

November 7, 1962

Letter from Arie Meyron, Counselor, the Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, to the Head of the Latin American Desk at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 'Brazil-Cuba'

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Summary:

A letter from Arie Meyron, a Counselor at the Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, to the Head of the Latin American Desk at the Israeli Foreign Ministry about Cuba-Brazil relations and about Brazil's proposal to the Organization of American States (OAS) to create a nuclear-free zone in Latin America.

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... I am most interested in your query regarding Brazil's initiative to create a nuclear-free-zone in Latin America. It is worth while talking about it because at first blush it seems that the source of this initiative are domestic issues as well as a quest to gain publicity...

It all started with a declaration by an OAS conference which took place in Washington during early October this year when the danger that the Cuban Communist activity posed for this region was first discussed. As you might remember, Brazil, at that time, supported the declaration made by Dean Rusk while explaining that that support does not impinge upon Cuban sovereignty etc...

Meanwhile events unfolded the way they did and on 23 October 1962 the OAS council convened to approve President Kennedy's declaration regarding a blockade over Cuba. In addition to that decision, several Latin American countries (Argentina, Columbia, Costa-Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Panama) issued a statement saying that they would be willing to help the US blockade over Cuba by sending their navies as well as using other measures.

Although Brazil was not part of that group it did join the 23 October 1962 decision and by doing so put in doubt its former declarations regarding sovereignty etc. One should note that at that time a certain rumor had spread according to which the Brazilian ambassador to the OAS, who participated in the council meeting on 23 October 1962, allegedly voted for the joint decision although he received no instructions from his government as to how to vote. However this rumor was quickly disproved when the Brazilian ambassador [to the OAS] traveled to Rio a day after the vote [in the OAS council] - they said [at the time] that he was summoned in order to be reprimanded - and explained publically that he had acted under instructions and in full coordination with the government. Moreover, sources close to the ambassador had explained that he would not have dared voting without instructions from the prime minister and foreign minister. The rumors had been evidently spread because of the contradiction in which Brazil found itself.

But if we look at the whole affair objectively we will see that there is no contradiction. The Brazilians said what they said in early October when the issue that was discussed had only regional implications. During the next three weeks events developed in a completely different fashion and Cuba became a Cold War issue... In these circumstances Brazil had to stand with the rest of Latin America to support the West. It was no longer a question of different shades of neutrality... That said, Brazil is still looking for ways, essentially for domestic reasons, to sweeten the [bitter] pill and create the impression that there was continuity [in its foreign policy] from early October [up to now]...