpetuation of unequal relations between developed and underdeveloped nations) tend to regard the region's dominant power with an often barely-concealed rancor. Thus, the military regime in El Salvador, itself engaged in a civil war, in which American aid is pivotal, denounced Washington for having "broken the Inter-American Treaty by supporting Britain." As a peculiar kind of "North-South dialogue," the South Atlantic war exacerbated profuse historical resentments, many of which were already evident at Cancun in 1981. Even in the short term, Washington's backing for Britain created obstacles as it sought to gain Latin support for its current counter-insurgency operations in Central America, where Argentina was a central piece in the offensive in Nicaragua and El Salvador. There is a certain irony in a situation in which the prime destabilizer of US hemispheric dominance has been, in this case, not the USSR, Cuba or Cuban-style revolutionaries, but rather the over-reaction of Washington's closest ally. This in turn may have the immediate effect of bolstering a kind of nationalism absent from the area for at least two decades. It can also enhance a type of solidarity among countries in the region not seen in this century.

These international trends may have, as well, significant domestic repercussions. A realignment of the Latin American military away from its US external constituencies and from the doctrine of internal war and towards a more conventional definition of its role (and of arms procurements) will undoubtedly require a broadening of the internal support base of the state. A return to populism and corporatism as in the thirties is not an impossible alternative here. This will also mean a serious re-assessment, if not rejection, of current monetarist policies of economic development in favor of statism and import-substitution. Of course, all these alternatives remain quite open-ended and fluid. The present system of international and internal domination may have the ability to withstand multiple dysfunctions. In the latter case, the status quo could be maintained after some short period of readjustment.

Opportunity for USSR?

How then, does the Soviet Union fit into this picture? Perhaps more than any other, this question highlights the liabilities of current American foreign policy. Incapable of viewing conflicts except through the prism of East-West confrontation, the US gropes confusedly in light of other realities. Yet, the war in the South Atlantic involved not a threat from without, but rather a mounting and dangerous feud within the Western camp.

Some analysts have expressed concern that currently-strained relations between Latin America and the US