

EXCLUSIVE

Venezuela-Argentina Summit Disrupts Carter Strategy For Latin America

Scarcely a week after his successful organizing tour through the Middle East, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez (CAP) has masterminded the creation of an anti-Wall Street development axis in Latin America. CAP and Argentine President Lt. Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla ended a three-day summit in Caracas May 12 with a joint declaration advocating the regional development of nuclear energy and other high technology industries. The communique also endorsed the Non-Aligned movement's Colombo Action Program, which calls for Third World debt moratorium and the creation of a new international monetary system.

In speeches at a state banquet prior to the signing of the joint declaration May 12, both presidents warned the New York banks that they are actively considering debt moratoria: they praised the 1903 Argentine "Drago Doctrine," through which the Argentines at that time protested the use of European gunboat diplomacy to enforce the collection of Venezuela's foreign debt, after that country declared a moratorium. As President Videla stated at the banquet, Argentina gives its full backing to the Drago Doctrine thesis "that prohibits the use of force for the collection of debts between states." CAP, in the traditional presidential exchange of gifts, presented to Argentine President Videla a book on the Drago Doctrine and another on the famous Argentine republican statesman, Sarmiento.

With these politically aggressive accords, agriculturally-rich Argentina and oil-wealthy Venezuela have thrown the Carter Latin American strategy askew. The reaffirmation of the traditional Venezuela-Argentina political "axis" along explicitly pro-development, pro-peace lines is a strong counterweight to the U.S. Administration attempts to simultaneously isolate pro-development government of President Perez from the rest of Latin America, and push Argentina into a fascist South Atlantic Treaty Organization (SATO). Such a SATO alliance, including Brazil and possibly South Africa, would be used as a shockforce both against the liberation struggles in southern Africa, and against the "democratic north" of South America — particularly Venezuela.

The resounding success of the trip has significantly stabilized and strengthened Videla within Argentina, undercutting the "watergating" destabilization efforts of the pro-SATO ultra-hardliners around Navy Minister Emilio Massera and Buenos Aires province governor, retired Gen. Iberico St.-Jean. While Videla has not hesitated, since the military coup of March 1976, to implement the IMF austerity dictates, he has been pushing a policy of limited "democratic opening" sharply opposed by the pro-Chile model military faction.

Just days prior to the Venezuela-Argentina summit,

Carter had dispatched his State Department Undersecretary for Interamerican Affairs, Terence Todman, for meetings with both Perez and Videla — as well as with Brazilian and Bolivian officials — in an attempt to strong-arm them into line. Todman's efforts were singularly unsuccessful.

Trying to exacerbate tensions and pit Brazil against the emerging Argentine-Venezuelan axis, Todman declared from Caracas May 11 that the Carter government "is not willing to accept the policies of the Nixon and Ford governments, according to which Brazil is the leading nation of Latin America."

His statements — covered over with "clarifications" issued days later by U.S. Embassy in Brazil — provoked a predictably paranoid reaction from Brazilian press layers, and a defensive response from Brazil's Chancellor, Itamaraty.

Both CAP and Videla were quick to counter Todman's provocations. In a press conference especially for Argentine journalists May 13, Perez stated that "those who speak of Brazil as a nation that plans to open a new im-

The Story Of The Drago Doctrine

In 1902, the Venezuelan government of President Cipriano Castro, confronted with a grave economic crisis, took recourse to the declaration of a moratorium on the entirety of its international debt obligations. At that time Venezuela's principal creditors were Germany, Great Britain, and Italy, and these three countries responded to Castro's move by blockading five Venezuelan ports with a joint naval task force, sinking three Venezuelan ships, and threatening continued armed aggression until Castro promised to meet his obligations.

The Roosevelt government in the U.S., fearing direct geographic expansion in Latin America by their Rothschild monetarist competition, interceded to force the Europeans to withdraw their warships and to arm-twist Castro into accepting binding international arbitration at The Hague. Ultimately Castro was forced to make good on his obligations to the Europeans.

During these events, all of Latin America — with the exception of Argentina — remained conspicuously silent or else sided openly with the Europeans and U.S. monetarists. Argentine Foreign Minister Drago, however, issued a policy statement, which later become known as the Drago Doctrine, in which he argued that "public debt cannot occasion armed intervention...by a European power."

perialism in the region are not the Brazilians, but the enemies of Latin American integration." By offering to include Brazil in a pro-development continental alliance, CAP has strengthened the hand of the anti-SATO faction within that country. Argentine president Videla similarly declared that "we believe in an integrated (Latin) America, in which Brazil...our brother and neighbor, has a place."

Perez Offers Argentina Partnership In Democratic Development

Excerpts from the banquet speech of President Perez honoring President Videla, in Caracas, May 11:

Argentina and Venezuela were born to history with common aspirations to liberty and democracy, to the value of the human being and the dignity of culture. We are conscious, Mr. President, of the efforts you are making as Argentine chief of state, within very dramatic circumstances, to find a road for your country and for your people to return the Argentine nation to the wide and certain way of representative democracy. It is not for us to judge the deeds or circumstances of national life, but only to observe with faith and optimism that there is a firm decision to travel Argentina's path towards her irrevocable destiny of a great Latin American nation.

The Argentine Republic is daily growing closer to us in the common task of forging the economic independence of our peoples...in joining our destinies with irrenounceable will to the global battle of the Third World for a new international economic order.

We cannot and should not ignore responsibilities in the common effort to assure world peace. The effective control of nuclear energy, so that it is not used for belicose ends and, fundamentally in our case, so that its ominous presence does not obscure the horizon of our Latin America;...

Venezuela concedes fundamental importance to the resumption of the Geneva Conference to put an end to the conflict in the Middle East, guaranteeing the existence of Israel and recognizing the sacred and unquestionable right of the Palestine people to have their national homeland.

The problem of human rights acquires a dramatic position in our historic moment. The circumstances in which the nations of our continent and of the entire world live, faced with situations of social dissolution that disturb the most profound foundations of our mature communities, and which sink the leadership of our peoples in a sea of confusion, are very complex...

Equal to this painful reality is the presence of terrorism, in its most foul and horrendous forms, to subvert peace and to create deep traumas of insecurity and collective intimidation that make the normal action

of governments impossible. Despite all of this, we think that no ideological principle or any pragmatic reasoning whatever can accept as sane that which violates the dignity of the human being.

I pronounce these words, senor President, in full awareness of the difficult and vigorous task that your Government carries out to give direction to the democratic destiny of the Argentine nation. For this we receive you in Venezuela with hope, as a ruler prepared to open the way in our continent to a democratic Latin America.

I must make mention here of that tragic Venezuelan emergency, when we received from Argentina her fraternal moral assistance in the action of the eminent Chancellor Luis Maria Drago, dear to the Venezuelan spirit. (Those foreign forces) would have humiliated our then-fragile Venezuela, convalescent, prostrate from the effects of the dissolving effects of "caudillismo." Great and powerful nations of the Old Continent committed the outrage of blockading our coasts to aid in the absurd collection of their excessive claims. Chancellor Drago, with all the weight of the Argentine republic behind him, brilliantly expounded on the principle that founded the doctrine of his respected name. We acknowledge this deed of recent history with the recognition and gratitude that demands our eternal solidarity with Argentina.

Videla Affirms Drago Doctrine

The following are excerpts from the speech of Argentine president Lt. Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla at a state banquet in Caracas, May 11.

American public law consecrated principles which, in that epoch (early 19th century), were singularly novel; the juridical equality of nations and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States acquired, in these latitudes, the category of fundamental criteria.

...it was precisely, with motive of the armed intervention of foreign powers in Venezuela, that an Argentine Foreign Minister maintained the thesis that prohibits the use of force to collection of debts between nations.

Since then, the Drago Doctrine forms part of International Law....

Argentina and Venezuela, from their corresponding perspectives, can and must join efforts for the realization of their common destiny.

The rapid and vigorous, powerful, strong growth of Venezuela is a singular example in the continent.

For its part, Argentina has resumed vigorously the rhythm of its growth in all areas including those fields that require the most advanced technology and whose accomplishments we wish to share, peacefully and fruitfully, with all fraternal peoples of our America...

We attribute great importance to uniting the countries of the continent in the search for solid and constructive common positions.