

The Brazilian Participation in World War II

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Brazil participated in World War II shoulder to shoulder with the Allies and what this participation brought to the country. During the 1930s, when the relationship between Brazil and Germany was improving yearly, and when it was supposed Brazil would support Germany in case of war, Brazilian leaders could drive the country to support the Allies cause, mainly the United States of America, allowing this country to set aerial bases in Brazilian North East region, in order to facilitate a connection with North of Africa. Moreover, the option in sending a Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF) to fight for the Allied in Italy was one of the most important decisions in Brazilian history. It was the first time that Brazil would take part in a war away from South America. The BEF did its best to well represent Brazil, overcoming several difficulties since its preparation and eventually, showing the Brazilian soldiers could fight as equal as the best soldiers in that war. Brazilian participation is almost unknown by countries away from South America, even here in United States; however, this participation was responsible for several transformations in Brazilian's nation powers. After the war, Brazil became the most powerful and wealthy country in South America. And due to this participation, the country became a global actor. It could be demonstrated for the Brazilian support to the creation of the United Nations. The Brazilian participation in World War II, doubtless, was the engine that transforms the country economically, politically, and militarily.

--iii--

Acknowledgments

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Acknowledgements to the excellent support and research assistance rendered by the CARL personnel, especially Mr. Mike Browne.

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--iv--

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<u>Abstract</u>	iii
<u>Acknowledgments</u>	iv
<u>Acronyms</u>	vi
<u>Illustrations</u>	vii
<u>Tables</u>	viii
<u>Chapter 1. Introduction</u>	1
Problem Statement	7
Proposed Research Question	13
Subsidiary Questions	14
Limitations	15
<u>Chapter 2. Brazil Joins Allied Cause</u>	18
<u>Chapter 3. Brazil Goes to War</u>	34
<u>Chapter 4. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force</u>	47
Strategic and Operational Overviews	47
The Brazliian Expeditionary Force Deploys to Italy to Join the Allies	51
<u>Chapter 5. Conclusion Post War Events</u>	69
<u>Bibliography</u>	81

Acronyms

AIB	Ação Integralista Brasileira
BEF	Brazilian Expeditionary Force
EID	Expeditionary Infantry Division
ESG	Escola Superior de Guerra
FMM	French Military Mission

Illustrations

		<i>Page</i>
Figure 1.	Brazilian Expeditionary Force Campaign in the Italian Theater and the Major Operations	48
Figure 2.	Brazilian Shoulder Patch	57

Tables

		<i>Page</i>
Table 1.	Brazilian-Germanic Commerce	5
Table 2.	Brazilian Commerce	22

Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the toughest decisions Brazil had to make in its history was its participation in World War II in order to support the Allies against the Axis. Although Brazil had fought in World War I as an ally of the United States, Great Britain, and France, with assets from the Navy, Medical Corps, and Army observers, the country's internal situation had changed significantly since then¹.

After World War I, Brazil realized that it was vital to establish a capable Army to protect and to defend the country. The Brazilian Armed Forces were small and ill-equipped in weapons and modern material. Some state police forces, such as São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Minas Gerais, had bigger and more professional troops than the Brazilian Army.² Based on the experience of Brazilian Army Observers embedded with French units during World War I, Brazil agreed with France in 1919 to establish a French Commission in Brazil known as the French Military Mission (Missão Militar Francesa).³ The task of this organization was to assist the Army and undertake modifications that would bring the Brazilian Army to the same level as European armies. This transformation was undertaken over twenty years and was designed to improve Brazilian Army schools, doctrine, and equipment. The commission's mission was terminated in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II.

The French Military Mission (FMM) undertook a great effort to improve the Brazilian Army; however, the primary mission assigned to the Brazilian Army since the Proclamation of the Republic, in 1889, was to contain internal rebellions and secessionist movements such as the Canudos rebellion in 1897 and 1898 in Bahia province. As a

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result, the Brazilian Army remained the same from the end of the nineteenth century up to 1939. Brazil did not take advantage of the lessons acquired in World War I. In fact, these constabulary missions constantly assigned did not prepare the Army for fighting a conflict like World War II.⁴

During the 1920s, several internal movements against the central government erupted, many of them with the participation of Army officers. The best known movement was "Tenentismo," when several officers, mainly lieutenants, rebelled and tried a coup to depose the Brazilian President in 1922.⁵ The aim of these officers was to transform Brazil into a developed country with a strong Armed Force. They believed that it was impossible to do so considering the government of Brazil at that time. This movement was defeated by troops that were loyal to the government, and the rebel officers were sent to prison for a short period. However, the officers' ideas were spread throughout the country, and they played an important role in bringing Getúlio Vargas to the presidency in 1930.

Brazil was an underdeveloped country, and its economy was predominately based on exporting agricultural products, mainly coffee and raw materials. The country's infrastructure was poor with few energy plants, railroads, roads, and industries. The population was predominantly rural, illiterate, and poor. The country had a short life expectancy and poor sanitation conditions. Politics was dominated by regional powers that were more interested in keeping their dominance and wealth than developing the country.⁶

For more than twenty years, the Brazilian presidency alternated amongst politicians from two states (São Paulo and Minas Gerais), where the richest farmers and

the most powerful politicians were concentrated. This political cabal was called "coffee and milk," due to what these states produced, coffee in São Paulo and milk in Minas Gerais.⁷

In 1930, São Paulo tried to maintain this tradition, and, in fact, the candidate Kúlio Prestes from São Paulo won the election against Getúlio Vargas, but the opposition parties cried fraud, declaring Getúlio Vargas had won. Then, Getúlio Vargas, from Rio Grande do Sul, came to power due to a movement supported by the Brazilian Army, which deposed President Washington Luis.⁸

Getúlio Vargas assumed office just after the American Great Depression hit in 1929, with the aim of developing Brazil and changing its economy from agricultural to industrial-based. His dream was to create the foundations for Brazilian industrialization and to provide all resources needed, such as steel, to enable the country to produce and export manufactured products. Vargas knew he had to expand exportation by Brazil in order to achieve his goals. Therefore, the Foreign Ministry worked to establish trade agreements with other countries. These countries included Germany, Italy, France, and the United States of America. The success of these efforts contributed to Brazil's industrial expansion and financial wealth.⁹

During the 1930s, internal politics in Brazil had several similarities to the struggles occurring in Europe between left wing and right wing parties.¹⁰ For example, a party known as the Ação Integralista Brasileira (Brazilian Integralist Action), which was established in 1932 as a deliberate imitation of European fascist parties, performed Nazi rituals and supported Hitler's action. From 1933 onward, this right-wing party was involved in demonstrations and struggles against liberals and leftists.¹¹ On one occasion

at Praça da Sé (São Paulo), in 1934, fourteen people died due to a struggle between these two factions.¹²

President Getúlio Vargas was sympathetic to Nazifascism, when it took over Germany and Italy. He was also sympathetic to "strong" regimes in general, where the centralized government could run the country without any opposition. President Vargas's sympathy became apparent when he overruled the Constitution and became a dictator in 1937.¹³ President Vargas demonstrated an ambiguity concerning the Ação Integralista Brasileira Party. On one hand, he took advantage of this party because it was against communism and did what he could not do as president. Yet, this party also started to create internal problems and had to be eliminated before it became so strong that it would undermine Vargas' government. In 1937, Vargas outlawed the Ação Integralista Brasileira and Communist parties and ordered their dismantlement. He also banned Nazi political activity in all of the Brazilian provinces. At that time, Vargas, due to internal pressure, aligned his government towards a "nationalist policy," and he avoided familiarity with

fascist regimes. Regardless of this alignment, radicalism was still evident within the Brazilian society, and the power of the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship increased gradually beginning in 1937.¹⁴ After World War II, the Brazilian Army would play an important role in ending this dictatorship.

Brazil had accepted large numbers of Italian and German immigrants for more than one hundred years, prior to World War II, and their descendents had secured important positions within the Brazilian government and society, including the Brazilian Armed Forces. They had a significant influence on decision makers. In the 1930s, German immigrants numbered more than 900,000 and the Italians more than 1,500,000.¹⁵

--4--

Most of them lived in the south and southeast, the two more developed regions in Brazil. These immigrants integrated and interacted well with Brazilians, building a good base for friendship between these two countries.

The relationship between Brazil and Germany after Adolf Hitler became chancellor was strengthened year after year up to 1940. Germany became the second most important trading partner of Brazil, just behind the United States. Germany imported raw materials and agricultural products, and exported manufactured goods to Brazil. Establishing a strategic commercial bond with Brazil was one of their objectives. The Brazilian Army believed that it would be easier to exchange Brazilian coffee, cotton, iron, and others for German weaponry than to purchase similar items from the United States for the currency of international acceptance or gold.¹⁶ Table 1 illustrates how this relationship increased from 1933 to 1937 and contributed to the growth of Brazilian economy.¹⁷

Table 1. Brazilian-Germanic Commerce

Year	Base
1933	100,00
1934	163,55
1935	300,77
1936	335,14
1937	435,55

Source: Ricardo Antonio Silva Seitenfus, *O Brasil de Getúlio Vargas e a formação dos Blocos: 1930-1942. O Processo do Envolvimento Brasileiro na II Guerra Mundial* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1985), 81-83.

The Brazil-Germany relationship was broader than depicted in table 1. The economic relationship was the most visible of the contracts, which also included a great

--5--

intensification in diplomatic and military issues. Brazil and Germany's relationship became so evident that the cooperation between these two countries was perceived as a possible problem in South America by the United States. The Brazilian political scientist Ricardo Seidenfus stated in 1985:

Business, law and enforcement, political, diplomatic and military relationships between the two countries grew so much that the USA got scared. Warned by the press, they were worried about the Nazi activity in Brazil and tried to fight against the growth of the German position--mainly in the business field. The close relationship between Brazil and Germany was evident in their business affairs, the anti-communist fight, the law and enforcement cooperation and, eventually, the growing influence of the Nazi-Germans in Brazil.¹⁸

In spite of the solid relationship with Germany and Italy, Brazilian diplomats were careful to avoid becoming identified with the international ambitions of Nazi Germany and continued to stress the importance of a close relationship with the United States.¹⁹ This relationship was the reason why Brazil and the United States were still negotiating military exchange programs, as well as cooperation in a possible war, which could affect the Western Hemisphere. The United States pushed for American countries' support, such as Brazilian support, realizing that a war was imminent. During this period, Brazil had two possible courses of action: the first was to choose the United States as an ally, and the second was to choose Germany as an ally. Several agreements favored the second option; however, the Brazil-United States relationship would prove to be stronger, more profitable, and more reliable than the relationship with Germany.²⁰

Among the problems stated above, there was one problem between Brazil and Argentina that existed even before World War I. Brazil and Argentina disputed the supremacy as a major regional power in South America. Getúlio Vargas undertook several actions to diminish the friction between the two countries, such as the Tratado de

--6--

Conciliação e de Não-Recurso à Guerra (Treaty of Conciliation and Non-Recourse to War) signed in 1933.²¹ However, most of the time, Brazil and Argentina were on opposite sides. This situation would last until 1982, when Brazil provided diplomatic support to Argentina during the Malvinas (Falklands) War.

Problem Statement

Brazil's shift from pro-Axis or neutrality to Allied status was an important stage in history.

At the outset of World War II, Brazil was not economically and militarily prepared to overcome its neutrality and to join the Allies. Brazil had solid relationships with both Germany and the United States. Therefore, the country was divided and would remain on the "razor's edge" to stay neutral. This neutrality existed for almost two years after the outbreak of war.

President Getúlio Vargas conducted what some Brazilian historians, such as Hélio Silva and Mécio Scalécio, have called a "pendulum" policy, as this policy was known. He attempted to take as much as possible from both the United States and Germany. The Brazilianist,²² Frank McCann, stated how Vargas performed:

In the 1930s both Germany and the United States sought to maintain Brazil's export orientation. Their interests were strategic rather than ideological. Getúlio Vargas attempted to set the country on a developmental course in such fashion that trade with both the major powers would continue, thereby securing the support of the external sector. At the same time he sought to convince Germany and the United States that aiding Brazilian development would be in their interest, thereby calming the internal sector. ... It was a delicate game that demanded a constant balance of interest.²³

Brazil also participated in continental meetings that took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1936, in Lima, Peru in 1938, and Havana, Cuba in 1940.²⁴ These meetings

--7--

emphasized the good relationship among the American countries and stated agreements for mutual defense if an American country were attacked. Brazil's policy remained the same, attempting as much as possible to maintain neutrality; however, the government of Brazil signed all agreements and committed itself to help the American countries if any were subject to Axis aggression. However, by the Law Number 1561, of 2 September 1939, Brazil declared its neutrality. Ricardo Seitenfus emphasized the main articles of this law and how they fit into Vargas' pendulum policy. Article 23 stated that "whatever hostile act against ships from non-belligerents countries in Brazilian waters and airspace would be considered an offense to Brazil and could undermine its neutral position." This article would result in Brazil declaring war against Germany and its allies:

1st Article. Brazilian government will not order any action to facilitate, help or restrain belligerent actions, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, neither citizens nor foreign residents will be allowed to practice any act that could be considered incompatible with the neutrality duties of the country.

2nd Article. No act that could be considered offensive to the Brazilian neutrality, on the part of the belligerents, will be accepted in the Brazilian territory, comprehending national waters (rivers or ocean) and air space.

3rd Article. War ships and their hostages will not be accused of offending the country's neutrality if they simply navigate through Brazilian waters.

8th Article. It is absolutely forbidden for belligerents to use Brazilian waters as a naval operation base against their enemies. It is equally forbidden for them to receive, in the Brazilian ports, groceries directly from other ships of any nationality.

18th Article. Belligerent ships arriving in Brazilian ports, bays or anchorages will drop anchor in the place ordered by local authorities, in perfect tranquility and peace, in relation to all the surrounding ships, even war ships from another belligerent country.

23rd Article. Every hostility act, comprehending capture and visit right permission, practiced by a belligerent ship or aircraft in Brazilian territorial waters or in its air space will be considered as a violation of the Brazilian neutrality and will offend the Nation's sovereignty. The Federal Government will ask the

--8--

belligerent government not only for explanations of the fact, but also to provide repair for damage caused.²⁵

Brazil took advantage of its neutrality to continue to trade with Europe. The situation changed only when Germany declared a maritime blockade in the Atlantic Ocean against American countries, and indicted that it would undertake all necessary measures to maintain this blockade. Germany also stated that countries like Brazil and the United States, which were supporting France and Great Britain with supplies, would be attacked.²⁶

As a result, Germany dispatched submarines (U-boats) to torpedo merchant ships that operated from Brazil to Europe. This action perpetrated by Germany sank significant numbers of Brazilian ships and killed many sailors. These attacks against unarmed Brazilian merchant ships were the turning point in the Brazilian public's opinion about Germany and its behavior. People held demonstrations all over the country, in which the Brazilian population pressured the president and the government to retaliate against the German attacks. President Getúlio Vargas could not maintain Brazilian neutrality for much longer and consequently had two private discussions with the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, explaining that Brazil would cooperate with the United States and list what the country would require concerning finance, equipment, and training from the United States.²⁷

Escalating the crisis, Japan carried out a surprise attack at Pearl Harbor. As a result, the United States found itself at war against Japan, Germany, and Italy due to the Axis alliance. Due to agreements negotiated in Buenos Aires, Lima, and Havana; and attacks by German U-boats against Brazilian merchant ships along the Brazilian coast line, Brazil joined the United States as an ally in the war against Germany, Italy, and

--9--

Japan. Brazil terminated diplomatic relations with Germany, Japan, and Italy on 22 January 1942, and started to prepare to fight in the Atlantic Ocean, North of Africa and in Europe.²⁸

Brazil gave up its policy of neutrality, overcame internal problems, and joined Allied Forces against the Axis in Europe. The "pendulum policy" practiced by Vargas for five years to take advantage from both sides was no longer effective. Vargas, pressured by public opinion and the Armed Forces, was also afraid of an invasion by Germany in the Northeast Region of Brazil and declared war against the Axis on 22 August 1942. Even before, Brazil had authorized aerial bases in some areas in the Northeast Region to sustain Allied efforts against Axis in North of Africa and to protect merchant ships on the way to Europe. The historian, Joseph Smith, summarized how Brazil could no longer keep its neutrality and its problems to join the Allied side:

Vargas was under great pressure to abandon the policy of neutrality. In fact, the attitude of the Brazilian public towards the Second World War was very similar to that shown at the outbreak of the First World War. Although opinion was generally in favor of Britain and France, there was no desire for Brazil to join the war. Furthermore, the government and military leaders were only too well aware that the country was militarily weak and ill-prepared. Nevertheless, it was known that Brazil could not avoid being directly affected by expanding conflict. A major concern was the inadequacy of the Brazilian Navy to protect the Northeast coastline or "bulge" from external attack. There was also anxiety that disaffected pro-German elements in the South might provoke civil unrest or even encourage an opportunistic Argentine invasion. In addition, there were adverse economic consequences caused by the establishment of a British naval blockade that virtually terminated Brazil's formerly profitable trade with Germany.²⁹

Eventually, when the decision to support the Allies was made, Brazil was not prepared for war. The economy was still dependent on the exports of agriculture, raw materials, and importation of manufactured products. The Brazilian Armed Forces were outdated with respect to equipment and training. Brazil required massive support to

--10--

prepare its shore defense and arm and equip its troops to support the Allies mission. For this reason, Brazil took almost nineteen months to establish an expeditionary divisional force, which was trained and ready to be deployed. This division and its support troops would be known as the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF). World War II was the first war the Brazilian Army became involved beyond its boundaries since the War of Triple Alliance against Paraguay (1865 to 1870), and some skirmishing with Bolivia in 1903.³⁰

The history of the BEF is noteworthy. There was a popular saying among Brazilians that "it is easier for a snake to smoke than for Brazil to go to war." When Brazil finally overcame its internal problems and sent the first contingent to Naples, in Italy, the BEF adopted a special badge called the "smoking cobra."³¹ This action proved Brazil was able to send troops and to fight for democracy in Italy.

This thesis will demonstrate how Brazil's involvement in World War II was possible for the country to overcome many difficulties in less than two years, regarding the national powers; the Army doctrine and equipment inadequacy; and, eventually, the transformation from a dictatorial regime to a democracy. It was remarkable for

Brazilian history that Brazil became the only Latin America country to send troops to Europe.

The thesis will also articulate how Brazil undertook a huge effort to prepare the BEF and highlight the difficulties encountered in mobilizing its people and resources. These problems were well explained by BEF Commander, Marshal Mascarenhas de Moraes, who wrote the book, *A FEB Por Seu Comandante* (BEF by its Commandant), in which he articulated all the procedures that were taken to prepare BEF to be deployed to Italy, in 1944.

--11--

The BEF history is still being written. Historians, scholars, and students in different areas are researching unique issues relative to the BEF. For example, recruitment systems, leadership in small units, health issues, combat stress, and personnel assistance are all research topics. The Brazilian Armed Forces also took advantage of the lessons learned in World War II to improve their readiness for employment that are relevant today, such as personnel and equipment mobilization. This thesis also provides a unique opportunity to outline BEF history for the Command and General Staff College, which was the school for many Brazilian officers in 1942 to 1944, when the country became an ally and adopted American doctrine. Most of these officers were part of the BEF that operated in Italy in 1944 and 1945.³²

World War II impacted the entire globe and involved several participants that were far removed from the conflict. Brazil was part of the so-called "periphery" of the world, because of its geographical position, its economic development, and its view of the war in Europe as a European problem. However, Brazil went to war with the Allied powers and performed well, even with internal problems regarding the social-economic underdevelopment, weak and dependent economy, and the ill-prepared Armed Forces. When the Brazilian government decided to join the Allies effort, the Nation was dedicated to support the Brazilian forces in World War II.³³

Brazilian participation in World War II was responsible for its major transformations. The dictatorship in the country ended because there was no sense in fighting for freedom in Europe and maintaining a dictatorial regime at home. Industrialization of the nation increased due to income received during the war, and a steel industry was established, reducing Brazilian external dependence. This

--12--

industrialization allowed, among others things, the establishment of an automobile manufacturing industry in Brazil. The Armed Forces transformed and became better equipped. Brazilian government and society understood that Brazil was now part of the world and that it had to think in global terms. Therefore, Brazil's involvement in World War II was a pivotal factor in the establishment of its democracy, industrial and economic transformation in South America, and entry into the global world arena.³⁴

Brazil was the only Latin America country that joined the Allied side in the two World Wars. Brazil's role in both wars was minor compared to the major powers, like the United States of America, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. However, this participation distinguished Brazil among the South American countries and initiated one of the major transformations in that region, as emphasized by Joseph Smith: "Participation in the Second World War resulted in Brazil surpassing Argentina to become the leading military power in South America."³⁵

Brazil not only surpassed Argentina in military power, but also in economic strength and international diplomacy. The country industrialized, built a huge infrastructure in roads and electricity plants, and reestablished its democracy, thus becoming the major regional power in South America.

Proposed Research Question

To complete this thesis it is necessary to answer the primary research question: How did Brazil become an effective ally in World War II?

--13--

Subsidiary Questions

Bearing the research question in mind, additional questions will be addressed to provide clarity to the primary research question to comprehend all the variables involved:

1. What were the main agreements with the United States?
2. What were the Brazilian interests in participating?
3. How did Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF) contribute to the Allied effort during World War II?
4. What were the major contributions for the country of Brazilian participation in World War II?

The thesis will be structured with this introduction, three chapters and the conclusion. Chapter 2 will develop the background and processes between Brazil and United States that facilitated Brazilian mobilization and preparation for World War II, demonstrating the importance of the Lend-Lease Agreement for Brazil and the political-military agreement signed on 23 May 1942. This chapter will address why Brazil overcame its neutrality and joined the Allied effort against the Axis. This chapter will also highlight how the contribution of Brazil to the North of Africa invasion by allowing the United States to establish aerial bases in the Brazilian Northeast Region (the bulge). Chapter 3 will develop the difficulties Brazil had before deploying the BEF to Italy. Chapter 3 will also outline how BEF was organized. Chapter 4 will discuss the history of BEF in Italy, providing a comprehensive overview of the entire Brazilian Italian Campaign. In this chapter the main battles will be summarized. Chapter 5, Conclusion, will outline the

transformation that occurred in Brazil, and how Brazilian participation in World War II was the pivotal reason for Brazil's transformation into a democracy,

--14--

initiated several improvements within the Brazilian Army, and involved Brazil in the international arena, summarizing the relevant points, supporting the thesis.

Limitations

The thesis will cover primarily the period from 1936, when Brazil took part in the first meeting of American States in Buenos Aires, to 1945 when World War II ended. This period is very important to understand why Brazil decided to join the Allied side and allowed United States to install airbases in Northeast Region of Brazil. The thesis will not explain how United States deployed its troops, nor how units operated from bases in Brazil.

The BEF Campaign in Italy will be summarized as a whole and the battles themselves will not be detailed. The thesis will provide an overview of BEF and its service during the war. There will not be any battle analysis explaining tactical procedures or how troops were employed in combat.

The thesis will be based on the Army perspective and employment; even sometimes the Navy and the Air Force may be part of the subjects articulated. The reason for this is that the Navy and the Air Force role during the World War II were more related to the coastline patrol and defense of the Northeast Region. The BEF was organized with one fighter squadron, but this unit was under the American command during all Italian Campaign, providing close air support to BEF when it was necessary. The thesis will also emphasize the difficulties Brazil faced along the process that culminated on the declaration of war on Axis countries. Moreover, this paper will also highlight how the country overcame the difficulties to prepare and deploy BEF within the Allied side after its arrival in Italy.

--15--

Chapter 1 Footnotes:

- [1.](#) Joseph Smith, "Brazil and the Two World Wars," *The Historian* (2004): 16.
- [2.](#) Frank D. McCann, Jr., "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 1 (May 1980), 115.
- [3.](#) Ann Doris Medal, "The Smoking Cobra: The Brazilian Expeditionary Forces in Italy during World War II" Research Project, San Jose State University, 1976, 4.
- [4.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 113.

[5.](#) Ricardo A. S. Seitenfus, *O Brasil de Getúlio Vargas e a Formação dos Blocos: 1930-1942. O Processo do Envolvimento Brasileiro na II Guerra Mundial* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1985), 7.

[6.](#) Seitenfus, XVIII.

[7.](#) *Ibid.*, 11.

[8.](#) *Ibid.*, 26.

[9.](#) Rui G. Granzieira, "Engagements of War and Economic Planning in Brazil 1942-1955" *Entreprises Et Histoire* no. 19, (1998): 77.

[10.](#) Seitenfus, 42. [11.](#) Smith, 19.

[12.](#) Seitenfus, 59.

[13.](#) *Ibid.*, 60.

[14.](#) *Ibid.*, 142.

[15.](#) *Ibid.*, 69 and 102.

[16.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 117.

[17.](#) Seitenfus, 81.

[18.](#) *Ibid.*, 68.

[19.](#) Smith, 19.

[20.](#) Granzieira, 79.

[21.](#) Seitenfus, 67.

--16--

[22.](#) Brazilian expert

[23.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 64.

[24.](#) Seitenfus, 235.

[25.](#) *Ibid.*, 267.

[26.](#) *Ibid.*, 412.

[27.](#) Medal, 21.

[28.](#) Seitenfus, 412.

[29.](#) Smith, 20.

[30.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 113.

[31.](#) *Ibid.*, 118.

[32.](#) Medal, 20.

[33.](#) Manoel ThomasCastello Branco, *O Brasil na II Grande Guerra* (Rio de Janeiro: Bibliex, 1960), 68.

[34.](#) *Ibid.*, 565.

[35.](#) Smith, 21.

--17--

Chapter 2

Brazil Joins Allied Cause

Brazil joined the allies in World War II as a result of internal political and transformational issues commencing in the late 1930s.¹ In spite of these internal dynamics, the Brazilian president, Getúlio Vargas, hesitated, sometimes acting pro-Axis and sometimes acting pro-Allied. This situation would change gradually and Brazil eventually took the Allied side.

Brazil was facing internal problems with both left and right political groups. In 1935, there was a Communist rebellion within the Army. This rebellion was defeated, but demonstrated to Vargas that the communists were organized and could try again. Vargas declared the Communist Party an illegal Party, and, in 1937, he created the Estado Novo (New State), a strong right wing regime with fascist doctrine.² The opposition party Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB) took advantage of the situation that President Vargas created the Estado Novo, and undertook manifestations supporting Nazi Germany, including the use of the Nazi's flags during parades. President Getúlio Vargas had no intention to be one of Hitler's "puppets" as he observed in Europe, where Hitler had assembled some countries under the Anschluss policy.³ He realized that the AIB party had a clear intention to drive Brazil towards a Nazi affiliation, and cooperated with Germany when the German Ambassador in Brazil declared that AIB was part of the Third Reich.⁴ The German ambassador requested special treatment be afforded to AIB, and emphasized that the German Nazism would support AIB and its leaders if necessary. Vargas became really disillusioned with the German involvement and with the AIB affiliation. Vargas banned the AIB party in April 1938, as he did with the Communist Party, and started to

--18--

dissociate his government from the Fascist and Nazi European regimes seen in Europe. Vargas also took strong measures to reduce German influence in the communities in the Southern part of Brazil, where the Germans still kept their original language and traditions. The Nazi political activities and Nazi flags were outlawed, and the Portuguese language was to be used in all occasions. These actions disappointed German immigrants and the AIB party, because most of its members were from that area.⁵

In May 1938, as Ação Integralista Brasileira Party was being outlawed by Vargas, he was targeted for assassination by the AIB by undertaking an attack against Palácio da Guanabara (Presidential Palace) while he was sleeping. The AIB had the clear intention of killing Vargas and taking the power. Fortunately for President Vargas, the presidential guard reacted and resisted until Army troops arrived. President Vargas was strongly disappointed with Germany, because, for him, there was no doubt the Germans had taken part in and supported the plot.⁶ Therefore, after the attack, he improved and issued orders to overrule the AIB within Brazil. Vargas feared that another uprising supported by the Fifth Column⁷ could remove him from the power and Nazify Brazil completely.⁸

Internationally, Brazil participated in the Conferences held in Buenos Aires in 1936, and in Lima in 1938, where the Pan-Americanism was emphasized and all American countries agreed to assist "sister" American republics against any invasion. The Declaration of Lima reinforced the United States' position to combat the Axis' influence in Latin America and opened the possibility for the Latin American countries to defend the western world against the danger represented by the Axis powers. At this point, Brazil had committed itself to support the United States in the case of a war.⁹

--19--

It is also worthwhile pointing out that various meetings occurred between Brazilian and American diplomats, as well as private conversations between the President of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas, and the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt. During one of these talks, President Roosevelt highlighted to President Vargas the necessity of establishing bilateral agreements between Brazil and the United States, reaffirming the long and traditional relationship between these two countries.

Roosevelt knew that Brazil would be very important for the war effort for three reasons. First, Brazil held a strategic position. Second, the country possessed important supplies, such as agricultural products and raw material for the United States industries. Third, to deny Axis access to Latin America. Roosevelt requested a special Brazilian representation in Washington that could work within the Brazilian and North American concerns to defend America and, if necessary, to fight against Axis forces. In January 1939, Vargas sent the Brazilian Foreign Minister, Osvaldo Aranha, with a "blank check" to negotiate everything in his own name (President Vargas).¹⁰ Aranha's Mission, as it was known, showed that Brazil had already decided which side the "pendulum" of alliance would swing. This was the most important action employed by Vargas to support the Allied side. After the Aranha's Mission, and due to the regional agreements

which the country had already been signed since 1936, Brazil could not avoid taking part in World War II, supporting the Allies.¹¹

In spite of all Brazilian commitments to the Allies, President Getúlio Vargas still continued with his dubious attitude as for deciding which country Brazil would give support to in the war; however, the several measures that he adopted since the Buenos Aires Conference guided Brazil clearly to favor the side of the United States. According

--20--

to some historians like Hélio Silva, Vargas had in mind that Brazil should ally with the United States, but the price would be higher if Brazil delayed its decision. An example of this was the financial issue for a steel mill in Volta Redonda. Vargas had negotiations opened with United States and Germany since 1938. Germany and the United States had promised to help Brazil to build that plant.¹²

Vargas accepted the American proposal because the United States stipulated that all manufacturing would be done in Brazil. The proposal specified that only Brazilian labor would be employed, 50 percent of the coal would be Brazilian-mined, and all of the furnaces would be Brazilian-owned. Despite the fact that the North American steel producers disapproved of this decision, President Roosevelt confirmed the arrangements and guaranteed Brazilian requirements. Roosevelt's action proved to be beneficial because the Brazilian government and the Brazilian public opinion viewed the United States as a country that was supporting its development.¹³

Another important fact was that the commerce between Brazil and Europe dropped drastically in 1939. The European main markets for Brazil, such as Germany and Italy, were closing because these countries were turning their production to war. Brazil dropped the commerce with Germany and Italy more than four times. At the same time, there was a huge improvement in the commerce with the Allied countries with import and export increased more than two fold. Brazil became economically dependent on the United States and England, as demonstrated in Table 2.¹⁴

--21--

Table 2. Brazilian Commerce

	First Semester			
	Imports		Exports	
	1939	1940	1939	1940
United States	678,000	1,352,000	868,000	932,000
Germany	585,000	80,000	420,000	104,000
England	230,000	264,000	278,000	540,000

Source: Ricardo Antonio Silva Seitenfus, *O Brasil de Getúlio Vargas e a formação dos Blocos: 1930-1942. O Processo do Envolvimento Brasileiro na II Guerra Mundial* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1985), 271-272. Note: In Brazilian currency--contos de réis.

Despite all the negotiations with the United States at the beginning of the war, Brazil always searched for a position of neutrality. On the next day after the outbreak of World War II, Brazil issued Law Number 1561 which established the Neutrality Rules which were to be observed in case of war among non-American foreign countries. Brazil desired no part in the war. The Brazilian government and the military leaders were well aware that Brazil was militarily weak and badly prepared.¹⁵

In Europe, the Axis had great success during the 1939 and the 1940 offensive, and after invading and dominating the Netherlands and France, Germany could count on "puppet" governments being established in these countries, and could take advantage of the Dutch and the French colonies to support the German effort. The World War II started to involve the American Continent directly, because of the European colonies of French Guyana and Dutch Guyana in South America. The United States then called a

--22--

Conference in Havana to set the conditions to deal with this new issue.¹⁶ At the Havana Conference, all American countries decided that the French and Dutch colonies in South America would be governed by a special commission established in Washington, and reaffirmed the mutual defense established in the Declaration of Lima. At the Havana Conference, the American Republics agreed to consider it as an act of aggression against them any attempt on the part of a non-American state against the integrity or inviolability of the territory, the sovereignty, or the political independence of an American

The Brazilian government was concern about the vulnerability of Brazilian Northeast region, known as "bulge," when Germany took the French North of Africa. From this place, Hitler could invade the bulge, and close the south Atlantic route to the Allies. The Brazilian government knew that only the United States could provide the necessary forces to protect that area, and to provide security in the South Atlantic Ocean for merchant ships.¹⁸

The Brazilian bulge was not only a great concern on the part of the Brazilian government. The United States shared this strategic concern as well. After the Panama Canal, the bulge was the second strategic problem in guaranteeing the defense of approaches to the United States.¹⁹ The route through Belém and Natal was the only naval route to Britain which was open all year long. The United States Congress had passed the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941, which enabled the President to sell, transfer, exchange, or lease any defense article to any country whose defense he deemed vital to the defense of the United States.²⁰ Taking advantage of this Act, President Roosevelt endorsed bilateral agreements with Brazil, emphasizing the defense of the bulge. This Lend-Lease Act would prove worthwhile helping Brazil during the duration of the war. The country

was looking for a special agreement that allowed the country to modernize its Armed Forces.

Brazil also relocated air bases to the Northeast in order to safeguard its maritime vessels, and at the same time deployed troops along the coast, in order to avoid the possibility of a German invasion.²¹ The strategic position of the Brazilian Northeast, the bulge, as an easy staging area for transit to Africa and the large quantity of raw material necessary for supporting the war were doubtless significant reasons for the decision of taking part in the conflict by the Allies' side.

Moreover, a new scenario emerged. As Brazil was directing its participation to the Allied side, a maritime blockage of the Atlantic Ocean established by the Axis powers to the American countries would start to affect Brazil adversely. This event resulted in a succession of attacks against Brazil's merchant fleet by German submarines. In the following two years, nineteen Brazilian vessels were attacked and sunk.²² The submarine blockage and the actions carried out by Germany in relation to the international and Brazilian coastline violated the neutrality principles of the country.

Brazilian public opinion began to force the Vargas' government to respond to the German attacks, even before Brazil declared war. Many demonstrations took place in big cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian people had already decided that Brazil should join the Allies and should start the mobilization and the deployment of troops to defend the bulge. Vargas was under great internal pressure; however, he managed to maintain the Brazilian neutrality during the whole year of 1941.²³ Two important issues would break the Brazilian neutrality and would draw the nation into World War II. The first issue was the Japanese attack to Pearl Harbor. The second issue

was Brazilian public opinion after the German submarine (U-boats) attacks of Brazilian shipping.

When the United States was suddenly attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, the United States was obliged to declare war not only on Japan, but also on Germany who had already declared war to the United States due to its former agreement with Japan and Italy. Thus, in accordance with the Havana Resolution, in case an aggression against any American country surfaced, all the other American nations would gather to debate about which joint measures would be adopted. As a result two days after Pearl Harbor, the United States sent notes to the Latin American nations asking them to meet to discuss this resolution.²⁴

A consultation of foreign ministers was scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro from January 15 to 28 January 1942. The United States expected that it could convince all of the nations attending to break off relations with the Axis powers. Argentina was the

only country that opposed the United States' proposal, and declared that it would keep its neutrality during the war.²⁵ In retrospect, Argentina faced almost the same problems as Brazil with significant German communities within the country and strong economic ties with Germany. Although Argentina managed to keep its neutrality in the early war years, later Argentina moved firmly to the Axis side. After World War II, when Brazil became the most powerful country in the region, Argentina would regret its decision not having joined the Allied cause at the Rio Conference. As a neutral country, Argentina did not receive any financial support from the United States from the Lend-Lease Act.²⁶ Argentina would only declare war against Germany at the end of 1944, and, by this time, was too late to take any advantage of its position.

--25--

As a direct result within this scenario, Brazil could no longer keep its neutral position because of its loyalty and friendship policy in relation to the United States. At the end of this meeting, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke to the audience expressing Brazil's deep indignation in relation to the actions carried out by the Axis powers and declared that Brazil, in spite of all the attempts to keep its neutral position, would break diplomatic relations with Germany, Italy and Japan. Due to the state of belligerence, Brazil would also attack any German submarine or vessel within Brazilian waters. As soon as President Roosevelt was informed of the Brazilian decision to recognize a state of belligerence with the Axis, he cabled to Vargas the following message:

I have been informed that the United States of Brazil has today recognized that a state of war exists between Brazil, on one hand, and Germany and Italy on the other hand.

On behalf of the Government and people of the United States I express to Your Excellency the profound emotion with which this courageous action has been received in this country. This solemn decision more firmly aligns the people of Brazil with the free peoples of the world in a relentless struggle against the lawless and predatory Axis powers. It adds power and strength, moral and material, to the armies of liberty. As brothers in arms, our soldiers and sailors will write a new page in the history of friendship, confidence, and cooperation which has marked since the earliest days of independent relations between your country and mine.²⁷

Brazil had not yet declared the state of belligerence in December 1941 when Vargas nominated General Leitão de Carvalho, head of delegation, as Brazil's representative at the Brazil-United States Joint Defense Commission, in Washington. Leitão de Carvalho was responsible for continuing negotiations already being carried out for the defense of the American Continent during the Lima Conference. Even before Brazil had signed any agreement, Vargas authorized the deployment of American forces in Recife. As the United States were preparing for the North of Africa invasion, it

--26--

immediately sent forces to prepare the installation of three air bases in Belém, Natal and Recife.²⁸

Upon breaking off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers in January 1942, Brazil was rewarded by the Roosevelt administration with a doubling of the amount of the Lend-Lease aid that had been previously allocated in October 1941. Moreover, Brazil and the United States had agreed that the presence of American troops at the strategic bulge would remain only for the period of World War II. In 1944, the United States would seek a special arrangement to ensure post-war use of the bases, and an agreement for future joint operations between the two countries was signed. This agreement would permit permanent use of this area by the United States; however, when the war was over, the United States demobilization and the adverse public opinion in Brazil prevented the agreement from being implemented.²⁹

Afterwards, General Leitão de Carvalho's Commission confirmed that the Brazilian Navy would be available to protect the coast and provide the necessary convoy escort to vessels that departed from Rio de Janeiro towards Recife. From this point, these vessels would be escorted by the United States Navy to Europe or Africa. The Commission also agreed to permit the United States to station a fleet in Recife to carry out the mission already mentioned.³⁰

In addition, Brazil and the United States signed a political-military agreement between the two countries on 23 May 1942, prior to the Brazilian declaration of war against the Axis powers.³¹ This agreement already established the employment of Brazilian troops in war operations outside the continent. The agreement also promised all United States support to the Brazilian coastline defense, as well as United States aid in

--27--

arming and equipping the Brazilian Expeditionary Force before and during the war. Brazil, on the other hand, would provide several supplies to the United States war effort. Detailed below is a transcription of the articles in the agreement which most enhanced the American cooperation as stated by Hélio Silva:

4th Article. BEF will campaign as a great indivisible unit, under the Operations Theater General Command.

2nd Paragraph, Aviation, assault tanks, heavy artillery and other needed elements will be provided by the Supreme Command or the Operations Theater Command.

8th Article. The US Government will supply, according to present agreements, ammunition, helmets, camping equipment, vehicles, aircrafts, signal, engineering and medical equipment and services, as well as it will provide transportation, facilities, hospitals, medical assistance, air bases, mail services in the same way as provided to the American troops.

9th Article. The US Government will substitute for damaged, useless or lost material or will fix them up when necessary.

10th Article. BEF transportation and protection from the Brazilian ports overseas, as well as the transportation demanded by war operations, including evacuations and repatriate personnel will be done by the US Government.

12th Article. The US Government will be responsible for food supplies or any other needed supplies since the embarkation of BEF until its return to Brazil.

13th Article. Brazilian Government will be responsible for BEF soldiers' wages, being the US Government responsible for allowing for necessary loans according to separate agreements.

15th Article. This agreement will not affect ordnance provisions that the US has been giving to Brazil, according to previous agreements.

17th Article. Sick or wounded military and similar personnel who cannot be treated by BEF medical services will be evacuated to US hospitals or medical organizations. For this reason, US hospitals receiving BEF soldiers will count on Brazilian medical personnel.

Single Paragraph. The US Government will repatriate the sick and wounded soldiers who cannot fight anymore.

--28--

19th Article. In case Brazil is attacked by any other nation, the US Government will supply political and military assistance according to the 7th Article in the previous agreement.

20th Article. The US Government will also supply the necessary material to the Instruction Centers to train new units and specialists demanded by war operations.³²

In view of all these Brazilian commitments with the United States, and the increasing trade between Brazil and the United States and Great Britain, Germany realized that there was not a chance of maintaining Brazilian neutrality. Furthermore, the policy that Brazil would attack all German submarines which were positioned off the Brazilian coastline caused an immediate German reaction.³³

From the end of 1940 on, Brazilian merchant ships experienced attacks from German submarines operating in Atlantic waters and along the Brazilian coastline; in August 1942, a major Germany submarine offensive was launched, in which Germany conducted the most violent series of submarine attacks against Brazilian vessels, torpedoing any ship they found in the South Atlantic. The German submarine *U-507* torpedoed and sank, in less than ten days, seven ships, including four passenger ships, resulting in more than six hundred casualties.³⁴

These attacks by German submarines motivated Brazilian public opinion again to request an immediate reaction against Germany from Vargas' government. Mass demonstrations erupted throughout the country. Thousands of people participated in

these manifestations, demanding Brazilian retaliation and that Brazil should join the Allied cause and declare war against the Axis powers immediately. Even the Armed Forces, where the senior leaders knew how weak Brazilian forces were and how unprepared Brazil was to go to war against the Axis, demanded firm action from Vargas and

--29--

emphasized that Brazil should fight against the Axis. These leaders thought Brazil should participate not only by supporting the war effort with resources and patrolling the South Atlantic, but should also prepare an expeditionary force to be employed with the Allied forces either in North of Africa or in Europe. Therefore, there was no alternative left to the Brazilian government. Thus, on 22 August 1942, Brazil declared war and joined the countries allied to the United States of America. The United States assistance was further increased after Brazil's formal declaration of war and took almost 75 percent of all aid the United States gave to Latin America.³⁵

Brazilian ambivalence toward the war had changed to a policy of cooperation and furthermore of effective participation with the Allied side. President Vargas himself fully believed that this chance to participate in such a combat would entirely benefit Brazil within the new World Order that would exist after War World II.³⁶ In his policy, Brazil should endeavor to obtain, at least, a better position in world politics, preeminence in South America, a maritime and an air power, the foundations of a war industry, and the establishment of an industrial base.³⁷

This Brazilian participation in World War II, granting military bases to the United States in the bulge, supporting the war effort with resources and patrolling the South Atlantic, even before the deployment of the BEF in the war in Italy, enhanced Brazil's position in South America. The performance of the Brazilian Air Force and Navy in the South Atlantic War, destroying six German submarines between July and December 1943 is an example of this.³⁸ A Brazilian troop footprint in the European Continent would complete Brazilian participation.

--30--

Brazilian leaders thought that if Brazil participated only as a resource supplier and as a way-station to the battlefield, then Allied countries that sent combatants would see such a role as symbolic and would relegate the country to a symbolic position at the peace-conference and in the post-war world. These leaders hoped that a combat role would grant Brazil a higher post-war status, and would allow Brazil to represent Latin America in all post-war decisions as the only Latin American country that provided troops to the fighting in North of Africa or on the European Continent. Military leaders also thought it was a great opportunity to provide war experience to the Brazilian Armed Forces and, equally important as that, would ensure that these forces would be modernized by the United States after the war, regarding weapons, equipment, armor vehicles, aircrafts, and vessels.³⁹

Therefore, President Roosevelt agreed with President Vargas that Brazil should be represented in the European Continent and should also send an expeditionary force to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Allied forces. Most of the financial resources Brazil received under the Lend-Lease Act were employed to prepare and deploy BEF in Italy.⁴⁰ The problems of mobilizing such a force were yet to come.

Chapter 2 Footnotes:

[1.](#) Frank D. McCann, Jr., "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," *Diplomatic History*, 3 (winter 1979): 61.

[2.](#) Seitenfus, 151.

[3.](#) Countries which have German culture and language.

[4.](#) Seitenfus, 185.

[5.](#) *Ibid.*, 195.

[6.](#) *Ibid.*, 198.

--31--

[7.](#) *Ibid.*, 362. A fifth column is a group of people which clandestinely undermines a larger group to which it is expected to be loyal, such as a nation. The term originated with a 1936 radio address by Emilio Mola, a Nationalist general during the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War. As four of his army columns moved on Madrid, the general referred to his militant supporters within the capital as his "fifth column," intent on undermining the Republican government from within (see also Siege of Madrid (1936-39)). The term is also used in reference to a population who are assumed to have loyalties to countries other than the one in which they reside, or who support some other nation in war efforts against the country they live in.

[8.](#) William O Lanker, "The Diplomatic Relations Between Brazil and United States During World War II" (Research Study, Bowling Green State University, 1958), 43.

[9.](#) Seitenfus, 235.

[10.](#) *Ibid.*, 240.

[11.](#) *Ibid.*, 236.

[12.](#) Granzieira, 77.

[13.](#) Lanker, 40.

[14.](#) Seitenfus, 271, 272.

[15.](#) Smith, 20.

[16.](#) Seitenfus, 332.

[17.](#) Lanker, 54.

[18.](#) Medal, 10.

[19.](#) Lanker, 79.

[20.](#) Medal, 12.

[21.](#) Seitenfus, 390.

[22.](#) Medal, 9.

[23.](#) Seitenfus, 360.

[24.](#) *Ibid.*, 382

[25.](#) *Ibid.*, 381.

--32--

[26.](#) Smith, 20.

[27.](#) Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil under Vargas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), 283.

[28.](#) Seitenfus, 368.

[29.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 72.

[30.](#) Medal, 13.

[31.](#) Seitenfus, 394.

[32.](#) Hélio Silva, *1944: O Brasil na Guerra* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1974), 305-8.

[33.](#) Robert L. Sheina, *Latin America's Wars. The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900-2001* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc., 2003), 164.

[34.](#) Seitenfus, 412.

[35.](#) *Ibid.*, 393.

[36.](#) Sheina, 166.

[37.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 70.

[38.](#) Sheina, 166.

[39.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 119.

[40.](#) Smith, 20.

--33--

Chapter 3

Brazil Goes to War

At the beginning of Brazilian participation in World War II, the United States supported the concept that Brazilian troops should be assigned missions related to continental defense and support convoy operations in the south Atlantic. Brazilian and American diplomats and defense officials that participated in several meetings, however, diverged on the role Brazil should have. The Brazilian government wanted much more active Brazilian participation, and Vargas would press for that.¹

A meeting was held on 20 January 1943, in Natal, when United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to visit the American air base. Vargas and Roosevelt discussed how Brazil could collaborate with the Allied effort, not only by providing bases and resources, but by taking part in combat operations. Vargas had a clear intention of getting Roosevelt's support for his idea. So, he told Roosevelt that Brazil would be able to mobilize an expeditionary force composed of three divisions and all the necessary supporting troops, including a fighter squadron. Roosevelt agreed and the question of sending troops was settled.²

Roosevelt's decision was based more on politics and economics than effectively on the necessity for new troops. The American leaders were especially concerned with maintaining a good economic, military, and diplomatic relationship with Brazil, and they thought that supporting Vargas's idea would facilitate relations between Brazil and United States in the post-war period. Roosevelt decided to support the Brazilian request in order to minimize problems during the discussions about the role of Brazil in World War II previously mentioned. Therefore, General George C. Marshall accepted the

--34--

Brazilian offer to send troops at Roosevelt's request. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was informed in May, and the Brazilian Minister of War announced it to the general Brazilian public on 31 July 1943.³

However at this time it was a basic fact that Brazil did not have any division available, nor sufficient weaponry or equipment. Vargas knew that to mobilize the BEF he would depend on the United States for support. A transcript of Vargas' recordings about some issues debated with President Roosevelt in that meeting held on 20 January 1943, proving Brazil was not prepared to fight, is shown below. Vargas' request revealed how the Brazilian Armed Forces were at that time:

Brazilian traditional policy, our decision in war and in peace, unrestricted support, what we need--Army, Navy and Air Force [emphasis mine]--economical and industrial preparation.⁴

Brazilian Forces in the war in support of the Allies was at this moment in time a rhetorical exercise.⁵ The planning, training, human resources, and material means of the Brazilian Armed Forces prevented the country from taking part in World War II immediately. It would take more than a year and a half for the country to mobilize and prepare the BEF for action.⁶

Prior to the Brazilian commitment to World War II, its Armed Forces remained almost the same as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century. Brazilian military leaders had tried to improve the Armed Forces as much as possible. In that effort, officers were sent to Germany and were taught by German officers. Another improvement, included the creation of the Army Staff College in 1905, based on the German model.⁷

Brazilian officers that took part in the German training, known as the "Young Turks," like the German officers, established the Missão Indígena (Indigenous Mission

--35--

Doctrine).⁸ The Mission doctrine emphasized the Brazilian experiences in the wars its Armed Forces had fought and to establish a native doctrine based on these experiences and their own experience with the Germans. This doctrine specified that the Brazilian military should have their own way of fighting and avoid replicating the practices of foreign militaries. The problem faced by this mission doctrine was that the last Brazilian war against an external threat was the War of Triple Alliance against Paraguay, from 1865 to 1870.⁹ Most of these lessons were outdated and not relevant.

During World War I, Brazilian officers were sent to Europe to observe European armies and to note what lessons could be brought to improve the Brazilian forces. These officers were embedded in French units and when they came back from that war, they thought the victorious French Army should be used as model for the development of the Brazilian Army.¹⁰ Therefore, Brazil and France agreed in establishing a French Mission in Brazil, known as Missão Militar Francesa (French Military Mission), in 1919, in Rio de Janeiro.¹¹ For twenty years, French officers cooperated with Brazilian officers writing field manuals, preparing command post exercises, and conducting field exercises. The French Mission was responsible for several transformations within the Brazilian Army; however, most of these transformational actions were done at the academic level. The Brazilian military leaders thought it would be possible to spread all

gains achieved throughout the Army. Unfortunately, this process did not work and did not have any great impact on Brazilian troops.¹²

The main reason why all these attempts remained stagnated in the military academic environment could be explained in the Brazilian military reality that was based on national internal problems such as rebellions, civil wars, and riots. The main military

--36--

mission was to keep law and order internally, such as the campaigns in Canudos in 1896-97, and Contestado in 1912-15, when the Army was called to defeat two secessionist movements.¹³ The Brazilian Army was employed most of the time against internal threats and for the majority of officers and troops there was no sense in preparing an Army for a foreign war that would not be fought. Frank McCann's excerpt below demonstrates this problem quite clearly:

Various Brazilian historians and foreign Brazilianists [*sic*] have written that the opposition of older officers to the approaches of the French mission, and the German-oriented indigenous mission before it, was due to their aversion to study; that for the veterans of the Canudos and Contestado campaigns, the art of war did not exist, armed struggle was only a question of discipline and bravery. But it might be that they sensed that the foreign models were unsuitable, not because they required study, as much as they did not fit the reality of Brazil as they knew it. Of course, the reformists carried the day in education, uniforms, and weaponry. The compelling glamour of the European model was too seductive. So in the academy and staff school, the officer corps studied and worked with hypothetical situations based on data from developed countries which called for armament, munitions, and forces that Brazilians did not have.¹⁴

Due to Brazil's internal problems, the Brazilian Army was dispersed throughout the country. Army forces were deployed geographically in ten military regions (districts) in order to keep federal troops deployed in all states. However, more than 50 percent of the Brazilian Army was deployed in the three main states: Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais. This dispersion was part of the "strategy of presence." The Brazilian government thought that deploying Brazilian troops around the country would be useful to prevent uprisings through the country.¹⁵ The predeployed troops would react immediately, allowing the government time to reinforce them with additional federal troops.

At the beginning of Brazil's entrance into World War II, the country did not have a mobilization plan or a military organization to fight overseas. Vargas and the military

--37--

leaders knew it would take several months to mobilize and prepare the BEF for World War II. However, they also agreed that Brazil should take advantage of the Lend-Lease Act signed with the United States, which provided financial aid to rearm and refit the

Brazilian Armed Forces. The BEF and Brazilian Navy received 200 million dollars in order to undertake the necessary modernization to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Allied forces.¹⁶

It was interesting to observe that Brazil took an active part in World War II mainly as a supplier of troops in order that the American Army could take troops from Italy to employ in "D-Day." Brazilian Armed Forces and the material resources were not enough to confront the German Army, which consisted of much more experienced and equipped troops, even during a critical period Germans experienced in Italy in 1944.

The Brazilian Armed Forces limited modernization during the interwar period of equipment and weaponry, such as the development of armored vehicles and motorized units, occurred between 1919 and 1939. Horse cavalry and horse artillery regiments were still a fighting force in the Brazilian Army. The rifles used by Brazilian Army were German made in 1895 and 1908.¹⁷ Moreover, there was a mix of German and French artillery pieces. Therefore, the United States had to provide every single item, from rifles, such as the Garand rifle, to fighters, in order to bring the Brazilian troops to a level at which they could perform well when facing the German troops.¹⁸

The strength of the Brazilian Army before entering the war was estimated at between 66,000 to 95,000 troops, distributed in regimental-size units, most of them under strength.¹⁹ The majority of the soldiers entered as draftees and stayed only for one year, based on a conscription system approved in 1919. Less than 50 percent stayed beyond the

--38--

required duty. The retention rates were very low. The other 50 percent were sent to a reserve component for five years more and could be called up if there was a reasonable necessity. The Army would recall the reservists for the BEF mobilization.²⁰

Another difficulty faced was the mobilization of commissioned officers (captains and lieutenants) and of the noncommissioned officers (sergeants, corporals, and privates). Manoel Thomaz Castello Branco wrote the following remarks in his book *O Brasil na Segunda Guerra Mundial (Brazil in War World II)*:

In order to have personnel to perform the jobs of company commanders, it was necessary to commission hundreds of young lieutenants of the 1936 and 1937 classes, due to the fact that the captains had grown old.

Although this measure was adequate, professionally speaking it was not a good choice, since the young officers had neither taken the Captain's Career Course nor had professional experience in their new jobs, even considering the fact that some of them had taken specialization courses in the United States.

If it were not the call for some old captains--mature and experienced men, companies would have been led by those young inexperienced officers, not used for commanding, although intelligent, confident and eager to succeed in their new missions.

This unexpected rise of the lieutenants to higher ranks left the platoons in the hands of even more inexperienced officers, some of them just graduated at the Military Academy.

The reserve officers that completed the team along with those young platoon leaders were even more inexperienced. However, several of them, due to their own effort, turned into excellent warriors.

The same phenomenon happened among the non-commissioned officers. Because new jobs were created and because the old sergeants were unable to fight, newly-trained corporals rose to higher ranks without the necessary maturity, essential quality in the performance of the new jobs.

BEF was, then, under the experience and prudence of its commanders and the enthusiasm of young officers.²¹

BEF mobilization started at the beginning of 1943. The existing active units were used as the core, and the recall brought some 84,000 additional men from the draftee system and the reserve. More than four hundred and fifty reserve officers were also mobilized.²² Due to a lack of resources, the Brazilian General Army Staff decided that

--39--

the deployment of the BEF would be carried out in three echelons, with each echelon having a Division, Corps, and Combat Support and Combat Service Units.²³ The divisions were named the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Expeditionary Infantry Divisions (EID).

After the basic directives were established, the organization of the 1st EID was ordered on 9 August 1943; the organization of the two others was ordered on 7 January of the following year. However, two days after the first echelon had embarked to Italy, in July 1944, the plan to organize the two other echelons failed, affecting drastically and negatively the aspirations of those who still believed in their participation in war.²⁴

There were several reasons for cancelling the two divisions. The first was related to scarcity of naval lift to transport the BEF to Italy due to the Allied needs, regarding weaponry and equipment, for the D-Day invasion in France. The second reason was the constant fear that Brazilian borders would become unprotected, especially in the Southern region. A third reason was the difficulties involved in switching the Army orientation from internal security, the main Army mission prior to 1943, to an overseas operations mission.²⁵ Therefore, the Brazilian government sent only one of a planned three

divisions; supporting troops; and a fighter squadron. The total strength of BEF was 25,334. It was considered very small compared to those of other allied countries; however, it represented a major effort for Brazil.²⁶

The mobilization of the BEF was doubtlessly the most challenging and difficult operation carried out by the General Army Staff, as the units were all scattered

throughout Brazil. The largest number of troops were based in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul provinces; however, the recruiting and mobilization stations had never participated in coordinated operations such as the BEF mobilization, and,

--40--

moreover, the mobilization stations did not have any expertise or files to help them in this mobilization.²⁷

Another big issue was training. The United States provided only one equipped and functional training site station in the Northeast Region of Brazil, and the United States command insisted on rotating Brazilian troops using the same facility. The majority of units were being mobilized in the Southeast and South Regions, almost three thousand miles from that training site. The Brazilian Army requested more equipment and weaponry in order to establish another training site in Rio de Janeiro area, where the troops would depart to be deployed. The United States, however, was not able to it. Nonetheless, Brazilian Army changed the main training site to Gericinó Maneuver Camp, at Rio de Janeiro areas, bringing all units to this site rather than sending them to the Northeast.²⁸

In the beginning, the mobilization training process was divided in three phases; the first two of which took place at the training site in the Northeast Region, with the third of which was to be carried out when the BEF reached the theater of operations in the North of Africa, and later shifting to Italy.²⁹ The first initial phase would last for about six months, from April to September 1943, and consisted of everything related to basic individual training, including marksmanship, physical training, marching, and first aid instruction. The second phase was designed to take an additional six months, and dealt with general developmental training, when the troops started operating in echelons, from squad to battalion in infantry, and from battery to group in artillery. This phase adapted the Brazilian troops to new and modern armament and equipment, which the United States had provided for training and BEF modernization. These two periods were

--41--

critical, because the Brazilian troops became familiarized with the new type of war they would encounter. Finally, the last phase should be carried on in the terrain and conditions the BEF would operate as soon the units arrived in the theater of operations; however, because there were not weapons and equipments available for BEF to accomplish the final training in Italy, this phase was not undertaken properly.³⁰

The planning and execution related to the training of the BEF was first planned by the General Army Staff and implemented by the "Interior General Staff."³¹ This new structure had the mission of completing BEF mobilization, bringing all BEF units to Rio de Janeiro, and ending the training process after the previous training in the Northeast

Region. The Interior General Staff took advantage of Brazilian officers that had been trained in the United States since 1939 on. By 1944, the Brazilian Army had sent over 1,000 men to attend several courses in the United States, including courses at the Command and General Staff College, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.³² The most famous student was BEF E-3, equivalent to American G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Humberto Castello Branco, who became the Brazilian President in 1964.³³ The majority of the officers and noncommissioned officers trained in the United States took part in BEF preparation and training.

Even with those officers, there were two major challenges faced during this training period. The first one was related to the language barriers. Among all the United States Army instructors there was only one who spoke Portuguese. This problem would be solved only in Italy, when the 5th United States Army assigned five officers and thirty-five enlisted men who spoke Portuguese, minimizing language misunderstandings. The second challenge was to replace the French doctrine, based in defensive mind-set,

--42--

and incorporate the American doctrine, that emphasized offensive actions, to all BEF units. A BEF commander wrote of the enormous effort made by Brazilian troops to adapt to the new doctrine:

The Brazilian Army had been being taught by a dedicated French Mission for several years. Its organization, regulations and combat processes were based on the so-called "French School." Suddenly, overnight, inside the old framework and under the Gaullist doctrine, there came the task of building an Infantry Division in the North American model, as well as instructing and training it under the American methods, processes and means. Only those who have never been in such trouble can ignore the consequent difficulties, misunderstandings and

shocks.³⁴

There was also considerable difficulty related to the psychological preparation of the Brazilian population and the necessary support it would be required to give the troops which would represent them in war. McCann and Floriano Lima Brayner, who was BEF Chief of Staff, referred to the Nation's lack of involvement as follows:

In January 1944, when the training program finally began, there was a demonstration in Rio de Janeiro City Theater to celebrate the second anniversary of the break-up with the Axis. Loudspeakers shouted the discourse to the streets, but in the Cinel%ondia (in front of the City Theater) sidewalks just few people stopped to listen. The Minister of War's official report mentioned the lack of enthusiasm on the part of Brazilians as proof that the "atmosphere around the Brazilian Expeditionary Force continued to show indifference and defeat spirit."³⁵

In short, the Brazilian people believed in Carnival and in Soccer Championship rather than in an Expeditionary Force to fight together with the Allies against the Germans. Our people do not have a warrior personality and do not feel the pressure of an

invincible obligation of going to war, sacrificing precious lives, destroying fortunes, causing families to mourn, creating emotional conflicts and misunderstandings inside their own social groups.³⁶

In fact, it has been often acknowledged by Brazilian historians, such as Hélió Silva, that the slowness with which mobilization was conducted came from internal opposition to World War II and the interference of pro-Nazi fifth-columnists, anti-British, and anti-American elements that feared Brazil would be dominated by the United States, which represented the new imperialism in the world.³⁷ The fifth-columnist spread a rumor that

--43--

Brazil would become so economically and militarily dependent on the United States that Brazil would never achieve its own goals such as developing the country and being a regional power. The most straightforward and direct statement about the movement mentioned above was made by General Mascarenhas de Moraes, the BEF Commander, referring to this internal difficulty faced by BEF. His comments accurately described the views of fifth-columnists within the Brazilian government and society:

Instead of trying to encourage patriotism among the Brazilian population and of cultivating their support in favor of the United Nations issues, our authorities remained compliant towards the secession movement carried on by the dictatorship supporters. Indigenous fifth-columnists, present in important jobs in the national life, tried to prevent the necessary mood to face the impacts of contemporary war from being created and developed. They have made use of several different processes to prevent Brazilian troops from combating the European totalitarian armies.³⁸

In spite of all the difficulties presented, on 30 July 1944 the 1st Divisional Echelon, consisting of a tactical group and formed by the 6th Infantry Regiment and by the II/1st 105 Howitzer Regiment in connection with other support troop components, embarked at Rio de Janeiro on the American transport vessel called General Mann bound for the Italian Theater of Operations. This tactical group would be the first BEF component to take part in World War II.³⁹ Upon the arrival in Italy the first BEF echelon was placed immediately under the command of the 5th United States Army, the fighter squadron that accompanied the BEF, known as the Senta à Pua Squadron would be assigned under the command of the 12th United States Air Force for the Italian Campaign.⁴⁰

Brazil had accomplished an enormous effort to train and send troops to fight with the Allies. Such effort could have been enhanced if an analysis had been made of the time spent since Brazil declared war until the departure of the BEF to the Theater of

--44--

Operations. The Brazilian Armed Forces, and mainly the Brazilian Army, overcame innumerable difficulties while mobilizing and training in order to send troops to fight in Europe for the first time in the Brazilian history.

Chapter 3 Footnotes:

- [1.](#) Hélio Silva, 1939: *Véspera de Guerra* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1972), 55.
- [2.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 73.
- [3.](#) Medal, 16.
- [4.](#) Silva, 1944: *O Brasil na Guerra*, 55.
- [5.](#) João B. Mascarenhas de Moraes, *A FEB Pelo Seu Comandante* (São Paulo: Instituto Progresso Editorial, 1947), 24.
- [6.](#) *Ibid.*, 25.
- [7.](#) Brasil Estado-Maior do Exército, *Anais do Exército Brasileiro* (Brasília: Biblioteca Militar, 1940), 60.
- [8.](#) Brasil Estado-Maior do Exército, *História do Estado-Maior do Exército* (Rio de Janeiro: Bibliex, 1984), 60.
- [9.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 108.
- [10.](#) Brasil Estado-Maior do Exército, *História do Estado-Maior do Exército*, 60.
- [11.](#) Branco, 6.
- [12.](#) Moraes, 24.
- [13.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 113.
- [14.](#) Frank D. McCann, Jr., *A Aliança Brasil Estados Unidos, 1937-1945* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1995), 114.
- [15.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 113.
- [16.](#) Seitenfus, 393.
- [17.](#) Casterllo Branco, 136.
- [18.](#) Octavio Costa, *Trinta Anos Depois da Volta. O Brasil na Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Rio de Janeiro: Bibliex, 1976), 30.

- [19.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 109.
- [20.](#) *Ibid.*, 108 and 118.
- [21.](#) Casterllo Branco, 131.
- [22.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 118.
- [23.](#) Casterllo Branco, 135-7.
- [24.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 119.
- [25.](#) *Ibid.*, 113.
- [26.](#) Casterllo Branco, 586-7.
- [27.](#) Medal, 19.
- [28.](#) Casterllo Branco, 149.
- [29.](#) Medal, 21.
- [30.](#) Casterllo Branco, 135-6, and 149.
- [31.](#) A parallel Staff organized by EME (Brazilian Army Staff) to prepare BEF Brasil, Estado-Maior do Exército, *História do Estado-Maior do Exército* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1984), 65.
- [32.](#) Medal, 19.
- [33.](#) Costa, 76.
- [34.](#) Moraes, 10.
- [35.](#) McCann, *A Aliança Brasil Estados Unidos, 1937-1945*, 292.
- [36.](#) Floriano de Lima Brayner, *A Verdade Sobre a FEB* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1968), 49.
- [37.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 69.
- [38.](#) Moraes, 9.
- [39.](#) *Ibid.*, 74.
- [40.](#) Medal, 26.

Chapter 4

The Brazilian Expeditionary Force

This chapter will summarize the main operations performed by the BEF in Italy, demonstrating how the BEF prepared to fight by overcoming the problems stated in chapter 2 and other challenges to adapt to the new situation in Italy. This chapter will also demonstrate how the BEF gained its war experience and created a good reputation for the Brazilian troops among the Allies. Figure 1, depicts the whole BEF campaign in the Italian Theater and the major operations.

Strategic and Operational Overviews

A brief overview of the war situation in Europe is necessary to understand the participation of the BEF in alliance with the United States Army. The Normandy invasion (Operation OVERLORD) was launched in June 1944, while the Italian Campaign was in progress, as a consequence of the strategy adopted by the Allied Command. The invasion of Southern France in August 1944 was deemed necessary in order to guarantee the use

of new harbors that would allow the entrance of reinforcements and provisions coming from the United States to that country. The Allied Command decided that the invasion should be conducted by the Allied forces in the Italian Theater.¹

--47--



Figure 1. Brazilian Expeditionary Force Campaign in the Italian Theater and the Major Operations

Source: VERDE-OLIVA Magazine, Brazilian Army, Historical Edition, May-June 1995, 14.

In Italy, the 15th Army Group (5th United States Army and British 8th Army), commanded by Sir Harold Alexander, started to be drained of forces to support the invasion. Both armies under his command suffered deprivations. The 5th Army, commanded by General Mark Clark, was more affected than the British 8th Army,

--48--

because the Allied Command took seven divisions from him, including three American divisions and the whole French Expeditionary Force of four divisions, to join in the invasion of Southern France. In his book, *Calculated Risk*, General Mark Clark disagreed with this decision, saying:

I am firmly convinced that the French forces alone, with seven divisions available, could have captured Marseilles, protected General Eisenhower's southern flank and advanced up to Rhone Valley to join hands with the main OVERLORD forces. The VI American Corps, with its three divisions, could then have remained in Italy. The impetus of the Allied advance in Italy would thus not have been lost and we could have advanced into the Balkans.

In fact, I discussed this very subject with General Marshall when he came to visit us shortly after the capture of Rome. I then urged that the French alone do the southern France job, leaving the American element of the Fifth Army intact. He expressed his interest, but it was too late then, I suppose, to do anything about it. Our government had committed itself to an attack, decided upon a year earlier at Teheran, without re-evaluating the strategic situation in the light of new Allied successes in France and Italy.

As it worked out, the men, materiel and air forces needed for ANVIL, simply stripped the Fifth Army of its strength. I eventually lost the entire VI Corps, including the 3rd, the 36th and the 4th divisions, all of which I had picked for the job when I had been designated to go on ANVIL. In addition, the French Expeditionary Forces, naturally, wanted to take part in the return to their homeland; it was only through Juin's efforts that I did not lose immediately their great fighting strength. However, by the end of July they had all left.²

The main purpose of the Allied Command in the Italian Peninsula was to put pressure on the German Army by fixing as many of the German troops as possible, in order to prevent experienced German divisions from moving to France. Therefore, the 5th Army urgently needed reinforcement.³ The initial strength of the 5th Army, which was 249,000 soldiers, was reduced to 153,000 soldiers to support the invasion of France. This reduction was so serious that it was necessary to transform American antiaircraft artillery battalions into a tactical infantry grouping, named Task Force 45. General Mark Clark could not accomplish the new mission with so few troops. In order to strengthen the 5th Army again, Mark Clark received the 92nd Division (Negro troops), the 10th Mountain

--49--

Division, the 6th South African Armored Division, the 6th Armored and 1st British Infantry Divisions, the 8th Indian Division, the Japanese-American Regiments, and the BEF. With these forces, Mark Clark nominated the 5th Army as a polyglot Army, because of the various languages spoken.⁴

At the end of August 1944, the forward edge of the battle line of the 5th Army was on the Pisa-Prato-Borgo line and had the 14th German Army as its opponent. The 14th German Army deployed on the so called Gothic Line, a defensive line using the Italian compartment terrain. This Army was composed of twenty-eight divisions and a great number of SS troops for rear-area defense.

General Mark Clark intended to push back the Germans and open a road to the North of Italy. He planned an operation called Operation Olive, and he envisioned breaking the

German Gothic Line allowing the allied 5th Army to keep Germans fixed and to proceed to North of Italy. For doing so, he positioned his troops as follows: 13th British Army Corps to the East; 2nd United States Army Corps in the center; and IV United States Army Corps, to the West.⁵

The IV Army Corps was commanded by General Willis Crittenger, and was composed of the 1st United States Armor Division, the 6th South African Armor Division, Task Force 45 (Infantry Tactical Group mentioned previously) and the BEF. The main concept of operation was to deploy the BEF as a replacement of the French Expeditionary Force, which was reassigned to take part in the invasion of Southern France; however, the BEF would join the 5th Army in pieces and would take some time to be ready to fight.⁶

--50--

The Brazilian Expeditionary Force Deploys to Italy to Join the Allies

The BEF was deployed to Italy as the availability of transport ships and convoy escorts allowed. Therefore, the BEF was divided in five echelons from July to September of 1944. There was no plan to welcome Brazilian forces at Naples. Even the reception area was not prepared; however, most of these problems were solved after the first echelon arrived.

The first echelon of the BEF arrived in Naples, on 16 July 1944, with an initial assignment to Agnaro, near Naples. The soldiers had traveled for more than fifteen days, and thought they would have some place prepared for them when they arrived at Agnaro, but this did not happen. The area was not ready to receive the Brazilian soldiers, and this fact caused some embarrassment to the Brazilian troops, decreasing the enthusiasm of the soldiers with regard to the war. In McCann's opinion:

The North American Command did not prepare an area for initial bivouac. The first night of the BEF soldiers in Italy was unsheltered and chilling in a stationing area, in dust crater of extinguished Astronia Vulcan. The morale of the troop decreased more and more, also as a consequence of the hostility on the part of the population of Naples in relation to the soldiers. Disarmed and wearing olive-green uniforms, people thought they were Nazi prisoners. The reception they got was not great at all.⁷

Another issue was the relationship between Brazilian and American officers. The Americans dictated everything that the BEF should do or should not do at the beginning. They did not allow Brazilian leaders to make any decisions as the Brazilians had expected. Brazilian senior officers seemed to be affected by this cultural shock and their dependence on the American Command.⁸ The uncertainties in relation to the limits of the Brazilian leaders' own responsibilities and rights were even more demoralizing made them feel worse. They had not been informed adequately of the terms of the agreement

--51--

with the United States. It was only when they got to Naples that they would understand how badly the BEF was prepared regarding equipment, clothes, shoes, and everything else that was necessary for an army. Furthermore, the Brazilians arrived in Italy disarmed, because the agreement stated they would get their weapons in Italy, which was another morale issue.

Moreover, the BEF staff was aware that the Brazilians authorities had hardly provided what had been requested in the pre deployment report written by an Observer Group who had been to the North of Africa and in Italy in December 1943.⁹ The BEF Commandant, General Mascarenhas de Moraes, pointed out the difficulties faced by the Brazilian soldiers in their initial months in Italy:

The Brazilian Expeditionary soldiers, psychologically ill prepared, overcame, more than anybody else, difficult and shameful situations from the Atlantic crossing to the front that happened over and over again in view of the uncertainties of war. American authorities were disappointed first with the inadequate health conditions of the first Brazilian troops that reached Italy. They were also disappointed with inadequate uniforms, coats and shoes wore by Brazilian troops. The U.S. Army had to provide adequate clothing and equipment by General Mark Clark's personal effort. Brazilian military authorities were not concerned about the information brought by the Observer Group, in December 1943 that was sent to Italy and Northern Africa, and about other information, not less important, reported by Brazilian officer serving in the Fifth Army.

It was under such an unjustifiable shame that Brazilian troops started war operations in September, 1944: American guns and ammunition, American shoes and coats, almost all American food (even the Brazilian coffee could not be used). As for the uniforms, besides being of poor quality and too light for low temperatures, they were similar to the enemy's, dangerously confusing aviation and our Allies, who could take us as opponents.¹⁰

In his book, *Calculated Risk*, General Mark Clark confirmed all of the information presented by General Mascarenhas de Moraes. Mark Clark said that he personally interceded to provide all necessary supplies for Brazilian troops and to bring

--52--

some comfort to the Brazilian soldiers before deploying them to fight, as the example below demonstrated.

At the end of November, on an inspection trip to a battalion of Brazilians who were about to go into the line, I noticed that many of the men were wearing clothing that seemed too light. I commented on this to General Mascarenhas, and he explained that they had come from Brazil without the proper clothing for a winter in Italy. This gave us still another problem to solve and it turned up a surprising fact. The Brazilian soldiers had small feet in comparison to the Americans and we had great difficult in getting enough small shoes to outfit them. We did, however, get combat jackets and

winter underwear for them quickly, and then they were properly prepared to go into the line.¹¹

During the first month of BEF operations in the Italian operations theater, there was limited training of the first echelon. The primary obstacle to the development of an effective training regimen was the lack of equipment. To make the best of a bad situation, sports, training marches, drill, and general classroom instruction activities were held during the time spent in Bagnoli, ensuring the BEF soldiers were kept fit and ensuring the discipline and cohesion of the BEF.¹²

On 26 June 1944, the first echelon headed for Tarquine, where the soldiers received armament and equipment, being under command of the United States 5th Army. Less than one month later, the BEF initiated its move to Vada Region, twenty five kilometers from the confrontation line at the Arno River, preparing to complete their training for combat.¹³ On 22 August 1944, the three-week final instruction period began. Several commissioned and noncommissioned officers practiced within the United States units serving at the Arno River front. There, the Brazilians were trained in American techniques and doctrine, so they could acquire knowledge about the combat environment related to their jobs.

--53--

The most important training of the BEF before combat commenced was the field training exercise in which 4,000 BEF soldiers took part, having United States officers as controllers and instructors. By the end of training, the troop was considered ready for combat by General Mark Clark. As a result of these maneuver the Brazilians soldiers' morale was restored and they were motivated for the upcoming fight against the Germans.¹⁴

At this time, the IV United States Army Corps manpower shortages were so great that it could not wait for whole BEF to arrive before employing them. In order to support combat, the assigned combat missions, an initial BEF Detachment was organized and commanded by General Zenóbio da Costa. This detachment was composed of the 6th Infantry Regiment, part of the 11th Infantry Regiment, First Company of the 9th Engineering Battalion, First Platoon of the Reconnaissance Squadron; part of the First Signal Corps Company, First Evacuation Company of the First Medical Battalion and some other auxiliary elements. This detachment would be the first Brazilian troops to see action.¹⁵

The first mission that the BEF detachment received from the IV United States Army Corps was to relieve the American troops that were deployed in the MassciucoliFilettolê-Vecchiano area. Its action zone was the region between the littoral of Tirreno Sea and Serchio Valley. From 15 September to 30 October 1944, the Brazilian troops had penetrated forty kilometers in Serchio Valley, having successive victories in Massarosa, Camaiore, Monte Prano, and Barga. This fact increased the troops' motivation and selfconfidence. In his book *A Verdade Sobre a FEB* (The Truth About BEF), General

Florianio Lima Brayner mentioned General Zenóbio da Costa as an example of leadership and command action:

Having been ordered to attack Camaioire, Zenóbio da Costa did not waste time. He collected information about the enemy position and on 18th of September, in the early morning, stated to move towards Camaioire.

He himself commanded, with bits of recklessness, the infiltration of a company of the Sixth Infantry Regiment, throwing it in jeeps loaded with 8-10 men down a slope, in great speed, at the enemy's sight. At a certain point in the road, General Mascarenhas de Moraes and I met General Zenóbio, alone, launching and directing the departure of the vehicles, not worrying about the dangers surrounding him. For him, there were only the mission demands. The Germans were overtaken, having to abandon early the Camaioire--La Rena--Fattoria line, which was immediately occupied by the two battalions of the Sixth Infantry Regiment. Camaioire, for its importance in the German defensive system, had an essential role. Its conquest was the first significant victory, conducted in Zenóbio's pure end impulsive style. In spite of his impetuosity and bravery, he did not "seize the bull by the horns" if not needed. He knew how to maneuver and combine efforts. I make this comment in this book to prove that, even in a smaller unit, imagination provides a good idea of maneuver to overcome the difficulties. This is the true leader.¹⁶

Due to these successes, Zenóbio personally asked the IV United States Corps Commander for the authorization to go on with the attack towards Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, in the Gothic Line, a very crucial point in the enemy's defensive front, and this area. Indeed, this point was an important crossroads of great operational interest to the Allies. Zenóbio thought his troops could take that position almost the same way they did in Camaioire.¹⁷

The first phase of the attack was promising. All objectives assigned were taken. However, having underestimated the Germans' counterattacking doctrine, the detachment could not resist the vigorous counterattack conducted during the night by German troops and had to withdraw to their former positions.¹⁸ This set back demonstrated two important things to the BEF leaders: the Germans were not "green" troops and they could

never again be underestimated; and the future plans should detail everything, avoiding improvisations and rush.

The detachment was very disappointed by the failure, which was a consequence of the exaggerated optimism in the maneuver planning, compounded by operational mistakes in the consolidation of the objectives. The problem was not only an underestimation of

the enemy, but also the detachment was not provided the supplies needed to keep the position, including ammunition, fuel, and reinforcements. Afterwards, the BEF detachment attacked and expelled the Germans from Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. During little more than a month, from 27 September to the end of October, the BEF detachment progressed forty kilometers along Serchio Valley, captured two hundred eight prisoners, liberated several villages and towns; and had acquired experience in fighting against Germans.¹⁹ The lessons learned from this operation were very important for the BEF detachment and to the follow-on BEF troops that would arrive by the end of October.

The most important thing for Brazilian soldiers was the visit of the Brazilian Minister of War, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra, on 17 October, not only because his presence on the battlefield raised troops' morale, but that he created the BEF expeditionary patch, identifying Brazilian soldiers ever since. General Mascarenhas de Moraes, in his book, explained how it happened.

General Dutra wanted to watch closely General Zenóbio's troops in combat actions in Serchio Valley. He went to the front lines, going into the trenches and combat posts. ... The Minister of War spent a journey with the troops, having lunch at the front line and watching the beginning of the attack so as to better evaluate the combat capacity of our men. Having observed that the American divisions wore a special symbol (shoulder patch) that made them different among themselves, he asked me why our troops did not adopt that system. It was at that

--56--

time that, spontaneously, the idea of representing the sentence "the smoking snake" in a drawing was brought up. This project was approved by General Mark Clark.²⁰

The shoulder patch created and adopted by BEF was designed to address upfront those people that had not believed in Brazil's capacity in sending a force to fight for the Allies. The patch also signified the valor and the courage of the BEF soldiers. The "smoking snake" became a symbol of the BEF, and its soldiers were very proud in wearing a patch that could identify them among the 5th United States Army. Figure 2 depicts the Brazilian shoulder patch.



Figure 2. Brazilian Shoulder Patch

Source: VERDE-OLIVA Magazine, Brazilian Army, Historical Edition, May-June 1995, 120.

On 6 October, when the BEF detachment was in full support of IV Corps, the second and the third echelons arrived at Naples, commanded by General Osvaldo

--57--

Cordeiro de Farias and General Falconiere da Cunha, respectively. In contrast to the first echelon, the troops were stationed in an area that had been prepared by the Americans in the woods next to Pisa, avoiding the problems faced by the Brazilian pioneers.

On 30 October, the Futa Pass Conference was held under the chairmanship of General Mark Clark, and attended by General Mascarenhas de Moraes. At this meeting, the 5th United States Army Commander discussed the difficulties he had been facing as a consequence of the reduced strength of his army and the increasing battle fatigue of the men. For these reasons, he decided to cancel temporarily the operations in Bologna, in order for soldiers to have a rest period and to fill the gaps in his ranks.²¹ He took the BEF detachment off Serchio Valley and sent it to Reno Valley line for a rest period and further planned deployment. The rest of the newly arrived BEF forces would be employed as soon as possible, after training and becoming familiar with the terrain and the war.²²

On 1 November 1944, General Mascarenhas de Moraes assumed the command of all the 1st Expeditionary Infantry Division (EID). IV Corps ordered the division to move immediately to Porreta Terme, and to assumed defensive posture along unfavorable terrain. The EID occupied a fifteen to twenty kilometer front. The 1st EID faced the Germans, who were in position in the Apennines, along a line of towns and villages of the line Belvedere-Gorgolesco-Mazzancana-Monte Castello-Torre di

NeroneCastelnuevo, which was a key to the control of Road 64, the best line of communications for the IV Corps. By means of this temporary defensive, General Mark Clark intended not only to allow some battle hardened units to rest, but also to reequip and resupply. However, the 5th United States Army Commander's intention to re-start offensive in

--58--

December, before winter, was very clear. He would assign the IV Corps to resume the offensive.²³

In November, the IV Corps was in charge of undertaking preliminary operations along Road 64 (Pistoia-Bologna), in order to enhance the conditions for the departure of a general offensive. In this context, General Mascarenhas de Moraes fully supported this mission for the BEF detachment in the action zone reserved to the Brazilian troops at Reno Valley; however, he was concerned that the new replacement or units should be sent to combat front only after they had been adequately prepared and concluded military training in Italy. The war demands and the insufficient number of men in the Italian Theater already mentioned would necessitate the employment of the newly arrived Brazilian troops before they were sufficiently trained.²⁴

The period between 5 November and 12 December, in the Reno Valley area of operations was a defensive-offensive due to the winter season, making any offensive operations extremely difficult. The weather and terrain favored the German's defensive posture, since they were positioned on the high ground of the Apennines, offering observation of the Brazilian positions. The Germans were also able to fire, making security and communication for the Brazilians very difficult. The Germans intended to spend the winter there so as to prevent the Allies from overtaking the Pó River plain.²⁵

In spite of these difficulties, the Allied Command ordered that offensive operations continue in order to capture Bologna before Christmas, to avoid the cold winter. Along the defensive-aggressive period, the IV Corps undertook some offensive operations against the German Line which resulted in bitter misfortunes, shared by the BEF. The most famous misfortune was the two attacks against Monte Castello carried out

--59--

by BEF and Task Force 45 on 24 and 25 November, the result of these allied attacks were less than successful or better described as defeats for IV Corps and Brazilian forces.²⁶

Twice more the Brazilian troops attacked these objectives on 29 November and 12 December, and as in the previous attacks, the BEF was defeated again. According to the BEF Commander, the failure was caused by inadequate manpower, bad weather, and insufficient artillery and close air support. At least two divisions should have been employed at Belvedere, Castello, and Torracia, with Torracia being a critical German

position whose domination was essential for the success of allied operations for Allied traffic on Road 64, the center of gravity for Allied supply and movement to Bologna. Due to those results, General Crittenberger decided to cancel the operations temporarily and abandoned the slogan and ambition of "Bologna before Christmas 1944."²⁷ Not having succeeded in these actions brought serious damage to the morale of the Brazilian forces.

General Mark Clark's decision to employ the newly arrived Brazilian troops without the appropriate training was considered another factor that affected the Brazilian performance against Monte Castello. The four defeats caused such severe morale problems to the Brazilian leaders; General Mascarenhas de Moraes thought about resigning. Instead, he decided he should personally take over command of the attack, and use the defensive phase to enhance the training of the BEF troops, improving their instruction under the lessons learned of the failed attacks themselves.²⁸

General Mascarenhas de Moraes observed the need to restore the combatants' psychological level and morale. He ordered the organization to begin a resting plan or even rest and recuperation leaves in Florence, in order to strengthen the morale and combat spirit of his men. By doing so, the Brazilian soldiers would feel better in relation

--60--

to the previous defeats, and hopefully success in future combat operations would be possible. The BEF was in combat for more than six months in the Apennines, facing the harsh winter in the Italian mountains, which were so different from the plains of Brazil.²⁹

In the spring of 1945, the Allies resumed operations with a great offensive in which all the existing troops in Italy were assigned. General Crittenberger approved the "Encore Plan," to commence from 19 February to 6 March 1945, against the Gothic Line.³⁰ The plan was framed to ensure the best conditions in the offensive against Bologna. In accordance with this plan, the BEF was in charge of conquering Monte Castello, continuing its action in the Marano River Valley, and capturing Torre di Nerone and Castelnuevo, successively. Monte Castello was to be conquered at all costs.

The defensive positions of the Germans at Monte Castello was commanding the departure bases for the planned attack, making offensive operations extremely difficult. The trained and experienced German forces had defeated the BEF attacks four times there. Before resuming the offensive, General Mascarenhas de Moraes, still worried about the morale of the troops, proclaimed to them:

Brazilian soldiers!

A decisive time has come. The defeat of our enemy is close; arrogant Germany, invaded through its east and west borders, can not stand the tough setbacks and attacks performed by the braves armies of the United Nations. In Italy, where we came because a military commitment and an unquestionable desire to take part in a team that now extinguishes one of the most tyrannical of all regimes at all times.

Our division has accomplished the honorable missions assigned by the IV Corps and now a wait for the moment when we will fight the enemy. When the time comes, I want to see the brave Brazilian soldiers, motivated by a military honor feeling, throw themselves onto the German soldiers as not to let them breathe anymore, until they quit. It is the last effort Brazil demands from us. We have to believe in victory that depends exclusively on each Brazilian soldier. The decisive victory is announced.

--61--

I tell you again that it depends on each of you. We will know how to accomplish our duty, the only way we will be able to return home with our heads up when peace comes, by knowing that we have served with uninterested love.³¹

The BEF, then, undertook an assigned offensive operation, on 21 February 1945, that allowed the units to conquer Monte Castello via the enemy's right flank, therefore, avoiding the less than successful frontal attacks performed in earlier attempts that were responsible for the failures and poor morale of the BEF. The success of this operation was a result of the combined action of the United States 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilian 1st EID that were motivated and strongly supported by artillery and aviation.³² The success of defeating the Germans at Monte Castello resulted in raising the morale of all Brazilian soldiers; it greatly influenced the future operations performed in the Reno River and Panaro River valleys, as well as in the Po Valley. The importance of the conquest of Monte Castello can be evaluated through the congratulatory letter written by General Crittenberger to General Mascarenhas de Moraes:

By means of this letter, I praise you and all the officers under your command who took part in the recent operation performed by IV Corps that has resulted in the capture and consolidation of Belvedere-Monte Castello hills and in the advance of one mile of the part corresponding to your front line in the accomplishment of the mission assigned to you, performed with dignity by the experienced troops your subordinates have already turned into.

In the capture of Monte Castello and in the consequent advance against the tenacious enemy resistance, BEF has shown a highly aggressive spirit. The coordination of your attack, either among the units themselves or with the neighboring division, has shown, equally, that there was a detailed staff plan and excellent supervision of the battlefield. The firing discipline that the maneuver plan needs was well performed and demonstrated praiseworthy command action on the part of the subordinate unit commanders. The honorable performance of the Brazilian troops under your command establishes a high pattern that will work as to stimulate all the other elements of your division when it is time to launch them in new offensive actions.

My official and personal congratulations are addressed to you for the excellent command action.³³

--62--

In fact, Monte Castello was a critical point for the BEF and restored its spirit after so many frustrations and deceptions since the arrival in Italy. There, 1 st EID had written one of the most exciting chapters along its fight in the European land that, besides being a military victory, meant a morale triumph, giving strength and stimulating the BEF "esprit de corps" to fight against German troops. Following this success, another victory was won at La Serra, on 24 February, had a decisive influence in the IV Corps operation, since it allowed the United States 10th Mountain Division to conquer Della Torracia.

This victory also led to the actions in Marano River Valley, aiming at the conquest of Castelnuovo.³⁴

The conquest of Castelnuovo on 5 March eliminated the last German observation points on the Marano and Reno River valleys that dominated a great part of Route 64, the supply route of the IV Corps in the Apennine region. For that purpose, the 1st EID employed two regiments that dominated the objective in a few hours. With these events, the conquest of the necessary base for the launching of the spring Allied offensive was concluded.³⁵ This offensive would lead to the definite defeat of the German forces in the Italian Theater of Operations.

After securing the objective of Castelnuovo, General Crittenberger ceased offensive operations by his Corps for a short period because he thought it was necessary to refit the units, and to give the troops some well deserved rest, so that they could succeed in the next actions. As a result of General Crittenberger's decisions, the Brazilian troops were relieved in Reno Valley, and were transferred to Panaro River, changing their course away from Bologna. The Brazilian troops remained in this new area of operations

--63--

in a defensive posture until 8 April 1945, preparing them for the Spring Offensive, which was to be aimed at the city of Montese in order to open the way to North of Italy.³⁶

On 8 April 1945, the Commander of IV Corps, General Crittenberger, presided at a meeting, in which the final details about the Spring Offensive were arranged, Major General George Hays, the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, said he was worried about the initial situation of his unit for the attack on Montese. Since there was a possibility that the enemy reserves could be employed in that area, he was afraid that this could delay the operations. General Mascarenhas de Moraes suggested to the Commander of IV Corps that the mission to secure Montese be given to the Brazilian troops, relieving the 10th Mountain Division.³⁷ Such an offer surprised the American commanders, according to General Mascarenhas de Moraes:

General Hays, surprised by the gentle attitude of the Brazilian chief, asked BEF commander, "Is the commander of the BEF sure that Montese will be conquered?" I answered, "Yes. I am. But I want to know if General Hays is sure he will take advantage

of the Brazilian success over Montese." After that, General Crittenberger finished the meeting, having agreed with the suggestion.³⁸

The attack on Montese was undertaken in the context of the Allies' spring offensive from 9 April to 2 May 1945, in the North of Italy, comprising a frontal line of nearly thirty kilometers from the south of Bologna, and between the Adriatic and Tirreno. The Brazilian troops, then, were assigned to conquer Montese, which was considered an important aim in the German defensive line, and to cover the left flank of the 10th Mountain Division. The attack of the IV Corps was scheduled to commence on 12 April 1945; however, the mission had to be postponed due to the bad weather conditions that made it impossible for the close air and bombing by the air force to support the ground forces. After two days, air force bombing preparation commenced as well as artillery, and

--64--

the Brazilian troops moved forward. On 14 April, the 1st EID won a very hard battle. The 1st EID faced an enemy who was not willing to lose territory. At the beginning of the afternoon, Brazilian troops invaded a village located at the south of Montese. The fight to secure the objective of Montese was delayed until 18 April 1945, when finally the city was conquered and the objective was secured, allowing the advance of the 10th Mountain Division to the north.³⁹

On 19 April 1945, a new phase in the Spring Offensive commenced--exploitation--this operation resulted in the capture of Middle Panaro by Brazilian troops. The mission assigned to the BEF was to continue covering the west flank of the IV Corps, clearing the right flank of Panaro River from Dardagnola River, a tributary river in the south, to the city of Vignola, in the north. The occupation of Vignola, on 22 April 1945, meant a definite break out in the Po Plains and the exit from the rough and mountainous Apennine. Tactically, it meant the end of exploitation, which had started after the break of the German line in the corridor between Reno and Panaro Rivers, and a transition to the pursuit phase, aiming at surrounding and imprisoning the enemy.⁴⁰

After conquering Vignola, the enemy had no chance to establish a new defensive line south of the Po River. Therefore, the Germans had moved back to the north and to the northwest, trying to delay the Allies' move forward and to reach the margins of Po River, so as to cross it and establish themselves defensively in the margins of another river, the Adige. This was the enemy's last chance of defense in the Italian territory. The Brazilian troops moved northwest pursuing the enemy, in order to reestablish contact, to defeat possible local resistance and, at the same time, to protect the line of communications from the Apennine to Po River.⁴¹

--65--

Having being informed that a German division was moving back to Parma, the Brazilian troops reinforced the pursuit between the Enza and Taro Rivers, trying to

block the roads that led to that city. On 26 April 1945, the Reconnaissance Squadron faced enemy elements in Collecchio and Fornovo. The Brazilian troops seized those cities, surprising the 148th German Division that was trying to set a defense position there. A Brazilian messenger was sent in order to ask the Germans to surrender unconditionally. The German commander refused unconditional surrender, forcing Brazilian forces to attack. Unable either to escape or to counterattack, the German commander finally surrendered on 30 April 1945. General Mascarenhas de Moraes wrote about this fact:

The Collecchio--Fornovo maneuver, ending in the capture of the German troops was a consequence of the stubborn effort of the Brazilian men.... The enemy still had plenty of means--men, armament, and ammunition--to keep on trying to break the siege. It was an elite troop: almost all the senior commanders and several officers had the Africa Corps decoration.... They were disciplined and technically well prepared. In spite of that, they gave up because our troops gave them no choice.⁴²

Finally, the participation of the Brazilian troops in combat in the Mediterranean Theater was over. On 2 May 1945, the last German troops surrendered in Italy.⁴³ The BEF would be sent home.

Chapter 4 Footnotes:

[1.](#) Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), 368.

[2.](#) *Ibid.*, 369.

[3.](#) *Ibid.*, 386.

[4.](#) *Ibid.*, 390

[5.](#) *Ibid.*, 392-3.

[6.](#) Moraes, 45-7.

--66--

[7.](#) McCann, *A Aliança Brasil Estados Unidos, 1937-1945*, 319.

[8.](#) Moraes, 31.

[9.](#) Brayner, 118.

[10.](#) Moraes, 31.

[11.](#) Clark, 406.

- [12.](#) Moraes, 45.
- [13.](#) *Ibid.*, 52.
- [14.](#) *Ibid.*, 53.
- [15.](#) Casterllo Branco, 182.
- [16.](#) Brayner, 166.
- [17.](#) Casterllo Branco, 198.
- [18.](#) Moraes, 93.
- [19.](#) *Ibid.*, 94.
- [20.](#) *Ibid.*, 85.
- [21.](#) Clark, 402.
- [22.](#) Moraes, 97.
- [23.](#) *Ibid.*, 105.
- [24.](#) *Ibid.*, 111.
- [25.](#) Moraes, 105.
- [26.](#) *Ibid.*, 118.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, 124.
- [28.](#) Costa, 47.
- [29.](#) Moraes, 106.
- [30.](#) *Ibid.*, 133.

--67--

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- [31.](#) *Ibid.*, 274.
 - [32.](#) Costa, 47.
 - [33.](#) Moraes, 57.
 - [34.](#) *Ibid.*, 142 and 144.

[35.](#) *Ibid.*, 156.

[36.](#) Costa, 52.

[37.](#) Moraes, 169.

[38.](#) *Ibid.*, 270.

[39.](#) *Ibid.*, 175 and 182.

[40.](#) Costa, 60.

[41.](#) Moraes, 191.

[42.](#) *Ibid.*, 318.

[43.](#) Clark, 437.

--68--

Chapter 5 Conclusion Post War Events

On 2 May 1945, the German troops in Italy unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces. For 239 days; the BEF fought against German forces, covering more than 400 kilometers and capturing more than 20,000 prisoners. After this success, the Brazilian government did not accept the United States' invitation to remain in Italy for a longer period, and to assist the Allied forces in dealing with the Trieste problem, which involved a border dispute between the Allies and Yugoslavia in Italy.¹ The Brazilian government indicated that it had accomplished its agreement with the United States, and the BEF should not be involved in the Yugoslavia, and elected to withdraw its forces back to Brazil.

Even with the shipping demands of the Pacific theater, the United States provided all the necessary transport for the BEF for its journey back home, giving the BEF disembarkation top priority. In order to carry on this transportation, the BEF was divided in echelons, the first of which left Italy on 12 July 1945, and the last on 13 October 1945. The BEF returned home with 509 men less, having 451 killed in action, and 58 missing-in-action. The 1,577 wounded in action during the Italian Campaign returned on a different schedule.² Since the Paraguay War in 1865, Brazilian Armed Forces had not lost so many personnel in less than a year.

In Brazilian history, the BEF was not a simple expedition to fight against the Axis and the fascist parties. Brazilian involvement in support of the Allies provided the spark

--69--

that brought dynamic transformations in the country. The first transformation was political, deposing the Estado Novo regime, and returning democracy.

On 18 July 1945, the first BEF echelon and members from the United States 10th Mountain Division paraded in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, where they were cheered by the Brazilian populace that attended the parade. This event demonstrated how the BEF victorious campaign in Italy enhanced Brazilian national pride. President Getúlio Vargas received a big ovation when greeting these troops; however, he ordered the BEF to disband immediately after this parade. The same occurred with the other echelons that returned later.³ The reason for disbanding these units was that President Vargas realized he could not keep these combat-tested units in the hands of those experienced officers that had fought against fascism in Italy.⁴ He was concerned that his dictatorial power could be jeopardized by the senior leadership of the BEF.

Even before the BEF was organized, President Vargas had emphasized his concerns about sending an expeditionary force to combat Nazi troops in Italy, and what the officers would think of the Brazilian political regime that was not much different from the one they would fight against in Europe. General Octavio Costa, in his book, highlighted Vargas' concerns.

One must pay attention to the fact that Brazil, at that time, was undergoing a dictatorial regime; however, it was by the side of democratic states, fighting a war the character of which was remarkably ideological. The political consequences of such fact could not be avoided.

President Vargas, the artful and clever dictator, had surely sensed it. It is said that, because he was worried about the decision he would soon have to make concerning sending an expeditionary force to fight in Europe, he asked for a reliable general's smart advice. The general was silent after he heard Vargas question, and Vargas asked once more, "indeed, what is your opinion about sending a military force?" He heard, then, the general's clairvoyant and sly warning, "I am not worried about their going, but about their coming back."⁵

--70--

President Vargas's concerns and fears proved to be correct. The veteran officers realized how ironic it was for the BEF to come home to a political system which had been modeled after Italian fascism. They also had been critical of Vargas' Estado Novo while they were fighting fascism in Italy. They thought there was no sense in fighting against a political system abroad while having a similar one at home. The defeat of the Axis powers was a signal for the end of Estado Novo. President Vargas promised to bring democracy back as quick as possible. The Brazilian political scene changed very swiftly at the end of World War II. The military did not wait until December 1945 to see if President Vargas would keep his promise to retire from his office and allow elections to take place. In October, a military coup took power through a bloodless revolution.⁶

General Cordeiro de Farias, the BEF Artillery Commander, emerged as the most politically experienced and visible member of the BEF in 1945. He carried out the final negotiations for the resignation of Vargas. The Supreme Court then took power until the election was held in December 1945. The military oversaw the election which granted presidential powers to the former Minister of War, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. Though military factions had intervened and withdrawn from the political scene in 1930, from 1945 up to 1985 they remained a constant contender for power.⁷

The Brazilian Constitution of 1946 officially sanctioned the new role of the Army. While the Army was still subordinate to the president, a provision was included for the Army's role as a guarantor of constitutional powers and of law and order.⁸ Therefore, the first outcome from the Brazilian participation in World War II was the restoration of democracy, and retiring the President Vargas from his fifteen years of presidency in a dictatorship.

--71--

Some of the BEF officers transferred their military leadership into political areas. General Mascarenhas de Moraes had no aspiration for a political career when he returned to Brazil in 1945, but found himself being pushed into the arena in 1951. A Congressional Act returned him to active duty for life and promoted him to Marshal of the Army as the Minister of War. General Zenóbio da Costa, the "Hero of Monte Cassino," became the Minister of War during Vargas' second administration, when he was re-elected in 1950. General Cordeiro de Farias was a cabinet minister for coordination of regional agencies. Colonel Castello Branco, the BEF Operation Officer, became the President of Brazil in 1964, when the political influence of the BEF reached the highest level of power.⁹

In fact, the Brazilian participation in World War II brought major internal transformations. During the war, giant public enterprises in steel, mining, mechanical fabrication, and chemical sectors were created.¹⁰ Economic planning was introduced, and Brazil got its infrastructure for industrial development, changing from an agricultural to an industrial based economy.

Brazil also took advantage of the trade relationships established when it provided raw material and staples during the war to the United States and Great Britain, expanding its exportation of minerals and agricultural products. This trade brought financial support to Brazil to initialize what was called the "Brazilian industrial revolution." The Brazilian government welcomed the financial support of the United States in building the first Brazilian steel mill in Volta Redonda.¹¹ The industrialization spurred by the building of the Volta Redonda steel mill propelled Brazil during a single generation from the age of the bull-cart to that of the internal combustion engine. If not for the infrastructure,

--72--

experiences, import-substitution processes, and transfer of know-how acquired during the war, it would be difficult to imagine how Brazil would be today. By its support of the Allies during the World War II, the government opened a new era in the Brazilian economy, transforming Brazil into an industrialized country.¹²

The transformation that occurred in the Brazilian economy was not only based in the industrialization process initiated, as mentioned previously, but it was also caused by the income provided by Brazilian exports during the war, incrementing the Brazilian international financial reserves. Tomaz Castello Branco mentioned this event as follows.

As we have already mentioned, Brazil had one of the smallest foreign businesses before the war started, which consisted of the trade of coffee and cotton, products that were responsible for our economy, for manufactured products, machines, and fuels.

As we can see, the only difference between this kind of business and the colonial business was that we did not export "Pau Brasil"¹³ and gems anymore, but two noble agricultural products.

This kind of business not only grew, but also diversified itself, since the market for our production increased and our products started to be the reason for a dispute between the fighting countries that were looking forward to storing all kinds of products to be consumed in case of a crisis. Our balance abroad increased gradually, turning our balance of trade from negative to positive.¹⁴

Therefore, it is widely assumed that the participation of Brazil in the World War II on the winner's side, the dispatch of the BEF, and the unconditional support provided by the United Nations had effectively contributed to integrate Brazil into an international scenario. This participation was also considered a key point in the internal economic development of the country because of the mutual support and the trade that was carried out.

An additional result of Brazil's support of the Allies that must be highlighted is that Brazil became one of the United States' closest allies in the Latin America region. The mutual agreements between these two countries, in which Brazil provided those raw

--73--

materials previously mentioned, as well as the aerial bases and the platform so that the United States could reach the North of Africa more easily and more efficiently, demonstrated how far Brazil would cooperate as an ally after World War II.¹⁵ The Brazilian government also saw the Americans as the most reliable partner, and this situation would remain almost constant up to President Jimmy Carter's administration, when he called for political changes in 1977, during the Military Regime, that lasted from 1964 to 1985.¹⁶ To amplify the relationship between Brazil and the United States, Cordell Hull, who served as Secretary of State of United States during World War II, commented on this subject, supporting why the war strengthened the relationship between Brazil and the United States.

Victory in Europe and Asia would not have happened so early if the Allies had not established aerial bases in Brazil. Those military bases, projecting themselves at distance in the South Atlantic, made it possible for our planes to fly in great number to Western Africa and from there to the theaters of operations in Europe and in the Eastern World. If those bases had not been established, we would not have been able to help the English in Egypt as we did in a crucial moment of the Battle of El Alamein. Besides, Brazil also sent an expeditionary force to Europe. Our Navy contributed to the patrolling of the Atlantic Ocean. In an attempt to supply the United States, Brazil lost a great part of its merchant fleet.¹⁷

Moreover, the BEF commander, General Mascarenhas de Moraes, requested and received the approval of the United States to purchase all the armament and equipment the BEF had used during the war. Even the nineteen fighters that had not been dispatched to Italy yet, but were allotted to the BEF, were brought, at the end of the war, by Brazilian pilots from Washington, DC.¹⁸ It was only after the participation of Brazil in the war on the side of the Allies that it became the main leader within Latin America, and the Brazilian forces became the most powerful and well-equipped military within South

--74--

America. The excerpt from the historian Robert Sheina demonstrates leadership achieved by Brazil.

Within South America, the traditional balance of power between Argentina and Peru on one hand, and Brazil and Chile on the other had been upset. Due to its role in World War II and the military aid it received, Brazil was now the dominant Latin America power. Argentina lost considerable political stature and economic well-being due to its neutral, sometimes pro-Axis positions which lasted until the "eleventh hour" of the war.¹⁹

Despite making Brazil the most powerful country within South America after World War II, the Brazilian Army faced problems due to the BEF disbanding. The chance to use combat-tested units as the core for armywide training and reorganization was lost. Even the after-action reviews were downplayed to the point that the officers assigned to prepare these reports were not members of the BEF staff. The sudden disbanding of the BEF did not allow the Brazilian Armed Forces to take all the advantage that would be possible from such experience acquired in Italy.²⁰

Another problem that the Army faced after World War II was the missions assigned. The Brazilian Army's primary mission was to defend the country against external aggression, and the great purchase of tanks, artillery, and aircrafts was well justified. The secondary mission was that of guarantor of constitutional powers, law and order, and Brazilian institutions. The Army, then, should be prepared to act as police. The training and weaponry applied to these missions should be quite different.

This problem was not new. Since the Republic Proclamation, the Brazilian Army had dealt with these two missions, and they competed with one another. Law and

enforcement consumed much more time and resources from the Army; however, the Army never had a clear guidance what should be addressed first. The answer for this question never came up, meaning that the Army would have to continue to deal with this

--75--

uncertainty. Therefore, the preparation of the Army should cover both missions. The internal mission assigned to the Army played an important role during the Cold War, when communism returned to be a problem for Brazil. The Brazilian Army was assigned to prevent the communist expansion in Brazil.²¹

Brazilian participation in World War II did not change the posture of the country in relation to war. In fact, the participation would restate this posture. Brazil would continue to look at war only as a last resort after arbitration and other pacific means had failed. While this posture dictated that Brazil would not wage a war of conquest, its officers and soldiers were taught to think in terms of an aggressive defense, utilizing the doctrine of deep tactical offensive, to destroy the enemy's Armed Forces, and seize territory. Thus, there was a replacement of defensive thinking and planning with an offensive outlook. This represented a basic intellectual change. The old static defensive posture of the French had been replaced by the American offensive doctrine.²²

Under the inspiration and leadership of General Cordeiro de Farias, the Escola Superior de Guerra (ESG), the equivalent of the Superior War College, was established in 1949.²³ The ESG grew out of the BEF experience incorporating many patterns of the United States National War College curriculum. The United States was granted exclusive rights to assist this organization until 1960. Only the United States had a liaison officer with faculty status at the ESG. The ESG attempted to do this by offering an academic year studying on national security doctrine and foreign affairs, which included a twenty-day tour in the United States.

Another transformation within the Army after World War II occurred in the enlisted and noncommissioned ranks. One of the consequences of the war experience was

--76--

an unwillingness to continue to accept illiterates into the ranks because of the technical knowledge required for modern warfare. Therefore, the Army would not allow illiterate people to join the Army, and would carry out a huge effort to educate all its personnel. The first action done was to provide a regimental school inside the barracks.²⁴ It was also necessary to point out that the Army established the first Sergeant School in South America, called Escola de Sargentos das Armas (Branch Sergeant School), in 1945.

After World War II, Brazil occupied an enhanced position within the international community due to its South American leadership, geographical features, and economic and trade expansion. This position of leadership was seen not only in its economic or

military power, that increased soon due to its participation in the war on the Allies' side, but also in diplomacy, when Osvaldo Aranha, a Brazilian diplomat, was elected the first President of the General Assembly at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, California, United States.²⁵ Since then, the Brazilian president has had the privilege of opening the annual General Assembly meeting.

As important as all these concrete gains achieved by Brazil, regarding economics, military, and political improvements, another important reward from the participation in World War II on the Allied side was related to the national self-confidence. Brazilians changed their way of thinking. Before the war, Brazilians usually joked about the people's low self-confidence in undertaking heavy and tough tasks. So, when it was said that the "BEF would not be sent until Brazil's snakes took to smoking the pipes," it reflected this Brazilian behavior.²⁶ The effort carried out by the country to prepare the Brazilian defense against the Axis's submarines, and moreover, to send an expeditionary force to Italy, overcoming both internal and external problems, proved that Brazil was

--77--

able to undertake large complex tasks.²⁷ The BEF's motto "smoking snakes" or "the snake will smoke" became very common, and is often used in Brazil when confronting change and challenge, on a manner similar to American expression "something wicked this way comes," showing the difference in the way Brazilians thought about themselves after the war.

The Brazilian government expected special recognition from the Allies, mainly from the United States, due to its participation in World War II; however, the Potsdam Conference, in July 1945, was monopolized by the leaders of the big three powers, the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. This all displayed an attitude of

indifference towards minor powers such as Brazil. The leaders of the "big three" were concerned with settling boundaries and dealing with of major reconstruction problems in Europe. After the war, the United States priority was to rebuild Western Europe, and, in consequence, Latin America countries were neglected.²⁸

Despite Brazil's military and economic leadership in South America and the benefits the country might have gained because of its participation in the war, and the good relationship with the United States, from the Brazilian government's perspective, the country had neither received the expected treatment from the United States, nor was it nominated to a permanent seat on the United Nation Security Council as anticipated by President Getúlio Vargas. It seemed to the Brazilian people that all the war effort and sacrifices were not even deemed worthy of proper reparations from the defeated enemy whose interests appeared to consume more attention in Washington than the interests of former allies.²⁹ Two reasons could be raised from this treatment. The first one was the Cold War, when the United States had to deal with the threat of the Soviet Union, and the

--78--

second one was Roosevelt's death. President Roosevelt was backing Brazilian desire for that permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.³⁰ Apparently, his successors felt the Brazilian role in World War II was not enough to give a permanent seat to the country. The permanent seat is an objective seeking by Brazilian diplomacy and Brazil is undertaking, even nowadays, all kinds of effort to enlarge the number of permanent seats on the Security Council. Brazilian purpose is to open ten more seats at that Council, allowing these ten countries to have the same status of the five that are already in there.

Even though, despite the lack of attention by the United States, and that Brazil did not get the permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council as desired, it is important to emphasize that the war was the catalyst that started the engine of transformation for Brazil and allowed it to enter the modern industrial economy of the twentieth century as a global peer. Brazil became a different country after its participation in the war. The gains the country acquired because of this participation many times outweighed the losses. The main Brazilian national powers, such as political, military, and economic, were strengthened due to the war participation.

Chapter 5 Footnotes:

[1.](#) Medal, 45.

[2.](#) Costa, 76.

[3.](#) John W. F. Dulles, *Vargas of Brazil: A Political Biography* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1967), 267.

[4.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 120.

[5.](#) Costa, 83.

[6.](#) Medal, 49.

[7.](#) *Ibid.*, 49.

--79--

[8.](#) Medal, 50.

[9.](#) *Ibid.*, 51.

[10.](#) Granzieira, 83.

[11.](#) Lanker, 101.

- [12.](#) Granzieira, 80.
- [13.](#) A kind of wood taken from trees which were found along the coast of Brazil; those trees gave their name to the country.
- [14.](#) Casterllo Branco, 564.
- [15.](#) Granzieira, 102.
- [16.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 76.
- [17.](#) Cordell Hull, apud Branco, 564.
- [18.](#) Dulles, 267.
- [19.](#) Sheina, 172.
- [20.](#) McCann, "The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964," 120.
- [21.](#) *Ibid.*
- [22.](#) *Ibid.*, 124.
- [23.](#) *Ibid.*, 123.
- [24.](#) *Ibid.*, 122.
- [25.](#) Lanker, 108.
- [26.](#) Medal, 21.
- [27.](#) Costa, 83.
- [28.](#) Smith, 21.
- [29.](#) McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," 76.
- [30.](#) *Ibid.*, 21.

--80--

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--81--

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--82--

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