

# Argentina marries Brazil

*Mark Sonnenblick examines the way in which NATO is being extended into Latin America*

With characteristic candor, Brazilian President João Figueiredo described the relationship sealed during his May 14-16 visit to Argentina as "a marriage." The nuptials between the two major nations of South America signifies a dramatic shift in the geopolitics of that whole part of the world.

For centuries relations between the two neighboring republics have been characterized by conflict and suspicion ostentatiously cultivated by Great Britain and then the United States in order to "divide and rule." For 45 years no Brazilian president had set foot in Argentina. And the shift from jealousy to marriage was so swift that while the two ruling generals were hugging and signing a series of agreements, the bulk of their respective military firepower was still concentrated near their common border.

The two presidents agreed to study setting up what the Argentine finance minister later tagged "a Brazilian-Argentine industrial common market." And they penned agreements on joint research in nuclear energy and aerospace, which are already being extended to joint production of jet fighters, training planes, ground-ground rockets and "sidewinder" class air-air rockets.

Although the two former enemies claim in public that they did not form a military alliance, they agreed on "permanent consultation" on all questions of mutual interest, especially the "security" of the Latin American region. As the Brazilian partner put it, "they have begun to think about how many children they are going to have and how to educate them."

With the 1979 formation of the Amazon Pact and political coordination with the Andean Pact, Brazil brought under its wing the much smaller Spanish-speaking neighbors on its west and north which had previously huddled together against Brazil's overbearing might. Now South America's two powers can exercise co-dominion over the Southern Cone area and the South Atlantic.

## How did it happen?

The standard interpretation inside and outside Latin America is that Argentina and Brazil got fed up with

the Carter administration's maladroit harassment of them for developing nuclear energy, for selling their harvests to the Russians and for indiscriminately depriving democrats and terrorists of their civil liberties.

However, a number of curious coincidences suggest that the rapprochement was not engineered exclusively by nationalist tendencies in the Southern Cone. First of all, the two nations joined their destinies only a few months after the West German nuclear consortium KWU won control over Argentina's nuclear construction business. KWU already held Brazil's big nuclear building contract. With "feet in both countries" and every incentive for integrating the two programs, KWU could have been the Godfather. What makes this especially interesting is that last year KWU was taken over lock-stock-and-barrel by Siemens, a German spook outfit whose top brass are hostile to both the development of industry and peaceful use of nuclear energy in the Third World.

Second, the rather astonishing joy with which all sectors of the Anglo-American establishment celebrated the marriage refutes the "breakaway nationalist" analysis. Citing Zbigniew Brzezinski's doctrine of "a multipolar world," the State Department diagnosed the new alliance as "healthy cooperation" and added, "We have to accept Argentina and Brazil as an important center of power in the world."

Dr. Harvey Summ, head of Latin American Studies at the Jesuit Georgetown University (where Ronald Reagan's policies are made) commented on how the "special relationship" Henry A. Kissinger set up with Brazil in February 1976, was now expanded into a "tripod" including Argentina:

The United States never considered Brazil as the "gendarme" of Latin America. That was a misinterpretation. What happened is that Brazil and the United States have complementary economies. Concretely, one is a tropical and the other a non-tropical country. . . . Argentina, on the other hand, produces raw materials which duplicate

those of the United States; hence the friction which has characterized our relations.

The new Argentine-Brazilian alliance will improve the Argentine-Brazilian-United States tripod. For example, Brazil now produces weapons Argentina needs because the Harkin-Kennedy amendment forbids Argentina from obtaining them from the United States. For its part, Argentina can supply Brazil with meat and wheat. . . . In reality, none of the three loses anything with this alliance.

### What is the tripod?

Despite the reluctance of some nationalist factions of the Brazilian and Argentine militaries, the "tripod" is meant to become a military-strategic axis in the Southern Cone. This axis would serve as the Southern Hemisphere component of the Trilateral Commission's design for an aggressive geopolitical grid around the Soviet Union's non-European flanks. This calls for the South American partners to join up with the "China card" and to pump out weapons.

Two weeks after hosting Figueiredo, Argentine President General Jorge Videla flew off for a ten-day state visit to the People's Republic of China. On the way, he landed in Brazil long enough to proclaim that he was setting up Chinese relations not just for Argentina, but for Brazil and the entire Southern Cone.

Videla's "China card" was arranged over a year ago by José Martínez de Hoz, his liberal finance minister and undeniably the real "strongman" of the regime. De Hoz worked out the strategy in meetings with his intimates David Rockefeller and Zbigniew Brzezinski. He explicitly defined Argentina's interest in forging a strategic tie with China as fulfilling the preconditions for Argentina to be welcomed as the fourth arm of David's Trilateral Commission, in which Argentina would then represent "the Third World." Brazil's ex-finance minister and current ambassador to London, Roberto Campos, entertains similar desires and is rumored to be China-bound.

The papering over of Argentine-Brazilian rivalries facilitates the extension of NATO into the South Atlantic. The Brazilians have repeatedly torpedoed such a SATO structure, since it would require a military alliance with South Africa, and that would be incompatible with Brazil's strategy of friendship with black Africa and the Arab world. Now, Brazil's functioning in a *de facto* South Atlantic naval operation could be mediated through Argentina, which openly favors an alliance with South Africa. "Operation Fraternity" exercises announced June 24 might herald a period of such Argentine-Brazilian coordination at sea.

### Militarization

While to some Brazil and Argentina moving into the big leagues seems like a joke, Ray Cline, director of Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies takes it deadly serious. Cline, who trumpets his former job at the CIA to lend himself credibility, issued his triennial box score of "world powers" on June 16. Cline ranks Brazil as *the number three* world power, far behind the Soviets and the U.S., but stronger than any country in Europe or Asia.

Brazil's new friendship with its historic enemy ironically clears away a major stumbling block to rapid military buildup. In the scenarios of Herman Kahn's kooks at the Hudson Institute and other architects of the rearmament plunge, Brazil would supply strategic materials and arms to Japan and the West's "Third World" allies, such as China and Egypt—both of whom recently went on arms shopping trips to Brazil.

Brazil is rapidly emerging as a major military supplier. Arms exports have skyrocketed to about \$600 million this year. Some experts foresee \$5 billion in annual exports soon as its annual \$60 billion industrial output is converted from peace to war products. Such a shift is dictated by financial pressures from the Carter administration and the International Monetary Fund to triage domestic consumption in favor of the exports needed to service Brazil's \$55 billion debt. And, with Brazil's other manufactured exports being shut out by rising protectionism, arms may be the only growth market left.

As Brazilian economic policies increasingly choke off capital-intensive products such as automobiles (Brazil rolls off a million cars per year) and nuclear plants, conversion to military production would be an obvious way to deal with the regime's fears that unemployment would create "a social explosion."

The pride of Brazil's substantial capital goods industry is the almost complete \$250 million nuclear engineering facility designed by KWU and Brazil to turn out 30 power stations by the end of the century. Even with three potential orders from Argentina, the retrenchment of nuclear programs in Brazil and elsewhere will leave the finest engineering machinery in the Third World just piling up debts. It would be logical for Siemens—one of the world's biggest weapons contractors—to favor shifting the big NUCLEP plant from nuclear electricity to conventional weapons. That would give Brazil the precision tolerances and quality control indispensable for churning out semi-sophisticated war materiel in abundance. Argentina could supply the required skilled technicians which Brazil lacks, thanks to its economic wizards systematic cheating on the costs of labor power since 1964.

## 'Now we must decide how many children'

*Following are excerpts from Brazilian President Figueiredo's May 16 press conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina:*

I would say that Brazil and Argentina have always loved each other. They always liked each other, but never did either of the parties, maybe due to pride, try to approach the other. This approach has now been made. It has been successful. We desire fundamental results. I would say that this marriage was in the cards, and now the man and woman, the married couple, have begun to think about how many children they are going to have and how to educate them.

... In my conversation with President Videla we did not deal with any kind of security measures in the South Atlantic. I can say that we exchanged observations on the international situation. The truth is that Argentina's worries in this regard are the same as ours.

## Political, and economic, but also military unity'

*Argentine Foreign Minister Washington Pastor, a career diplomat, gave such a forthright invocation to an Argentine-Brazilian military alliance in an interview with the Brazilian daily O Estado de São Paulo May 3, that the Brazilians compelled him to issue an insincere denial. Excerpts follow:*

**Q:** During the presidents' meeting will it be possible to sign a pact for the South Atlantic equivalent to the one which presently exists for of the North Atlantic?

**A:** Given what is happening in the world, that idea must be taken more seriously now. We must not give ourselves up to the weakness of the NATO countries, the Western European countries and the other countries which have an alliance but do nothing effective to put the brakes on Soviet expansion. For that reason, I say that there must be a real alliance between us—an alliance which serves all purposes, not just economic and political ends, but also military objectives.

If we don't put the brakes on everything that is going on, with penetration in Southeast Asia, in Africa, in Cuba, there'll be 20 or 30 simultaneous points that we won't be able to cover.

**Q:** What is the importance of the rise of Marxist or left radical governments in Central America

**A:** It is a terrible threat, a terrible threat. Just think for a moment about what happened in Nicaragua and is now threatened in El Salvador. It is important that we act intensely in Honduras and Guatemala to try to save them. Cuba is already what it is, and if we lose those Central American countries, the American continent will be completely broken in two. . . . If the Marxists manage to win in Central America, there will be no one able to stop them and they will disturb Mexico to the north and the Andean Pact countries to the south.

Thus we get back to the essence of our conversation, that is, the reason why it is so important for there to be a total alliance with Brazil: the day could come when they couldn't be stopped unless Brazil and Argentina unite.

. . .

. . . Through our complete convergence, our strong union, we can be the brake to guarantee the security and the well-being of other countries having less resources; we can consolidate them and strengthen them. . . .

## 'A plan to sell arms to many countries'

*While plans for joint research in atomic energy and for selling reactor components between Brazil and Argentina (once approved by KWU) are proceeding rapidly, so are contacts for integrating military industries. Aerospace is just the first of "dozens" of military areas in which cooperation will become the rule, according to O Estado de São Paulo June 10. The following are excerpts:*

The arms and equipment produced within the framework of the bi-national agreement which will be signed soon will be for two purposes: first, to supply the domestic markets of the two countries; and second, to modernize and refurbish the armed forces of other nations, especially developing countries. . . . The Argentines are mainly interested in the technology of the "Piranha," an air-to-air missile with an infrared guidance system.

O Estado also reported June 10:

According to the unimpeachable International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, Brazil's military industry is the sixth biggest in the West and was equivalent to 3.5 percent of our GNP in 1978, or approximately \$4 billion. The world's largest factory for wheeled armored vehicles is in São Paulo; . . . it covers the spectrum from super-light to super-heavy. In the area of rockets and missiles, the industry is also quite complex.