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The German–Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

When Señor Azeredo da Silveira, the Foreign Minister of Brazil, recently visited Bonn, both his country and the Federal Republic signed a treaty on cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Orders for the first two of altogether eight atomic power stations to be supplied by German industry to Brazil will presently be placed. The first agreement enables the most comprehensive nuclear cooperation ever cultivated so far between the nations. German–Brazilian cooperation covers the entire nuclear fuel cycle from prospecting work for uranium ores to the disposal of the radioactive waste products emitted. West German industry is not only to supply eight nuclear power stations but also a plant for manufacturing fuel rods; it is intended to cooperate in producing enriched uranium fuel and in the construction of a spent-fuel recycling pilot-plant. In the Federal Republic's economic interest are also Brazilian supplies of natural uranium ore. The contract value of the eight nuclear power stations has been estimated to total about DM 10 bn.

These sums involved and the fact that German nuclear technology will thus manage to enter a market hitherto shared out exclusively between the two US-based multinationals, General Electric and Westinghouse, are sufficient reason for the final completion of the agreement having been a risk up to the last minute. It was conceivable that political intervention by the Americans might still have blocked the agreement at the last minute.

Even after negotiations about the cooperation pact had been completed on February 12, 1975, American agencies still displayed a feverish activity. On April 7, a US mission of experts had entreated the Bonn Government to postpone final decision on the agreement with Brazil. Immediately before the documents came up for signature, US reactions became absolutely melodramatic. For a long time US competitors attempted to preempt the big construction orders tied to the general agreement and to push German nuclear technology out of the race, and it was this which had given the whole bargain its political flavour.

US Senator Pastore during a debate in the Senate about foreign policy and military spending denounced the alleged risks implied by the agreement. A

country "situated below the belt of the US" would be thus enabled to manufacture nuclear weapons, which would bring about "a Cuban situation". The Senator called for diplomatic steps "on the highest level" even before the treaty was signed. A demarche of the US Secretary of State himself was not thought impossible in Bonn. Moreover, it could not be overlooked that the Federal Republic is heavily dependent on the US for its own supplies of nuclear fuels.

Bonn, on its side, openly called the statement – that signing the treaty implied helping Brazil eventually to acquire atomic bombs – a "deliberate deception". Brazil which had never signed the non-proliferation agreement on atomic weapons had made binding promises that went far beyond the requirements of precisely that agreement. The West German authorities also pointed to the fact that – when similar agreements had been negotiated for in the past – foreign competitors had already used the tactics of disseminating deceptive rumours.

For German nuclear industry depending on exports this situation was not a novel experience. Already other orders that had seemed "sown up tightly" were filched away by the two big American "multies" with dirty methods at the last minute. In Yugoslavia, it was the agreement that the Germans would never be capable of supplying the needed uranium fuel, and Westinghouse obtained the order. A similar trick succeeded in Spain: An order for six nuclear power stations had appeared certain, but in the last minute, Westinghouse got it, partly because it participated in several Spanish electric utility companies. In Iran, the rumour was spread that the German *Kraftwerksunion* had "blown up" – but there the Germans succeeded in landing the order, notwithstanding. Argentina was threatened with a US embargo on the supply of heavy water for the projected heavy-water reactor to burn natural uranium, and with a "reconsideration" of US development aid. But also there, a German company eventually made the running. The dream of the omnipotence dreamt by the two American giants in the market, Westinghouse and General Electric, is likely to be over now.

Klaus Kwasniewski