

January 18, 1962

**Report from Cultural Attaché at the Israeli Embassy,
Rio de Janeiro, Smeul Benizi, 18 January 1962,
Subject: 'Brazil - Cuban-Latin American Relations'**

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Summary:

Cultural Attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, Smeul Benizi, discusses the proposal from Brazil to the Organization of American States (OAS) suggesting that Cuba become a neutral country, like Finland.

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As part of Brazil's recent drive to become Latin America's leading country, Brazil is about to propose in the foreign ministers conference which the OAS [Organization of American States] set for 22 January, this year, in Punta del Este, [Uruguay,] a plan for Latin American policy toward Cuba.

It is assumed that Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia would support this proposal.

The Cabinet adopted a plan on January 11th and 12th. The foreign minister, Santiago Dantas, presented the proposal during a meeting of Brazilian ambassadors that took place at the ministry.

The details of the proposal are as follows:

Cuba would agree to become a neutral country ("like Finland") and OAS members would work with US and Cuban officials to create a list of "obligations." This would ensure Cuba of non-interference in its internal affairs. On the other hand, Cuba would commit to certain things regarding the sources of its weapons and propaganda in the continent. Viz. [Cuba] would [commit to] not sign agreements with non-continent countries [i.e. the Soviet Union] and would not try to spread its ideology in the continent. In Brazil's opinion, the granting of neutral status to Cuba is better than any other proposal that might bring about interference in Cuba's domestic politics that, in turn, might create a situation of constant lack of trust between Latin American countries.

After hearing the foreign minister's presentation, Cuba's ambassador to Brazil, Joaquin Hernandez Armas, said that the proposal was "splendid and brilliant" and emblematic of Brazil's desire to maintain, during the [forthcoming OAS] conference, a position that supports Cuban independence and non-interference in Cuban affairs, "the only formula that can bring peace to this region."

According to the ambassador, Cuba would fully accept the Brazilian proposal to create a committee that would examine the possibility of a "modus vivendi" with the Cuban government.

Four former Brazilian Foreign Ministers: Jose Carlos de Macedo, Joao Neves de Fontoura, Vincente Paulo Francisco Rao, and Horacio Lafer, wrote a memo to the Foreign Minister (for submission to the Prime Minister) proposing that the government together with other countries in Latin America take a position which would isolate Cuba by severing diplomatic relations. [Such a position, the former foreign ministers argued,] would not impinge on the non-interference principle. This position should isolate dictatorial Castroist Cuba from the OAS because it was wrong to shirk commitments that had already been taken using the pretext of "neutralism." It is interesting to note that the Foreign Minister responded by saying that this memo "showed unanimity on the principle of non-interference."

Best,
Shmuel Benizi,
Cultural attaché