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A MILITARY FORCE ON A POLITICAL MISSION: THE BRAZILIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN WORLD WAR II

by

DERRECK T. CALKINS

(Under the Direction of Laura Shelton)

ABSTRACT

Despite declarations of war from several Latin American nations, The Brazilian Expeditionary Force was the only representative from the region to contribute to Allied combat operations on the European continent. The first contingent of men sailed from Rio de Janeiro on July 2, 1944, one year later, after more than two hundred days in continuous contact with enemy forces in northern Italy, the *febianos*¹ returned to Brazil as national heroes.

Brazil's wartime alliance with the United States was a calculated risk. Brazilian President/Dictator Getulio Dornelles Vargas and his advisors believed the alliance would guarantee Brazil the economic assistance it needed to industrialize its economy and provide the weapons necessary to transform the weak Brazilian military. The FEB was one of many instruments Vargas utilized to enhance Brazil's international position. As Letícia Pinheiro, a professor at the Institute of International Relations of the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) explained, "The FEB was the core of a political project to strengthen the Armed Forces and provide Brazil with a globally prominent position as an ally of the United States."²

Vargas and his Foreign Minister Oswaldo Euclides de Sousa Aranha were aware of recent Brazilian history. They knew that although Brazil declared war on the central powers in

¹ This is the most common nickname for members of the Expeditionary Force.

² Carlos Haag, "For whom did the snake smoke? Studies show the importance of Brazil's participation in the Second World War," *Pesquisa (online)*, November 2010. <http://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/?art=2867&bd=1&pg=1&lg=en> (accessed May 1, 2011).

1917, it did not send troops to Europe. In the 1920s consequently, Brazilian efforts to secure greater international prestige never blossomed; in 1926, a frustrated Brazil withdrew from the League of Nations. On Monday May 21, 1928, *Time Magazine* reported on its withdrawal stating:

The Secretariat of the League of Nations reluctantly made public, last week, a note dated one month previous in which the Brazilian Government of Premier Octavio Mangabeira reaffirmed Brazil's intention to withdraw from League membership in June 1928.

In serving the original notice of withdrawal, two years ago, Brazil was joined by Spain because both nations felt that they should be accorded permanent seats on the Council of the League of Nations, at the time when Germany was admitted to the League and given a permanent Council seat (TIME, June 21, 1926).³

Brazilian leaders that rose to power in the 1930s must have felt that World War II provided Brazil unique opportunities to achieve the status it had failed in attain two decades earlier. They believed that if Brazil offered a “sacrifice of blood” it would acquire increased international respect and a prominent seat at the peace table.

This thesis studies Brazilian participation in World War II, through an examination of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. It argues that although the FEB was a military force, its mission was fundamentally political; the ever-changing political climate in Brazil repeatedly influenced the mission of the expeditionary force. What was that mission? As Leticia Pinheiro argued, its mission was to, “strengthen the Armed Forces and provide Brazil with a globally prominent position as an ally of the United States.”⁴ How was the FEB to accomplish this objective and was it successful? For the FEB, success was contingent upon its ability to organize, train, deploy, engage enemy forces, and attain victories on the battlefield while strengthening Brazil’s image

³ “The League of Nations: Brazil Out,” *Time Magazine*, May 21, 1928.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,731754,00.html> (accessed May 2, 2011).

⁴ Haag, “For Whom did the Snake Smoke”

on the international stage. This paper uses a chronological narrative to analyze its mission and show that the bold foreign policy objectives of Vargas and domestic political unrest directly affected the organization, combat mission, and the decision to demobilize the expeditionary force rapidly.

INDEX WORDS: Brazil, World War II, The Brazilian Expeditionary Force, FEB, Força Expedicionária Brasileira, Segunda Guerra Mundial, febianos

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DECICATION

To my wife Joanna whose constant encouragement and infinite love made this possible

To my son Cooper whose timing was impeccable

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INTRODUCTION

Each year on the first Sunday in October, a symbolic “changing of the guard” ceremony takes place at the *Monumento aos Mortos da Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Monument for the dead of World War II) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.⁵ Constructed in the early 1960s, the memorial, popularly known as the *Monumento aos Pracinhas* (the Soldiers Monument), memorializes the World War II participation of the Brazilian Army, Navy, and Air Force. Although the site pays tribute to the involvement of all three service branches, the most hallowed feature of the memorial is an underground chapel where the remains of 457 members of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (*Força Expedicionária Brasileira*, or FEB) rest as a testament to the Army’s operational participation in World War II.

As historian Charles Thomas explained, “World War II was the largest conflict in human history and devastated Europe, Asia, north Africa, and large portions of the Pacific.”⁶ It began in the 1930s as two separate conflicts, one in Asia and the other in Europe; however, it merged into a single “global war” following the entry of the United States in December 1941. Between 1939 and 1945, numerous nations supported either the “Big Three” Allied powers (the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain) or the principal Axis nations (Germany, Italy, and Japan), making World War II, more universal than any previous conflict. One of the war’s great chroniclers Gerhard Weinberg explained the war’s worldwide significance. “The fighting of that

⁵ The literal translation for Praça is a square or marketplace, however, the term is also used to describe common soldiers.

⁶ Charles Thomas. “World War II,” in Lester Kurz, ed., *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*. (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999,) 853.

war ranged and raged over all oceans . . . and touched every continent . . . It was therefore, a war, which reached further around the globe than any, which had ever preceded it.”⁷

The historiography of World War II is rich, containing thousands of volumes devoted to a vast expanse of war related social, political, and military themes, yet the immensity of the topic, has often led historians to concentrate their work on the contributions of the major powers, consequently, limiting discussion of those made by those considered “minor” participants.

Though Brazil was a secondary Allied power, it was the primary ally in South America; nevertheless, the historiography has often excluded or misrepresented Brazilian participation.

Historian Frank McCann correctly iterated this point, observing:

Oddly, even though Brazil hosted, at Natal, the largest United States air base outside its own territory, and, at Recife, the U.S. Fourth Fleet; and even though it tied its economy to the American war machine, sent its navy in pursuit of German U-Boats and provided an expeditionary force and a fighter squadron on the Italian front, Brazil in some mysterious fashion has been lumped in popular memory abroad as pro-Nazi.⁸

In January 1942, Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers; eight months later, on August 22, 1942, Brazilian President Getulio Dornelles Vargas renounced Brazil’s official policy of neutrality and declared war on Italy and Germany. From 1942 to 1945, Brazilians actively contributed to the allied cause on land, air, and sea, before the war concluded Brazil lost 1,889 soldiers and sailors, 31 merchant vessels, 3 warships, and 22 fighter aircraft.⁹

Why then has Brazil been “lumped” together with other “pro-Nazi” nations? First, Brazilian cooperation is regularly mistaken for Argentine dissent. Second, as Shawn Smallman

⁷ Gerhard Weinberg. *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

⁸ Frank D. McCann, “Brazil and World War II: The Forgotten Ally. What did you do in the war, Zé Carioca?” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Y el Caribe* 6 (July-December 1995).
http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/vi_2/mccann.htm#foot15 (accessed December 12, 2010).

⁹ McCann, “Brazil and World War II.”

explained even after Brazil declared war, some high-ranking military officials “opposed Brazil’s World War II alliance with the United States and England, countries they considered imperialist powers that threatened Brazilian sovereignty.” These officials included Brazilian Chief of Staff Pedro Aurelio Goes Monteiro and Minister of War Dutra.¹⁰ Third, throughout the war ‘Fifth Column’ propagandists effectively disseminated pro-Nazi messages that questioned Brazilian involvement and weakened national resolve. Finally, Brazilian participation was a strategic foreign policy decision not a reflection of overwhelming public support for the allied cause.

Following World War I, the United States overtook Great Britain as Brazil’s largest trading partner. By the 1930s, however, Germany was rapidly becoming a principal competitor. According to Stanley Hilton, the U.S. and Germany primarily competed for commercial control over Brazil and other South American Nations during the first half of the 1930s, with the competition transitioning into a “politico-military” struggle after 1937.¹¹ Vargas and the military continued playing Germany and the U.S. off one another after war broke out in Europe; however, by 1941, the British blockade of German shipping made it increasingly difficult for Brazil to continue its economic relationship with Nazi Germany. Vargas, therefore, took a calculated risk and formalized the Brazilian American alliance – believing that such an alliance would guarantee Brazil the economic assistance it needed to industrialize its economy and the military weapons necessary to modernize the weak Brazilian military. He calculated correctly. Before the war ended the United States provided Brazil with more than 200 million dollars in Lend-Lease aid, or

¹⁰ Shawn Smallman, "The Official Story: The Violent Censorship of Brazilian Veterans, 1945-1954." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (May, 1998): 258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2518116>.

¹¹ Stanley E. Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War in South America, 1939-1945: German Military Espionage and Allied Counterespionage in Brazil*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 25.

“70% of all United States Lend-Lease equipment sent to Latin America.”¹² Brazil subsequently emerged from the war as South America’s dominate economic and military power.

Brazil’s most significant contribution to the allied cause was its decision to grant the United States access to a series of naval and air bases along Brazil’s northeastern coast – a region commonly known as the “Brazilian Bulge.” From the strategic location, the United States transported tons of vital military equipment across the South Atlantic. In the South Atlantic, the U.S. carried out these operations year round; the supply chain, which “bounced” supplies to Africa and beyond, became nicknamed, the “trampoline to victory.” Stetson Conn and Bryon Fairchild emphasized the strategic importance of the bases in their work, *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*. They explained: “In collaboration with Brazilian naval and air forces, the United States Navy used Brazilian bases to cleanse the South Atlantic of German submarines and to blockade it against the shipment of war materials to or between the Axis nations. The airway through Brazil, which the United States was permitted to use freely and virtually without restriction after 1941 for military purposes, was one of the vital links with victory in the war.”¹³

The FEB, which fought as a division within the IV Corps of the United States Fifth Army in Northern Italy, was born out of Brazilian ambition; it was a military force with a political mission. Brazilian officials organized the FEB as an unambiguous symbol of Brazilian commitment to the allied cause. The establishment of the bases was the indispensable element of Brazil’s pro ally policy; however, the formation and deployment of an infantry division was its most politically symbolic commitment. As historian Francisco César Ferraz explained, “At the height of the war effort, the Allies didn’t want a partner like Brazil, whose troops had to be

¹² McCann, “Brazil and World War II.”

¹³ Stetson Conn and Bryon Fairchild; *United States Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere: the Framework of Hemisphere Defense*, 273; (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), in The Center of Military History United States Army, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/Framework/> (accessed March 15, 2010) 330.

dressed, fed, trained, and armed, and tried to discourage Brazil's intentions. The Vargas administration, however, insisted in sending the expeditionary force to improve its international position at the post-war negotiations table."¹⁴ Vargas and Aranha believed that if Brazil offered a "sacrifice of blood" it would acquire increased international respect and a prominent seat at the peace table.

The first 5,000-man contingent of the First Expeditionary Infantry Division ("Primeira Divisão de Infantaria Expedicionária" or 1st DIE)¹⁵ sailed from Rio de Janeiro on July 2, 1944. After arriving in Naples, the United States Army incorporated the FEB into the IV Corps, under the command of General Willis D. Crittenger, of the Fifth Army, commanded by General Mark Clark.

The British Eighth Army and the U.S. Fifth Army were undoubtedly the most "international" allied armies; however, the FEB was atypical. Each of the other international forces were either, colonial forces, commonwealth forces, or "free" forces; the Indians were a colonial force, the Canadians, New Zealanders, and South African were commonwealth forces, while the French and the Polish were "free" forces. The Brazilians, however, were the only division drawn from the army of a sovereign state placed under United States command."¹⁶ Unlike the American Expeditionary Force that served in France during World War I, the Brazilians willingly placed their soldiers under the overall command of a foreign army. When the FEB reached Italy in July 1944, it was wholly dependent on the United States for training,

¹⁴ Haag, "For Whom did the Snake Smoke."

¹⁵ Why was the FEB called the First Infantry Division? The division that did fight in Italy (the FEB) was originally called the First Infantry Division because Brazilian officials originally intended to send three of four divisions to Europe but a lack of equipment, training, healthy recruits, and transportation to the theatre of operations prevented this from taking place, nevertheless, the FEB was still known as the First Infantry Division.

¹⁶ Frank McCann, "The Forca Expedicionaria Brasileira in the Italian Campaign, 1944-1945," *The Professional Bulletin of Army History* 20 (spring 1993): 1. <http://www.history.army.mil/armyhistory/AH26newOCR.pdf> (accessed March 5, 2011).

uniforms, food, equipment, weapons, and even transportation to and from the theatre of operations.¹⁷

The FEB was one of the instruments Vargas utilized to enhance Brazil international position. Both Brazilian and American officials were aware of the symbolic nature of the FEB, that is why Brazilian commanders were generally eager to engage the enemy and American commanders were willing to help them do so. In his memoirs, General Mark Clark confirmed his understanding of the FEB's political mission, stating: "The Performance of the Brazilians was, of course, important politically as well as militarily. Brazil was the only Latin American country to send an expeditionary force to take part in the European war, and, naturally, we were eager to give them a chance to make a good showing."¹⁸

The FEB's image and "mission" changed according to the political climate in Brazil. Domestically, at least three groups, Vargas and his supporters, the army (Minister of War, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra), and Vargas' pro democratic opposition, attempted to use the mission of the FEB or its symbolic nature for political gain. Initially Vargas sought to use the FEB as a symbol that would increase Brazil's hemispheric and global prestige, yet it is likely that he also "hoped to distract the military, to give him more space in which to organize a populist base to continue what he considered the gains of his dictatorial regime."¹⁹ At first, Dutra opposed its organization, eventually only agreeing to its organization because he knew that if the army was to become a modern fighting force it needed modern weaponry that only the United States could provide. The expeditionary force was a combat division deployed by a semi-fascist dictatorial regime to defeat fascism in Europe. Although Roosevelt was willing to overlook this

¹⁷ Frank McCann, "The Forca Expedicionaria Brasileira in the Italian Campaign, 1944-1945," *The Professional Bulletin of Army History* 20 (spring 1993): 1.

¹⁸ Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956,) 389.

¹⁹ McCann, "The Forca Expedicionária Brasileira," 1.

apparent contradiction, Vargas' pro-democratic political rivals were not and upon its return they used it as a symbol to argue that if Brazil defended democratic principles abroad, then a democratic government should govern at home. Before the war's conclusion, however, Vargas' aims shifted. He decided to use the FEB's publicized successes to help him reorganize and restructure his dictatorial regime, while Dutra, now a presidential candidate, came to fear the FEB's political potential and its possible use by Vargas. He therefore signed the order that demobilized the FEB before it ever returned to Brazil.²⁰

Considering the immensity of the war's military campaigns, Brazilian combat participation was at best minimal – Brazil only deployed a single reinforced combat division. In the final year of the war, millions of Axis and Allied troops covered the battlefields of Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. Only weeks before the first Brazilians arrived in Naples in July 1944, the largest amphibious landing invasion in history occurred on the western front at Normandy, while on the eastern front dozens of Russian divisions were pursuing a beleaguered German army. As a single infantry division, the FEB's operational use was limited; yet, during its deployment it underwent an extreme transformation while tenaciously and successfully battling German and Italian forces in the mountains and valleys of Northern Italy. Because it was successful on the battlefield, it became a symbol of national pride after the war. In an interview, retired Brigadier General Plínio Pitaluga stressed that the FEB had to overcome opposition in order to become an effective fighting force. He stated:

We overcame the judgments of some and the indifference of others of our people, the lack of enthusiasm from the allies, and even a lack of confidence in ourselves and became comparable with the best troops in the world, and returned victors. We showed adaptability and persistence in the face of a difficult enemy and a harsh climate of the 15 to 20 degrees below zero in mountainous terrain . . . We won the support of admirable leaders, including

²⁰ Ibid, 1.

some American commanders who were our friends, among them the esteemed General Mark Clark, commander of the Fifth Army²¹

No previous or subsequent Brazilian military force attained a similar level of success. Today the FEB remains the most revered military force in Brazilian history. Scholars and soldiers simply refer to the force by its acronym, the FEB. McCann correctly assessed the FEB's importance when he stated, "In truth, the FEB did not alter the course of the war in Europe. Its significance lies less in the history of the war than in the history of Brazilian-American relations and in the history of Brazil."²² Echoing his sentiment Smallman declared, "the greatest impact of the expeditionary force (FEB) was probably not in Europe but back in Brazil, where it became a symbol of national pride."²³

Throughout most of the FEB's deployment Brazilians were skeptical about the FEB's ability to engage and defeat European soldiers – a complex that Fifth Column propaganda exploited. Therefore, when the FEB defied expectations and attained success on the battlefield, it became a nationally unifying force at a time when regional, economic, and social differences sharply divided Brazil. This was the first and last time Brazilian forces engaged in combat on the European continent. Over the last half century, the very fact that Brazil successfully deployed an infantry division has been politically and culturally significant. Since its return Brazilians have been able to remind their Spanish-speaking neighbors that Brazil was the sole Latin American nation to participate in the European Theatre.

To understand the link between Brazilian politics and the FEB's mission it is necessary to first understand what events led to the rise of Vargas. Chapter 1, therefore, summarizes the

²¹ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1. General-De-Brigada- Plinio Pitaluga, 145.

²² McCann, Frank, "The Força Expedicionaria Brasileira in the Italian Campaign, 1944-45", 1.

²³ Smallman, "The Official Story," 229.

social, political, and military movements that although not directly linked to one another, sowed the seeds of revolution, which resulted in Vargas' rise to power and the subsequent move towards centralization within the government and military.

Throughout each stage of its mission, the FEB dealt with political strategizing and meddling while overcoming logistical, and public relations setbacks. Chapter 2 covers the period leading up to World War II, showing why Brazil entered the war on the side of the allies, why Brazil organized and deployed a politically significant expeditionary force. It will further show that from its earliest stages the FEB had to overcome hindrances, which were the result of domestic political disputes and the influence of Fifth Column propaganda.

After it arriving in Italy, the FEB was unable to escape the political quarrels taking place in Rio de Janeiro or the confines of international agreements that left the FEB completely dependent upon the United States. Chapter 3 takes the reader through the FEB's early campaign experiences. This chapter shows that the FEB's officers, including its commander General Mascarenhas de Moraes, understood the political nature of their mission. That is why he personally engaged in "international diplomacy" and secured the supplies, equipment, and training necessary for effective participation in a modern military campaign. Furthermore, the FEB remarkably overcame logistical and political barriers once again and entered combat in the fall of 1944, after which the first tactical group successfully engaged retreating German forces.

Chapter 4 will show that because of the combat defeats that the FEB suffered throughout the winter of 1944-1945, American patience and confidence began eroding, and anti-FEB defeatist rumors that challenged the prestige the FEB gained after its early successes once again began circulating throughout Brazil. In a sense, the FEB was a victim of its widely publicized victories. The FEB's initial combat success, although minimal by U.S. standards, had greatly

amplified expectations back in Brazil. This chapter takes the reader through this dark period, examining the causes of the FEB's setbacks and their political and military consequences. It argues that despite fledgling international confidence and domestic support, the FEB overcame continual artillery bombardments, sickness, freezing winter weather, negative German messages, and even defeat. In the spring of 1945, the FEB emerged as a well-trained fighting force that quieted skeptics on both sides of the Atlantic. It proved Brazilian officers and infantrymen were not inferior to their American allies or German adversary. Given the proper time and training, they could successfully plan and conduct offensive operations. After the war, the FEB morphed into a symbol of national pride; however, if the FEB had not achieved operational success, the government and society would have marginalized all febianos rather than propping following their return to Brazil.

The thesis will then conclude with a more in-depth discussion of the historiographical debates that center on the post-war political involvement of the FEB's veterans. Here I argue that scholarship needs to examine the links between politics and the FEB in order to understand how it became a powerful political force. Too often scholars have overlooked the wartime experiences of the FEB; however, its ability to project political power after the war are inseparably connected to the combat success of the FEB.

Chapter 1

The Causes and Effects of Revolution

In October 1930, Brazil's "Old Republic" (1889-1930) ended when top ranking military officials sided with rebels, known as the Liberal Alliance, that were quickly converging on the national capital, Rio de Janeiro. Earlier in the month Minister of War, General Serzefredo dos Passos, assured President Washington Luís that the armed forces would support the President if the rebels attempted to overthrow the government. Nevertheless, as rebel forces approached the capital these same high-ranking military officials, rather than seeing the country torn apart by a possible civil war, staged a bloodless coup and removed the incumbent president. As the Old Republic faded into the shadows, "it ended as it began, with a military movement."²⁴

During the 1920s social, political, and military upheaval engulfed Brazil. These movements, although not directly linked to one another, sowed the seeds of revolution that Getulio Dornelles Vargas and the Liberal Alliance effectively harvested. Without the movements of the 1920s, revolution would not have occurred in 1930. On October 31, 1930, Vargas and the other rebel leaders victoriously entered Rio de Janeiro; four days later – only ten days after taking control of the government – the military junta appointed Vargas Provisional President of Brazil.²⁵ One of the defining characteristics of the Vargas era was Brazil's move toward centralization. Because of this political shift, by the time Germany remilitarized the Rhineland, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia, and civil war erupted in Spain, Vargas and his military commanders were able to orchestrate a coup and bestow virtually dictatorial powers upon Vargas

²⁴ E. Bradford Burns, *A History of Brazil*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 290.

²⁵ This marked the second time in Brazilian history that the military peacefully stepped aside and conferred the government to civilians. This first occurred at the time of the Republic's creation in 1889.

who then established his authoritarian *Estado Novo* (New State) regime.²⁶ By the time Hitler invaded Poland two years later, Vargas' government, consisting of Vargas, his cabinet ministers, and high-ranking military officials, unilaterally controlled Brazil's domestic and foreign policy, which allowed them to make calculated political decisions at a time of unparalleled international tension.

To understand the link between Brazilian politics and the FEB's mission it is necessary to first understand what events led to the rise of Vargas. The following pages, therefore, summarize the social, political, and military movements that sowed the seeds of revolution and resulted in the overthrow of Brazil's Old Republic.

The 1920s

Getúlio Dornelles Vargas was Brazil's most influential political leader of the twentieth century. After officials tallied the popular vote following the March 1930 presidential election, however, Julio Prestes of São Paulo, the candidate handpicked by incumbent President Washington Luís, soundly defeated Vargas. Official returns awarded Prestes 1,100,000 of the 1,900,000 votes cast.²⁷ In fact, Vargas only won a majority of votes in the three states that backed his candidacy, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and Paraíba.²⁸ How then did a defeated political machine, the Liberal Alliance, and their candidate, Vargas, rise to power and overthrow

²⁶ The name *Estado Novo*, came from António de Oliveira Salazar's authoritarian regime, also known as the *Estado Novo*, that controlled Portugal from 1932-1968.

²⁷ In keeping with the tradition of the Old Republic, local political authorities tallied the votes. Therefore, it is likely that political machines tampered with the 1930 ballots to secure the victory of Prestes. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many votes Vargas actually received. For more information regarding Brazil's history of election frauds see, E. Bradford Burns, *A History of Brazil*. Also, see, Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁸ Robert M. Levine, *The Vargas Regime; The Critical Years, 1934-1938*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1970,) 4.

the Republic within seven months of the presidential election? To answer this question it necessary to examine first the decade that preceded the Revolution.

At the dawning of the 1920s poverty, malnutrition, disease, and illiteracy plagued most of Brazilian society, even as class and race restrictions limited economic and social mobility. Within the military, the officer's corps was reserved for the upper classes. In his article "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45," José Murilo De Carvalho showed that as late as 1942, the instructions for the entrance examination to the Military Academy "included restrictions relating to race, religion, family background, and ideology."²⁹ He further argued that in spite of Brazil's 1916 implementation of a universal draft system, "enlisted men were drawn exclusively, mostly through coercion, from the more disadvantaged sectors of the population."³⁰

In the 1920s São Paulo was quickly becoming the most industrialized city in all of South America. As Thomas Skidmore showed in *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, in 1907, São Paulo was only responsible for 15.9 percent of Brazilian industry; by 1937 that share augmented to 45.4 percent.³¹ Yet, most of the country remained agrarian. In 1920, more than seventy percent of all employed males in Brazil worked in the agricultural sector of the economy.³²

Throughout the 1920s, social, political, and military movements undermined the legitimacy and authority of the Old Republic. The Brazilian Modernist movement, the contested election of 1922, and the tenente revolts of 1922 and 1924-1927, amplified discontent that had been slowly evolving at least since World War I. Although these events did not directly cause the Revolution of 1930, they each implicitly contributed to the collapse of the Old Republic. In

²⁹ José Murilo De Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 62, no. 2 (May, 1982), 205. <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2514978>, (accessed July 1, 2010).

³⁰ De Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45," 201.

³¹ Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 98.

³² Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 7.

Brazil, revolutionaries and discontented masses began to question the efficacy of capitalism and democracy. Each time Brazil's fragile economy deteriorated these questions resurged, as was the case in 1921 and again in 1929. According to Skidmore, when Brazilian elite looked toward their traditional model, Europe, for guidance they discovered that "liberal electoral democracy" was under attack by "bolshevism in Russia, by fascism in Italy and Germany, and by anarchism and corporatism in Spain and Portugal."³³ Therefore, as Burns articulated, "industrialization, urbanization, the spread of nationalism, and a growing desire for modernization set in motion forces with which the sterile and unimaginative Old Republic was unable to cope."³⁴

Governments Pass and the Army Remains

Between the signing of the new federal constitution in 1891 and the revolution of 1930, no significant political referendums occurred. Slight change occurred only when the price of coffee fell or the question of presidential succession divided the state machines, as was the case during the presidential elections of 1910, 1922 and 1930. For decades, the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais indicated which candidate would succeed the incumbent president. Of the thirteen presidents elected during the old republic, eleven came from either São Paulo or Minas. In recent 1922 election, São Paulo and Minas Gerais chose the young and politically well-connected governor of Minas, Artur da Silva Bernardes, to succeed President Epitácio Lindolfo da Silva Pessoa. During the 1922-election cycle, however, a coalition from Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, and Pernambuco united over their resentment of the coffee oligarchies domination of national politics. The three states subsequently formed a new coalition, the Radical Republican coalition, and nominated former President (1909-1910) Nilo Peçanha of Rio de Janeiro.

³³ Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 105.

³⁴ Burns, *A History of Brazil*, 290.

Although the military oversaw the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment the Old Republic, the military maintained greater political influence than military power during the era of the Republic. The Constitution of 1891 gave individual states a considerable amount of autonomy and allowed them to levy tariffs on goods that crossed their borders and contract loans from foreign powers. Consequently, individual states trained and equipped state militaries. The state militaries of the powerful southern states were better armed and trained than the federal forces garrisoned within their borders. From 1906-1924 São Paulo contracted a French mission to train its state military, the *Força Publica*, and although the force was primarily responsible for police action, between 1894 and 1930, the *Força Publica* annually outnumbered federal troops in the state by a margin of ten to one.

Like many nations in the western hemisphere, Brazil followed the lead of the United States and declared war on the Central Powers in 1917. Brazilian military commanders hoped that the war would result in the modernization of the army and navy; by the 1920s civilian politicians continued to frustrate such efforts. The lack of training weaponry led a military historian to comment, “the cavalry had no horses, the artillery had no artillery pieces and the infantry had no rifles.”³⁵

Despite its obvious lack of operational power both of the parties involved in a contested presidential election sought the political support of the military. Perhaps this was because civilian politicians remembered that only a generation earlier a weak military overthrew the monarchy and established the Republic. In order to secure the military’s support, politically judicious presidents had allocated “generous” budgets for both the army and the navy. In return for these distributions, the military backed the “official” candidate in each disputed election.

Without regard for this alliance, President Pessôa made several political miscalculations

³⁵ Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 100.

that damaged the military's honor and further weakened its dwindling support for the government.³⁶ He vetoed a bill that would have increased very low military salaries, and then he appointed two civilians, João Pandia Calógeras and Raul Soares as the Ministers of War and Navy. This was the first time the government gave civilians control over military ministries. Because of these and other actions taken by the President, disillusioned officers did not back the government's candidate in the 1922 election.

For the military, the election took a personal turn when the Rio de Janeiro newspaper, *O Correio da Manhã*, published the content of a letter that contained derogatory remarks about the military. Artur Bernardes had supposedly written the letter to Raul Soares. Despite Bernardes' rightful claims that the letter was a forgery, the damage it caused was irreversible.³⁷ As the bitter campaign cycle continued, tensions escalated. The most important event occurred when the powerful military fraternity, the "Clube Militar," accused President Pessôa of using presidential authority to give the "government's" gubernatorial candidate in Pernambuco power over federal forces garrisoned in the state. Former president of the republic and current president of the Clube Militar, Hermes da Fonseca, telegraphed the local garrison in Recife and asked its commanders to ignore the president's order, saying "governments pass and the Army remains."³⁸ When word of Hermes' actions returned to the president, Pessôa had Hermes arrested and for the next six months, the doors of the Clube Militar remained shut.

As expected, the election results declared that the government's candidate Artur Bernardes was the victor. Following the election, the military and the Republican reaction

³⁶ Military leaders had hoped that Brazil's entry into World War I would provide them the ideal opportunity to strengthen and modernize the army and navy. However, this did not occur and as the 1920s began officers began to feel disillusioned towards the federal government. For more information see: Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 100.

³⁷ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 11.

³⁸ Frank D. McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria: A History of the Brazilian Army, 1889-1937*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 263.

claimed fraud and called for a recount, but despite accusations of fraud, Bernardes became president. Yet as Skidmore argued, “the gap between the senior military and the political leadership had been opened.”³⁹ For the next eight years political ideology divided members of the military, most notably junior officers considered a corrupt and ineffective government.

Tenentismo

On July 5, 1922, the first public acts of military descent occurred when junior army officers – mostly *tenentes* (lieutenants) – revolted against the republican government by seizing control of Fort Copacabana in the federal capital of Rio de Janeiro. The planned insurgency was to be coincided with similar uprisings throughout the nation. With the exception of a small number of men from a garrison in São Paulo, however, those in Rio were the only rebels to take up arms. General Setembrino de Carvalho and those of the First Army Division that remained loyal put down the rebellion without any major difficulties. The only casualties occurred after the shelling of the fort stopped when eighteen officers marched from the fort and met the army on the beaches of Copacabana; sixteen of the eighteen rebels subsequently died as martyrs for their cause. Although the revolt did not result in any military gains, as Robert M. Levine argued in, *The Vargas Regime; The Critical Years, 1934-1938*, the “resistance gave birth to the tenente (literally lieutenants) movement among young officers opposed to the planter dominated federal system.”⁴⁰

The catalyst that finally led certain officers to act against the government occurred when President Pessôa arrested Marshal Hermes for sending his infamous telegraph to the federal garrisons in Recife. Because the majority of those who rose up in rebellion were young

³⁹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 11.

⁴⁰ Levine, *The Vargas Regime*, 2.

lieutenants, the name of the movement became Tenentismo. Although Hermes only spent seventeen hours in jail, McCann in, *Soldiers of the Pátria: A History of the Brazilian Army, 1889-1937*, showed that tententes were outraged because they “viewed the army as the creator of the republic and the civilian politicians as its betrayers.” Delso Mendes da Fonseca, like many of his fellow officers, believed that “professional preparation was not enough . . . to fulfill completely their responsibility before the future of the country; it was no longer possible to serve government . . . without analyzing the repercussions of any act on the future of the nationality.”⁴¹

In the 1920s, the federal district of Rio de Janeiro was the center of social, political, and military activity. Therefore, the army and navy assigned more than half of their officers to the district where they lived in private residences. The close proximity to the civilian population brought officers into steady contact with the modernist works of intellectuals and writers that were calling for change. As was the case in the United States, the Brazilian military provided officers with few opportunities for rank advancement following the First World War, Stagnated growth caused the armed forces to become officer heavy. The majorities of those in the officer corps were underpaid lieutenants, 65.1 percent, and captains 21.3 percent. These “junior” officers were not young men however. Most were in their late thirties with fifteen to eighteen years of experience.

By 1922, the lack of professional opportunities combined with disillusionment over the oligarchies domination of politics and the dismal state of Brazil’s national development. As McCann showed, officers began adopting ideologies that were similar to those espoused by civilian reformers such as Alberto Tôrres that in 1914 proclaimed Brazil was suffering from, “self-ignorance, false optimism, regionalism, and lacked nationality and nationhood.”⁴²

⁴¹ McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 263-264.

⁴² *O Problema Nacional Brasileiro, (1914)*. Cited in McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 210.

According to him, most officers agreed that reform was necessary, but they did not agree on how that change should take place; therefore, “legalist and revolutionary currents” divided the officer’s corps. The legalists believed that by “concentrating and improving the army, making it...a school of civics, discipline, and organization they would gradually create a national mentality conducive to defending the motherland.” The revolutionaries agreed that the army must play an educative role if Brazil was to rise and become a major world power. Yet they saw “intense regionalism and political corruption as impediments to carrying it out successfully.” Therefore, they sought after the establishment of an “organized, self-aware, industrialized Brazilian nation” with a “strong central government, free compulsory education, obligatory military service, and government intervention in the economy to develop natural resources and to industrialize.”⁴³

Two years after the Copacabana, two other tenente revolts took place, one in São Paulo and one Rio Grande do Sul. Following the Rio Grande revolt, 800 to 1,000 soldiers led by Captain Luís Prestes eluded capture by the federal government for three years, as they marched across more than 24,000 kilometers of the Brazilian interior. The Brazilian press soon began referring to the rebels as the “Prestes Column.” As word of the column spread, “a popular mystique immediately developed around the adventure and its leaders acquired the stature of national heroes.”⁴⁴ The march concluded when on February 3, 1927, Prestes and his men dissolved the column and fled to Bolivia, where they remained in exile until 1930.

The successes of the Prestes Column, like those of the Copacabana uprising, were social and political. Until the final days of the republic, civilian politicians felt the impact of the movement. Like the intellectual revolution that occurred in the 1920s, the tenente movement

⁴³ McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 210-211.

⁴⁴ Levine, *The Vargas Regime*, 2.

contributed to a growing discontent with the corruption and liberalism of the old republic. As Skidmore explained, “The military were active participants in this restive discussion, but they were certainly not the only participants. The cultural community and the intellectuals also took part.”⁴⁵

Officers on both sides of the revolts continued crossing paths for several decades after the revolts ended. Captain João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes as an artillery officer remained loyal to the government, however, some of the rebels that Mascarenhas de Moraes shelled later served under him when he became commander of the FEB. Another young officer, Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, remained loyal to the republic and despite fighting against the Prestes Column. During the revolution of 1930, he commanded the Liberal Alliance’s military forces. Góes Monteiro was heavily involved in all of Brazil’s WWII military actions, serving first as Minister of War (1934-1935) and then as Chief of Staff of the Brazilian Army (1937-1943).

The Election of 1930

The election of 1930 is perhaps the most studied election in Brazilian history, because the coup d’état that followed not only toppled the federal government, it also propelled Vargas to power, which subsequently increased the political and operational power of the military. In 1930, the question of presidential succession once again divided the ruling parties. Political tension that peaked when President Washington Luís of São Paulo selected Julio Prestes, also a Paulista, as his successor rather than returning control of the presidency to Minas led the political machine of Minas to unite with those of Rio Grande do Sul in the south and Paraíba in the northeast.

⁴⁵ Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 100.

In 1930, the worldwide economic depression that began the previous year continued to have devastating effects of the Brazilian economy. Between 1929 and 1931, the price of coffee on the world market plummeted downward from 22.5 to 8 cents per pound. Between 1929 and 1932, the volume of Brazilian trade fell by thirty-seven percent and the value of trade fell sixty-seven percent. Therefore, Vargas campaigned for direct federal influence to relieve planters, and social welfare legislation to help Brazil's struggling urban classes. Despite these campaign pledges São Paulo's powerful party bosses managed to secure the election of Julio Prestes.

Because of suspicion over the legitimacy of the electoral process, some of the coalition's members began discussing rebellion even before voters cast the first ballots. In September 1929, Luís Carlos Prestes met with Vargas and his close friend and political advisor, Oswaldo Aranha. The Vargas coalition was at the time offering Prestes command of the military forces of the Liberal Alliance.⁴⁶ Although Prestes refused to accept the post, he and other tenente leaders, aware that the opposition would most likely rig the election, began discussing the possibility of a rebellion if Vargas did not emerge victorious.⁴⁷ After Vargas' first two selections refused command of the alliance's military forces he gave the command to Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro.

Robert M. Levine showed that following Vargas' defeat, the Liberal Alliance divided into two factions: "tenentes and their civilian allies and a wing comprised of anti-Washington Luís politician . . . which advocated accommodation."⁴⁸ When Prestes separated from the Liberal Alliance in May, because Vargas was not willing to take the radical action the extreme tenentes

⁴⁶ Although it seems odd that a political party would have its own military forces, it must be remembered that powerful states like Rio Grande do Sul often maintained highly trained well-equipped forces, and as governor of the state Vargas controlled the states armed forces. In fact, the state forces outnumbered federal forces and were better equipped; as Secretary of the Interior for Rio Grande do Sul Aranha purchased weaponry from Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁷ Levine, *The Vargas Regime*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

hoped for, the majority of the tenentes separated from Prestes and supported Vargas. By 1930, many of those involved in the campaigns of the 1920s simply hoped to attach themselves to a political machine that would provide amnesty. Therefore, by the time the revolution broke out the movement itself moved closer to center while Prestes drifted further left. As he often did, Vargas remained ambiguous and avoided siding with either faction; instead, he chose not to immediately challenge the election results despite growing pressure because he felt the coalition “lacked the power to contest the election successfully.”⁴⁹

The Revolution of 1930

When an assassin’s bullet killed João Pessoa, the governor of Paraíba and Vargas’ 1930 running mate, on July 26, it provided Vargas the momentum needed to unify the Liberal Alliance and overthrow the government.⁵⁰ Between the assassination at the end of July and the start of the rebellion on October 3, the leaders of the alliance took the necessary steps to ensure the successful overthrow of the incumbent administration. Skidmore explained the steps they took. First, “the governors of Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and the rebel states of the Northeast used their military to secure their states.” Second, “they then convinced the part of the federal army stationed in Rio Grande do Sul to join them.” Third, they added “a series of rebel columns from other regions.” The army of rebels then converged on Rio from the north, south, and west.⁵¹

In 1931, Clarence H. Haring discussed the recent political upheaval in an article written for *Foreign Affairs* entitled, “Revolution in South America.” In his discussion of Brazil, he explained the Liberal Alliance’s professed justification for the revolution.

⁴⁹ Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 107.

⁵⁰ The assassination was not the result of the Presidential campaign; rather it was “due to a romantic involvement enmeshed in local politics.” Ibid, 107.

⁵¹ Ibid, 107.

The Opposition made a number of charges. They accused President Luis of military intervention in Minas Gerais and Parahyba to insure the election of his candidate. Congress, controlled by the President, was declared to have fraudulently deprived these states of their legally elected representatives, by rejecting the electoral returns and seating opponents favorable to the President. So the revolution made the elimination of Dr. Prestes and the dissolution of Congress its immediate aims⁵²

As rebel forces approached the capital, high-ranking military officials staged a coup and forced President Washington Luís to flee into exile. One of the most influential officers in the 1920s was Chief of Staff Tasso Fragoso, a legalist. According to McCann, however, President Washington Luís' earlier refusal to satisfy Fragoso's recommendations regarding rearmament and reorganization of the army "may have been one reason legalist Tasso Fragoso was willing to take a leading role to depose the president and turn the government over to Getúlio Vargas in 1930."⁵³ On November 4, 1930, Getúlio Dornelles Vargas became Provisional President of Brazil.⁵⁴

In his article, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45" José Murilo De Carvalho showed that from the time insurgent forces captured Pôrto Alegre, support within the army and navy was warm at best – within the army, not a single unit unanimously supported the revolution and only a percentage of officers openly championed the rebel cause. The navy totally opposed the movement, remaining loyal to the republic until the very end.⁵⁵

⁵² Clarence H. Haring "Revolutions in South America," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Jan., 1931), 277, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20030349>. (accessed March 12, 2011).

⁵³ Frank D. McCann, "The Brazilian General Staff and Brazil's Military Situation, 1900-1945". *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 25, no. 3 (August 1983): 307, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/165781>. (accessed February 1, 2011).

⁵⁴ This marked the second time in Brazilian history that the military peacefully stepped aside and conferred the government to civilians. This first occurred at the time of the Republic's creation in 1889.

⁵⁵ De Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45," 194.

Scholars have found it difficult to determine the level of individual support because those involved kept few detailed records during the rebellion. Nevertheless, McCann successfully divided the officer corps and sergeants into six classifications. First were the “tenentes, including the veterans of 1922, 1924, and the Prestes Column,” and the second generation that joined the movement after graduating from the military school in the final years of the 1920s. “Moderates made up the second group. They included a few dozen “field grade officers” like Góes Monteiro, however, most were legalist lieutenants and captains that followed their orders of their senior officers, but opposed the tenente movement. Third were the “opportunists” who joined the rebellion after being taken prisoner. Fourth were the loyalists that supported the government; many in this group entered into exile, while some were killed, including the commanding general in Paraíba. Fifth came the “pacifiers,” top ranking officers who forced Washington Luís into exile and formed a military junta in the capital. Included amongst this group were Chief of Staff Tasso Fragoso and Minister of War General Serzefredo dos Passos. Following its victory, the Liberal Alliance quickly forced these officers into retirement. The sixth group consisted of Pacifists who did not take any position at all – they simply waited for the outcome.⁵⁶ “The Old Republic discredited fell in 1930 before the plotting of Oswaldo Aranha, the military organization of Pedro de Góes Monteiro, and the political leadership of Getúlio Dornelles Vargas.”⁵⁷

Consolidation 1930-1937

A quick and decisive transference toward centralization occurred immediately after the Vargas coalition took control of the government. While the states may have retained considerable

⁵⁶ McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 299.

⁵⁷ Frank D. McCann, “The Military and Changes in Brazil,” *Cultural Change in Brazil*; papers from the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies, (October 30 and 31, 1969):5-6.

autonomy under the constitution of 1889, Vargas' first order of business was the dismantling of all political opposition at the local, state and federal level. Backed by the new commanders of the nation's armed forces, including Góes Monteiro,⁵⁸ on November 11, 1930 Vargas signed an official decree instituting an "emergency regime." The decree "granted virtually dictatorial powers to the provisional government" and suspended "the National Congress and state and municipal legislative bodies," while granting the President "absolute powers to name and dismiss all public officials."⁵⁹ A key to this centralization was control over the military because when the revolution took place, it was not a single general and the majority of the officer corps did not support it. As Carvalho argued, "One of the major consequences of the 1930 revolution . . . was the catapulting of the armed forces into the center of national political life."⁶⁰ As historians have shown, however, this centralization did not take place immediately. In the early 1930s, military commanders with diverse ideological and political views struggled to gain control of the armed forces. Nevertheless, after seven years of conflict Góes Monteiro and Eurico Gaspar Dutra outmaneuvered their opponents and secured control of the army.

McCann, states "The politics of Brazil between 1930 and 1937 was fraught with tension, anguish, and expectation, but the republic presented to the world a façade, masking its political squabbles, social problems, and economic change."⁶¹ Tension and anguish permeated through the ranks of the military, which was in a state of total disarray; however, "as unstable as the army was, it was the only national institution that the central government had at its disposal, so

⁵⁸ When the revolution took place, it did not have the full support of a single General on active duty at the time. Therefore, as Vargas took control of the government Góes Monteiro was given three promotions in just over a year, so that the government could have loyal supporters in the highest military posts. See, De Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45," 209.

⁵⁹ Levine, *The Vargas Regime*, 5.

⁶⁰ De Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45," 193.

⁶¹ Frank D. McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance 1937-1945*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 12.

mastery of it was key to everything.”⁶² If Vargas was to retain power, the military had to fall under his sphere of influence. Moreover, if the military were to modernize it needed the support of a “strong civilian moderator.”

Carvalho contended that both vertical and horizontal divisions fractured the ranks in the early 1930s. Vertically, rank and social class divided officers from the NCOs and enlisted men they commanded. Horizontally, radical interventionist and reformist factions separated themselves from the conservatives who felt that military should stray from any political involvement.⁶³ Civilian politicians seeking to regain power further exacerbated these divisions when they established what Smallman in his work, *Fear and Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889-1954*, called “informal structures of power within the institution.” The result was a chaotic period “in which short-lived factions appeared and faded with the fortunes of a few key individuals, a circumstance that badly undermined the army’s unity, power, and discipline.”⁶⁴

Early on, the tenentes retained a great deal of political influence. In an effort to remove them from the political nerve system in Rio, Vargas appointed many of them to serve as State Interventors. Within a few years, however, most showed a lack of political skill and became embroiled in local politics; politicians with more skill soon replaced them. In 1931 and 1932, unavoidable clashes between the horizontally divided radical and conservative officers led to the establishment of private military organizations. In 1931 conservative generals and junior officers⁶⁵ established the União da Classe Militar (Unity of the Military Class), in order “to rally

⁶² McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 301.

⁶³ De Carvalho, “Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45,” 194.

⁶⁴ Shawn C. Smallman, *Fear and Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889-1954*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 43.

⁶⁵ Officers such as, Colonel Bertholdo Klinger, General Tasso Fragoso, and General Mena Barreto, who served in high ranking positions under the older republic, supported the movement. These junior officers never actively participated in the revolution and therefore they felt threatened by the readmission recently granted to tententes that the government expelled during the 1920s.

officers behind their hierarchal commanders and to oppose the political involvement of the military.”⁶⁶ Later that year, Góes Monteiro established the more radical Clube 3 de Outubro (Third of October Club), to prevent the even more radical tenentes from discussing political issues inside the barracks. The influence of these and dozens of other military organizations rose and then fell in the years following the revolution. The Clube 3 de Outubro lost its influence when Góes Monteiro and Oswaldo Aranha withdrew their membership in 1932.

During the formative years of the Vargas regime, ambitious young officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) either planned or suppressed dozens of “protests, conspiracies, mutinies, and open rebellions.” Such divisions are what prompted General Góes Monteiro in 1935 to state that the Brazilian army “resembled the Russian armed forces before the revolution.”⁶⁷ Between 1930 and 1945, the military was involved in ninety-four incidents. (See Table I) Until 1932, Vargas worried that Minister of War “General José Fernandes Leite de Castro and other dissatisfied generals might launch a coup” even as others warned him that Góes Monteiro was conspiring against him. Hence, as Smallman claimed, “If Vargas needed Góes Monteiro to control the military, he needed other generals to control Góes Monteiro.”⁶⁸

Table I: Military Incidents, 1930-1945⁶⁹

Major Actors	1930-1934	1935-1939	1940-1945	Total
Generals	9	6	2	17
Other Officers	15	12	2	29
Noncommissioned Officers	20	13	1	34
Other*	6	7	1	14
Total	50	38	6	94

*Incidents whose leadership involved different ranks or could not be clearly identified.

⁶⁶ De Carvalho, “Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45,” 196.

⁶⁷ Góes Monteiro’s history, AN, AGM, AP 51, 8 (1). Quoted in, Smallman, *Fear and Memory*, 43-44.

⁶⁸ Smallman, *Fear and Memory*, 44.

⁶⁹ This table came from, De Carvalho, “Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45,” 195.

In July 1932, rebel forces within the state of São Paulo led by General's Bertoldo Klinger, Isidore Days Lopes, and Euclides Figueiredo⁷⁰ carried out the “*Revolução Constitucionalista*” (Constitutional revolution). The revolution was an effort to overthrow the Vargas government. When São Paulo did not receive the expected support from Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais, it took federal troops commanded by Góes Monteiro only two months to put down the uprising. In 1933 and again in 1934, responding to the army's horizontal divisions, which led it to stem the influence of NCOs by closing the Escola de Sargentos (Sergeant's School) and preventing the promotion of sergeants into the officer corps, a series of sergeant's revolts took place throughout the country. In 1934, the ratification of the new constitution and the election of Vargas led to other revolts and in 1935, the communist-led *Aliança Nacional Libertadora* (National Liberation Alliance) led by Luís Prestes, and the fascistic *Ação Integralista Brasileira*, failed in their attempts to overthrow the government.⁷¹ Incidentally, the 1935 revolt provided Vargas the political advantage needed to declare a “state of war” and receive authority to suspend constitutional guarantees. Over the next two years, the congress continually granted Vargas this power in order to suppress a communist threat that after 1935 “existed only in official propaganda.”⁷²

In order to retain his power Vargas was required to “perform a smooth juggling and balancing act . . . not only of the country but of his regime.” From October 1930 to November 1937, 42 individuals held the nine cabinet positions, and 103 others had served as state

⁷⁰ Euclides Figueiredo was one of the eighteen tenentes that marched against federal forces on the beaches of Copacabana during the 1922 revolt. After returning from exile in 1934, he supported the Integralista revolts.

⁷¹ The *Aliança Nacional Libertadora* (ANL) was a leftwing organization that consisted of anti-Vargas socialists, communists, liberals, progressives and nationalists. The ANL launched a series of revolts that took place in Natal, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro in November 1935.

⁷² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 30.

Interventors. Between 1930 and 1945 the armed forces transitioned from a “weak poorly organized institution and a rather marginal social and political actor” to become a “respected fighting force” with significant social and political power.⁷³ The more moderate radical elements of the military eventually gained control, and from the mid-1930s onward, the military remained heavily involved in national politics. As Góes Monteiro stated, “because the army is an essentially political instrument, its collective conscience should be shaped so as to bring about the politics of the army and not the politics in the army.”⁷⁴

On November 10, 1937, Vargas and his supporters stages another successful coup. They threw out the constitution of 1934 and replaced it with the *Estado Nôvo*. “Vargas’ Estado Nôvo furthered the nationalization of Brazil through an intensely centralized civilian regime, and at the same time provided the armed forces with a shield behind which they could strengthen themselves militarily while developing an institutional ideology.”⁷⁵ Following the 1937 coup, the number of military incidents dramatically declined because Vargas had successfully consolidated his power by destroying political and military factions conspired against him. Furthermore, the military was now firmly under the control of officers that could not have risen to their current positions if it were not for Vargas, Army Chief of Staff Góes Monteiro, and Minister of War Eurico Gaspar Dutra. When the army began planning for the deployment of an expeditionary force, its highest ranking officials were aware that the ranks were still splintered; therefore, they remained actively involved in every aspect of the FEB’s mission from its organization to its demobilization. Commanders, especially Dutra, hoped to prevent the FEB from becoming a strong political force within Brazil or the army.

⁷³ De Carvalho, “Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-45,” 193.

⁷⁴ McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria*, 300.

⁷⁵ McCann, “The Military and Changes in Brazil,” 5.

Chapter 2

Measures of Counter Propaganda

On July 18, 1945, members of the FEB began returning to Rio de Janeiro after one year in Europe where they successfully engaged and defeated German and Italian forces in along the Gothic Line in Northern Italy. After disembarking from their vessels, the *febianos* (members of the FEB) under the direction of General Euclides Zenóbio da Costa –who once opposed the establishment of the FEB⁷⁶ – paraded down the streets of the federal capital. Exuberant crowds greeted the returning heroes and in many parts of the city, crowds overturned police barriers and turned the city into “carnival chaos.”

In the stands, General João Baptista Mascarenhas de Morias, Commander of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, was joined by numerous high ranking U.S. officers including, General Mark Clark, Commander of the 15th Army Group, and General Willis Crittenger, commander of the U.S. Army’s IV Corps. As the febianos left Rio de Janeiro and returned to their homes, they discovered comparable patriotic celebrations in other major cities including São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, and Pôrto Alegre. Speaking of the celebrations Mark Clark reported, “At Bela Horizonte, after I had reviewed a parade, the crowd swarmed around so thickly that I literally was picked up off the street and carried back to my hotel.”⁷⁷ The awe-inspiring show of patriotism that engulfed the proud febianos in July 1945 sharply contrasted the doubt and skepticism that lingered over the nation one year earlier when the FEB departed from Rio de Janeiro under a cover of darkness and secrecy.

⁷⁶ Smallman, "The Official Story," 233.

⁷⁷ Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 450-451.

From the time of its official inception in January 1943 until the time of its demobilization in on June 6, 1945, the FEB continuously faced major organizational and public relations battles. Some of these battles resulted from political backbiting; however, others were the result of an intense propaganda campaign carried out by axis agents in Brazil. As Stanley Hilton explained, “Although the major non-European target of the (German) military intelligence agency (Abwehrabteilung) was the United States, neighboring Latin America – and particularly Brazil – also became important theatres of clandestine activity.”⁷⁸ By the late spring of 1944, as the FEB struggled to organize and train for its deployment, it felt the effects of a “harmful and systematic campaign conducted by Nazi fifth columnists and opponents of the government, not only interested in releasing confusion and discord amongst Brazilians but also preventing the departure of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force.”⁷⁹

This chapter will use the military order, *Medidas de Contra Propaganda* (Measures of Counter Propaganda)⁸⁰ as a template to argue that Brazilian entry into the war on the side of the allies and the subsequent decision to create and deploy an expeditionary force were political calculations. The analysis of this document will further support the assertion that from its earliest stages the FEB had to overcome hindrances, which were the result of domestic political disputes and the influence of Fifth Column propaganda.

On 25 May 1944, the Office of the Chefe do Estado Maior (Chief of Staff), seriously concerned about the morale of soldiers and their families, issued to the headquarters of the First Infantry Division the order *Medidas de Contra Propaganda*. The directives found in the order

⁷⁸ Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War in South America*, 18.

⁷⁹ *Medidas de Contra Propaganda*, Tenente Colonel Amaury Mauel, May 25, 1944, Armário 4, Caixa 30, Força Expedicionária Brasileira, La. D.I.E./Quartel General, Arquivo Da Segunda Seção, Documentos Expedidos, O Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Rio de Janeiro. I discovered this document while in Rio de Janeiro conducting research in the Arquivo Histórico do Exército in July 2010. I translated this document during the fall of 2010.

⁸⁰ *Medidas de Contra Propaganda*.

reveal, (1) that neither the general population nor the febianos themselves clearly understood why Brazil was at war with the axis powers, or why the government was deploying troops into combat; (2) the Brazilian people still did not regard military service as an honorable pursuit; (3) the propaganda disseminated by the Nazi fifth column was negatively impacting the state of Brazilian morale; (4) the febianos did not trust that the government would adequately support them.

In order to rectify the FEB's organizational and public relations shortcomings while simultaneously boosting troop morale, the army ordered commanders to "organize special weekly sessions of moral and civic education." During each session, instructors were to "point out to our soldiers the reasons that led us to war, put them in contact with reality and give them knowledge about the course of events and the news that may be of personal interest."⁸¹ The order issued by the army further warned officers that, "through good jokes or biased and demoralizing puns, it [Nazi propaganda] seeks to instill in our soldiers the notion that the sacrifice we are requesting is useless, due to them not understanding what reasons compel us to cross the ocean, to fight on another continent."⁸²

Clarify the reason for our military involvement in the World War

Why did Brazil declare war on the axis nations? Furthermore, why did Vargas and other high-ranking officials encourage the creation and subsequent deployment of an infantry division? In May 1944, the Brazilian army ordered its instructors to reinforce the government's official position. This position asserted that Brazil was "dragged into this serious and supreme decision as a consequence of the inhuman attacks suffered by our fellow comrades, who were traveling

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

along the Brazilian coast and headed for Brazilian lands exclusively fulfilling the mission of defending our territory against possible threats and attacks.”⁸³ The “inhuman attacks” referred to by the army occurred during the German Naval offensive known as Operation Drumbeat. Between February and August 1942, German U-boats in the South Atlantic sank at least thirteen Brazilian merchant ships. The most devastating of these attacks occurred between August 15 and 19, when U- 507 sank five ships, killing 600-650 Brazilian officers, soldiers, sailors, women and children.⁸⁴

As news of the attacks spread through Brazilian cities, it provoked anti-axis demonstrations and even rioting. Across the nation, citizens attacked both German-and Italian-owned businesses calling for a declaration of war.⁸⁵ Speaking of this period retired General Geraldo Augusto D’Abreu recalled, “Brazilians were outraged and participated in repeated demonstrations in front of the Catete Palace, calling on President Vargas and demanding that Brazil enter the war. There are even photos of the season very interesting, showing the number of people from all walks of life who demanded that Brazil declared war on the Axis.”⁸⁶

The anti-axis rallies gave Vargas the popular support needed to declare war, but neither the German attacks alone nor the rallies they provoked the cause of Vargas’ decision to enter the war on the side of allies. It is accurate to say that Brazil was “officially” a neutral nation at the time of the attacks; however, its willing cooperation with the United State during the first half of

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Robert M. Levine, *Father of the Poor?: Vargas and His Era*. New approaches to the Americas. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69.

⁸⁶ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1. General-de-Divisão Médico Geraldo Augusto D’Abreu, 82.

1942 spoke louder than any diplomatic claims of neutrality. When the attacks on Brazilian vessels took place, Germany was not attacking a “strictly neutral nation.”

Following World War I, the United States overtook Great Britain as Brazil’s largest trading partner. By the 1930s, however, Germany was rapidly becoming a principal competitor. In his work, *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939: The Politics of Trade Rivalry*, Stanley Hilton argued that the U.S. and Germany primarily competed for commercial control over Brazil and other South American nations during the first half of the 1930s, with the competition transitioning into a “politico-military” struggle after 1937.⁸⁷ He further argued that the worldwide depression of the 1930s ushered in a new phase of world politics. According to him, “the rules of international political and economic intercourse were bent – or broken – with alarming ease in an era whose dominant attitude seemed to be that of beggar-thy-neighbor.”⁸⁸ He explained that one of the most profound features of the “Depression decade” was the inevitable confrontation of Germany’s bilateralism, which Secretary of State Cordell Hull described, as a “cut-throat trouble-breeding method of trade,” and the liberal system of trade sought after by the Roosevelt administration.⁸⁹ Although Vargas leaned towards the United States early on, he was pragmatic; as a “shrewd, calculating leader whose appraisal of national and international realities was devoid of emotion,” his foreign policy focused on the goal of industrializing the Brazilian economy – which prior to 1942 meant getting all that he could from both the U.S. and Germany.⁹⁰

Two years after Vargas rose to power in Brazil, Franklin Roosevelt became President of the United States. As a newly elected President, Roosevelt made it clear that he planned to open

⁸⁷ Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War* 25.

⁸⁸ Stanley E. Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939: The Politics of Trade Rivalry* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1975), xx.

⁸⁹ Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers*, xx.

⁹⁰ Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War*, 19.

a new “era of mutual respect and understanding”⁹¹ between the United States and the nations of Central and South America. In his first inaugural address, he declared, “In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor – the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others.”⁹² Roosevelt sought to avoid military intervention – a feature of U.S. imperialist policy towards Latin America during the close of the nineteenth and initial decades of the twentieth century. As an alternative, he promoted trade, hoping that hemispheric unity would bring stability to the western hemisphere, while making the U.S., rather than Germany or Great Britain, the primary trading partner of Latin American nations, particularly Brazil. In December 1933, at the Montevideo Conference, Secretary of State Cordell Hull reaffirmed U.S. commitment to the “Good Neighbor Policy” declaring, “The definite policy of the United States from now on is one opposed to armed intervention.”⁹³

Responding to political unrest in Europe, Roosevelt began lobbying for the creation of an Inter-American Organization as early as 1936. He hoped that an organization of American Republics would unite the hemisphere on a “multilateral basis against possible aggression from outside.”⁹⁴ In November 1936, while working to create an Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee, Roosevelt made his initial visit to Brazil. On that visit, he assembled for the first time with Brazil’s President and future dictator, Getulio Dornelles Vargas. On the last night of his visit, he spoke at a banquet, at which time he promoted the Good

⁹¹ Marcio Siwi, “U.S. - Brazil Cultural Relations During World War II” <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/llilas/ilassa/2007/siwi.pdf>. (accessed September 2009).

⁹² U.S. Department of State, “The Good Neighbor Policy”; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/id/17341.htm>

⁹³ U.S. Department of State, “The Good Neighbor Policy”; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/id/17341.htm>

⁹⁴ Donald W. Rowland, *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*. (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 3.

Neighbor Policy and discussed what he perceived to be the future relationship between the U.S. and Brazil. "I have always felt that the advent of the airplane and the advent of quicker steam ship service are going to make a large difference in the future relationships of the Americas because science is going to make it easier for us to get to know each other better, and people who know each other well can be friends."⁹⁵ He ended his speech by asking those in attendance to raise their glasses and "drink to the health of my good friend President Vargas and to the great Republic of Brazil, our sister Nation."⁹⁶

After years of diplomatic talks, the U.S. finally succeeded in creating an inter-American agreement at the Panama Conference in September 1939; by this time, Germany had already invaded Poland. At the conference, each of the nations present, including Brazil, signed the Panama Declaration. The declaration "confirmed the neutrality of the participants, banned belligerent submarines from entering their ports." Additionally, it, "demanded the cessation of subversive activities within their countries" while announcing the creation of a "maritime security zone which was to extend for 480 km. (300 mi.) either side of the American continent, except for Canada and the colonies and possessions of European states."⁹⁷

While building rapport with Roosevelt, Vargas also continued expanding commercial relations with Germany. In the late 1930s, continued economic crisis forced Germany to reevaluate its trade policies. It sought out raw materials required to increase its military power, but was unable to pay cash for materials. Consequently, it increased trade with Brazil and other Latin American nations that, much to the dismay of Roosevelt, were willing to accept industrial

⁹⁵ The American Presidency Project, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, XXXII President of the United States: 1933-1945"; available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15237>(accessed October 2010).

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷ I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot, "Panama conference," *The Oxford Companion to World War II*. 2001. *Encyclopedia.com*. (January 21, 2011). <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/10129-Panamaconference.html> (accessed January 20, 2011).

products, rather than currency, in exchange for raw materials.⁹⁸ Between 1933 and 1938, Germany virtually doubled its share of Brazil's import trade, increasing its share from twelve percent to approximately twenty five percent. By 1934, Brazil was Germany's most important trade partner in South America and in 1937 and 1938, Brazil, which desperately sought weapons to modernize its military, signed contracts to purchase large shipments of modern armaments from the German company, Krupp. Also during the mid-1930s, the Brazilian security police led by pro-Axis Police Chief, Filtino Muller, began working with the Gestapo on measures intended to help each nation effectively fight the spread of communism.⁹⁹

Throughout the years of hemispheric neutrality, 1939-1941, the nations of the Western Hemisphere anxiously observed as Hitler's Nazi armies stormed across Europe. As the war in Europe raged, concerns over both hemispheric defense and economic stability once again began permeating the Roosevelt Administration. The knowledge that many South and Central American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, were the home to thousands of first and second-generation German, Italian, and Japanese immigrants heightened concerns over hemispheric defense that were already on high alert due to the steady expansion of Germany's economic influence Central and South America.¹⁰⁰

The many uncertainties over hemispheric defense increased as policy makers and intelligence agencies endeavored to identify the national and political loyalties of the Western Hemisphere's German, Italian and Japanese immigrant groups. The United States was not alone in its efforts to suppress the spread of Nazi influence; in 1938, Vargas launched a campaign

⁹⁸ Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers*, 40.

⁹⁹ Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ According to Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War*, nearly 200,000 Germans immigrated to Brazil. The majority of the immigrants resided in the southern states of Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. In the southern states large German speaking immigrant communities were established. By the late 1930s, one of every four inhabitants of Santa Catarina was either German-born or was of German descent. In Rio Grande do Sul it was one in six and in Paraná it was one in eight. The German community in Brazil consisted of approximately 900,000 individuals.

against the Nazi party agents, and isolated German settlements in southern Brazil. This action on the part of the Brazilian government eventually led Germany and Brazil to recall their ambassadors. For Germany, however, economic ties were of such value that they quickly overlooked these issues; meanwhile in Rio de Janeiro, there was “little inclination to press a dispute with an important trade partner that apparently was destined to become even more powerful, as long as that country respected Brazilian sovereignty.” The two nations resumed diplomatic talks in September 1939.¹⁰¹

Ultimately, American intelligence concluded that, “under the program of the Nazis most of these persons [German immigrants] had been drawn into a tightly-knit organization directed from Berlin.”¹⁰² In a speech given on September 11, 1940, Roosevelt claimed that Hitler was attempting to control the seas and stop commerce. According to Roosevelt, the sea was the first phase of a larger Nazi plan that would eventually lead to their controlling the entire Western Hemisphere, “with control of the seas in their own hands, the way can obviously become clear for their next step – domination of the United States (and the) – domination of the Western Hemisphere by force of arms.” Only a few days before the speech, an international incident occurred in which a German submarine fired torpedoes at the U.S. destroyer *Greer* off the coast of Greenland. The controversial episode created an ideal opportunity, enabling Roosevelt to address the American public and make claims about Nazi Germany’s intrigues in the hemisphere because the attack clearly violated the position outlined by the U.S and other Latin American nations at the Panama Conference. In his message, Roosevelt elaborated on several supposed attempts, which Hitler had undertaken to secure footholds in South America.

His intrigues, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the Government of the United States. Conspiracy has

¹⁰¹ Hilton, *Hitler's Secret War*, 19-20.

¹⁰² Rowland, *History of the Office of the Coordinator*, 3.

followed conspiracy. For example, last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was smashed by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently, an endeavor was made to subvert the government of Bolivia. And within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air-landing fields in Colombia, within easy range of the Panama Canal.¹⁰³

According to historian Max Paul Friedman, of the 100 meetings held by the Joint Planning Committee of the State, Navy, and War Departments in 1939 and 1940, ninety-four placed Latin America as a primary topic on the agenda.¹⁰⁴ Throughout 1940, Roosevelt worked with military leaders to draw up plans for the defense of the hemisphere. They knew that only 1,800 miles separated the east coast of Brazil, known as the “Brazilian bulge, from the west coast of Africa; therefore planners identified this area as the likely point of Nazi invasion. By May 1940, under the President’s direction, planners had developed operation “Pot of Gold,” a plan to prepare and deploy 100,000 U.S. troops to Brazil in case of, “an external attack or an internal Nazi-inspired revolutionary movement in South America.”¹⁰⁵ Although the plan itself was unrealistic and impossible to carry out, its very existence shows that even before Pearl Harbor, Germany was a perceived threat to hemispheric security. Nevertheless, U.S. suspicions over Nazi penetration in the hemisphere did lead to the successful but misguided implementation of a little-known program that was responsible for deporting German, Japanese, and Italian immigrants from Latin America to the U.S., where U.S. officials had them shipped to special internment camps. Eventually the U.S. interned 4,058 Germans, 2,264 Japanese, and 288 Italians. However,

¹⁰³ *On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas*. <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/091141.html> (Accessed March 18, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Max Paul Friedman; *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign Against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

¹⁰⁵ Conn, *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*.

the two countries with the largest immigrant populations and the greatest amount of political power, Argentina and Brazil, refused to cooperate with the program.¹⁰⁶

Early in the war, Brazil endeavored to remain neutral through most of 1941, and continued cooperating with Germany and the United States in hopes improving its own military and economic situation; however, by mid-1942 Brazilian foreign policy clearly favored the United States. In October 1941, Brazil had signed a much-anticipated agreement that finally allowed the U.S. to construct new airfields in northeastern Brazil. Without these airfields, the U.S. would have been unable to meet supply demands in the early years of the war. As a “trampoline to victory,” “the huge Parnamirim field at Natal became the focal point in the Allied air transport system that ran west then north through Belém and the Guianas, across the Caribbean to Miami, and east over the Atlantic via Ascension Island and across Africa to the China-Burma-India Theater.”¹⁰⁷ In return, the U.S. financed the construction of Brazil’s first steel mill. At the same time, Brazil allowed the German airline Condor to continue “carrying high-value small volume strategic goods and war materials to Germany, and bringing propaganda materials and agents Brazil.”¹⁰⁸

After the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, Brazil’s diplomatic position began shifting towards the United States at an accelerated pace. As Keith Campbell explained, upon receiving word of the Japanese attacks, Vargas “pledged that Brazil would associate itself with the war effort of the United States, though he cautioned that this did not mean that Brazil had any immediate intention of declaring war on or even of breaking diplomatic relations with Japan.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ McCann, “Brazil and World War II.”

¹⁰⁸ Keith Campbell, *Brazil in the Second World War*, (Pretoria: Unisa Centre for Latin American Studies, 1992), 10.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, *Brazil in the Second World War*, 10.

Nevertheless, throughout 1942, the Brazilian-American alliance continued to blossom both militarily and diplomatically. By June, three USN air squadrons patrolled the Brazilian coastline.

Not all top-ranking officials, however, were pleased that Brazil had gone to war with Germany. Frank McCann reported that when General Góes Monteiro, Chief of Staff for the Brazilian army and known admirer of the Germany military, returned to work in August 1943 after illness had forced him to take an extended leave of absence, American foreign service officers jokingly commented that “the illness was caused by Brazil’s going to war with Germany.”¹¹⁰

While Brazil’s diplomatic and military ties to the U.S. provoked German aggression and forced Brazil to enter the war, ulterior motives, unclear to both the general population and the febianos, led the government to organize and deploy a combat division. After all, like most Latin American nations, Brazil declared war on Germany towards the end World War I, without committing Brazilian troops to the battlefield. What changed? When World War II broke out in Europe, Brazil was looking for opportunities to expand its role on the international stage. As McCann argued, “If Brazil’s role was to be that of a supplier of raw materials and sites for foreign bases its role in the postwar world was likely to be of a similar nature.”¹¹¹ Brazilian leaders were now looking for ways to secure the prominent seat at the post-war negotiation table. Vargas sanctioned the FEB’s creation, hoping to “restructure his government along populist lines, while the people were distracted by military exploits.” Other groups, however, were also interested in the outcome of its mission. The military viewed the war as an opportunity to

¹¹⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 345.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 345.

increase its domestic and international stature and Democratic idealists believed that a war against fascism would inspire the populace to overthrow the Vargas dictatorship.¹¹²

By 1943, several individuals, including foreign minister Osvaldo Euclides de Sousa Aranha, were encouraging President Vargas to play a more proactive role in the war. Therefore, at the Natal Conference in January 1943, Vargas met with Roosevelt and discussed the possibility of raising a Brazilian Expeditionary Force. While Vargas mentioned a deployment to North Africa, Roosevelt revealed that U.S. officials preferred to send Brazilian troops to the Azores and Madeira Islands. For Brazil, the theatre of operation was a secondary concern. In 1943, the government and the military were aware that without modern military equipment, that only the U.S. could supply, it was impossible to train or deploy a fighting force. Therefore, when Roosevelt committed himself to the supply of a Brazilian force, he made its creation possible. Shortly after the conclusion of the Natal conference, the War Department “reversed its position and supported the employment of Brazilian troops abroad.”¹¹³

Appeal to our soldiers the sense of honor and patriotism

Why did the army feel it was necessary for instructors to appeal to each soldier’s sense of honor and patriotism?¹¹⁴ Unable to fill the army’s ranks with volunteers at the time of the FEB’s creation, the army relied on the implementation of conscription laws, which Brazil enacted in 1916 after decades of debate, to fill its ranks. In his book, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864–1945*, Peter Beattie examined the relationship between society and military service. According to him throughout most of Brazilian history, society attached negative stigmas to enlisted service. He was correct in his assertion that “the draft transformed

¹¹² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 344.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 351.

¹¹⁴ *Medidas de Contra Propaganda*.

enlisted military service from a punitive to a preventive institution of social reform. Instead of policing family honor by pressing wayward males, conscription aimed to win over the hearts, minds, bodies, and even genes of the honorable poor”¹¹⁵ This transformation discussed by Beattie, however, was not rapid; military service in Brazil was still in a state of transition when the military began to outfit the FEB. In 1939, Vargas, in an attempt to make the laws more effective, enacted new legislation that required all men to obtain a reservist draft card if they wished to vote, qualify for any benefits from the state, or apply for any of the government jobs created under Vargas’ *Estado Novo* regime.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, when the government sanctioned the creation of the FEB most men of any standing continued to avoid enlisted service. As if draft dodging were not enough of a hindrance, the poor state of the populations health also seriously affected recruitment. In order to raise a division of 25,000 men, medical officials examined at least 107,609 men, with some 23,236 immediately failing their physicals.¹¹⁷

Through the first half of 1944, disorganization and delay amplified doubts concerning Brazil’s ability to train and deploy a force capable of contending with German or Italian armies. Because War minister Eurico Dutra was unwilling to deploy units stationed in northeastern Brazil, the primary components of the expeditionary force came from units that were scattered in the states, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro.¹¹⁸ The nine regiments located in these states were in eight separate towns and the regions. The 38,000 active duty personnel were located in thirty-three different locations.¹¹⁹ The original plan called for the deployment of the

¹¹⁵ Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2001) 13.

¹¹⁶ Peter M Beattie, 1996. "The House, the Street, and the Barracks: Reform and Honorable Masculine Social Space in Brazil, 1864-1945," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 76, no. 3 (August 1996): 469. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2517813_(accessed September 2010).

¹¹⁷ Beattie, "The House, the Street ," 470.

¹¹⁸ Campbell, *Brazil in the Second World War*. 26.

¹¹⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance, 1937-1945*, 363.

FEB to Africa and then Europe in February 1944¹²⁰; however, the final remnants of the division did not arrive in Rio until the third or fourth week in March 1944.¹²¹ Even then, the majority of the fighting force arrived without sufficient training or familiarity with American tactics or weaponry. Medical examinations further complicated the situation; during the reexamination of draftees, doctors discovered recruits with, tuberculosis, imbecility, hernia, color-blindness, parasites, circulatory and respiratory, and two recruits that were afflicted with leprosy.¹²²

Amidst this internal fighting, a powerful external threat also confronted the FEB's commanding officers. Since the late 1930s, fifth-column Nazi sympathizers successfully disseminated negative propaganda that influenced public opinion. In 1941, agents attempted to create feelings of animosity towards U.S. sailors in Recife; while in 1943, officials apprehended an agent spying on allied convoys in the Bahia.¹²³ The propaganda caused civilians to question Brazil's relationship with the allied powers, and its capability to generate one, yet alone four infantry divisions. As febian Plínio Pitaluga explained, "Nobody believed it was possible to organize FEB, and much less sail to Italy. They said they would remain indefinitely in training at Gericinó in Rio de Janeiro."¹²⁴ This propaganda was particularly damaging because Brazilians continued to propagate social stigmas that were historically associated with military service.¹²⁵

Brazil has a history filled with men who found creative ways to evade the draft and this continued to be the case in 1944. Therefore, instructors refuted "the current infamous rumor that

¹²⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 373.

¹²¹ Floriano de Lima Brayner, *A Verdade sobre a FEB. Memórias de um chefe de estado-maior na campanha da Italian, 1943-1945*. (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, 1968), 49.

¹²² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 370.

¹²³ Campbell, *Brazil in the Second World War*, 24.

¹²⁴ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1. General-de-Brigada Plínio Pitaluga, 145.

¹²⁵ Beattie, "The House, the Street, 439-473.

many men prefer to desert or be shot rather than embarking overseas.”¹²⁶ However, this was more than a rumor. Before it embarked for Italy, the FEB experienced a demoralizing high rate of turnover; thousands either deserted or used their influential family’s broker a draft exemption or a transfer into another division.¹²⁷ According to McCann, one rifle platoon in the sixth infantry regiment had eight different commanders prior to its overseas deployment, which was typical considering at the same time, five of the other nine companies in the regiment experienced similar rates of turnover. The Chief of the FEB’s staff Floriano de Lima Brayner reported that, “the great mass of those mobilized were there because they could not secure an escape.”¹²⁸

**Elevate the moral of the troops, citing for them examples of our forefathers
virtue and bravery**

Why was it necessary for instructors to “elevate the moral of the troops, citing for them examples of our forefathers virtue and bravery?” Throughout 1944, the public showed little enthusiasm for the FEB. In January, the war ministry, in an effort to bolster public support for the expeditionary force, organized a rally at Rio de Janeiro’s downtown Municipal Theatre. Loud speakers lined the sidewalks of Cinelândia, affording ordinary citizens the opportunity to hear the speeches, yet official reports indicated that few people stopped to listen. The war ministry, who “was ambivalent to the FEB from its inception,”¹²⁹ viewed the lack of popular support as a

¹²⁶ Medidas de Contra Propaganda

¹²⁷ Beattie, "The House, the Street," 470.

¹²⁸ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 376.

¹²⁹ Smallman, *The Official Story*, 233.

confirmation that “the atmosphere surrounding the Brazilian Expeditionary Corps continues [to be] frank indifference and defeatism.”¹³⁰

Negative propaganda persistently inundated febianos not only in the barracks of Rio de Janeiro but also on the battlefields of Europe. It continually questioned Brazil’s involvement in the war and the ability of Brazilian soldiers to fight modern European armies. Whereas many of the jokes caused febianos to question their purpose and abilities, one joke united them.

According to the joke Adolf Hitler, having heard of Brazil’s military intention, said, “the FEB would sail the day Brazilian snakes took to smoking pipes.”¹³¹ Shortly after the first regiments arrived in Naples, the image of a cobra smoking a pipe was adapted as insignia for the FEB.

Much of the cynicism was the result of miscommunications and setbacks caused by a lack support within the government and the army. After the war, General Mascarenhas blamed the delays and lack of popular enthusiasm on “some officials close to the President who were known to be against the participation of Brazil in the war on the side of the United Nations.”¹³² Who were these “officials”? Shawn Smallman explained that it was a group of powerful military leaders including, Brazil’s two most influential officers, General Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro and General Eurico Gaspar Dutra.¹³³ Knowing this it is easy to understand why McCann argued: “There was no reason why the man on the street should have been more enthusiastic than the army itself.”¹³⁴

Few had believed the expeditionary force would ever assemble in Rio; even fewer believed it would actually cross the Atlantic Ocean. Brayner later explained that, “the Brazilian

¹³⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 372.

¹³¹ McCann, Frank D. *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 375.

¹³² João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force by Its Commander*. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1966), 9.

¹³³ Smallman, “The Official Story,” 233.

¹³⁴ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 372.

people believed more in Carnival and the football Championship than in an Expeditionary Force to fight shoulder to shoulder with the allies and face to face with the Germans.”¹³⁵ That is why instructors were to demonstrate through “the exaltation of historical examples that he [the Brazilian soldier] is in no way inferior to the soldiers of the best armies in the world. They appealed to their self-esteem and sense of dignity, so that the flag of Brazil will cover the fields of Europe in glory as it always covered battlefields of this continent.”¹³⁶

Explain to our soldiers that they will receive support from the Government of the Republic

By 1944, Vargas already succeeded in passing laws intended to provide support for military veterans; nevertheless, most remained skeptical about the implementation of these laws. History gave justified concerns about the receipt of pensions and other governmental support for veterans. Army commanders, aware of this fear and skepticism, ordered instructors to “explain to our soldiers that they will receive support from the Government of the Republic, and their families will have help in case of death or disability... and upon their return they will be recognized for the sacrifices they made, it will and not abandon them at the mercy or luck, conforming with the peremptory statements made by the President of the Republic.”

During the winter of 1944-45, a German leaflet that circulated amongst febianos depicted a Brazilian soldier with an amputated leg. On the front side the wounded soldier said, “Listen; oh zé (Jose) let me tell you something.” On the reverse side, the wounded soldier continued “Listen: What I got was my discharge and a pair of crutches. Now I am part of the army of war invalids, which continuously increases. I am good for nothing. I can no longer perform my job in

¹³⁵ Brayner, *A Verdade sobre a FEB*, 372.

¹³⁶ *Medidas de Contra Propaganda*

railways. Maybe I can get a permit to sell roasted peanuts. The business does not yield much, but with the small pension we receive, we cannot support a family.”¹³⁷ This message exploited a rational fear held by many febianos who believed the government would not support them during or after the war. As shown by McCann, “the Axis propaganda machine and Brazil’s collective paranoia combined to spread defeatist rumors that the FEB would never sail, or that it would be given antiquated weapons to fight crack German troops, or that once the troops had embarked the United States would use the bases to occupy Brazil.”¹³⁸

The army also expected officers to “explain the issue of salaries and benefits, showing that each expedition member will receive enough to leave their parents free from economic hardship during their absence...” However, even the most idealistic private was aware that he could not expect to leave his family free of hardship. According to McCann, a Major General received the equivalent of U.S. \$250 while a nonspecialist praça (private) received only \$2.80. How was he supposed to support his family with this minuscule amount of money? In 1942, a minimum worker making only minimum wage in São Paulo earned \$0.48 per day or \$14.40 per month – that was more than the army was paying a second corporal?¹³⁹ Unfortunately, after returning the febianos quickly discovered that they were right to doubt the reality of the government’s lavish promises.¹⁴⁰

Although it is impossible to identify how many members of the FEB actually took part in the “sessions of moral and civic education,” the very existence of the order *Medidas de Contra Propaganda* shows that the army was keenly aware of the febianos many concerns. From its

¹³⁷ A Casa dos Expedicionários Curitiba, Paraná, Arquivo Documentos Originais IV (Livro), Propaganda Communication Code. I received a copy of this document from Uri Rosenheck of Emory University. I translated this document during the Fall of 2010.

¹³⁸ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 363.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 367.

¹⁴⁰ See, Smallman, “The Official Story” and Smallman, *Fear and Memory*.

inception, negative propaganda persistently inundated the FEB. During the winter months of 1944-1945 German propaganda asked members of the FEB, “So why are you still participating in the fight against the Germans, without justifiable reasons, and that is waged solely in the interests of American capitalists? Common sense will tell you that it is better to evade the last and most terrible episode of this war, reaching the German lines and waiting for the end of the struggle for peace and quiet in a prison camp”¹⁴¹ The propaganda messages of skepticism and negativity that followed the FEB from the streets of Rio de Janeiro to the battlefields of Italy consistently emphasized four primary themes that the military outlined in May 1944. It continually questioned Brazil’s involvement in the war, called into question the honor of those drafted into the army, told Brazilians soldiers that they could not fight European armies, and challenged soldiers to question the fidelity of their government. It was with these doubts in mind that febianos lacking full government or army support prepared to sail to Italy where they faced an innumerable number of hardships before their eventual heroic return.

¹⁴¹ A Casa dos Expedicionários Curitiba, Paraná, Arquivo Documentos Originais IV (Livro), Propaganda Communication Code. I received a copy of this document from Uri Rosenheck of Emory University. I translated this document in November of 2010.

Chapter 3

Always Anxious to Carry Their Share of our Burdens

In order to organize and deploy to their intended theatre of operations the FEB was required to overcome a series of significant and demoralizing logistical, political, public relations, and military setbacks in Brazil. This chapter will show that the FEB's difficulties did not disappear when they boarded the *General W.A. Mann*. After disembarking in Naples, it encountered logistical barriers and tremendous obstacles that could easily have affected the division's psyche and thwarted its combat effectiveness. If it were not for the determination of its commanders and men, the FEB may not have played any meaningful role in the final campaigns of 1944 and 1945. In the weeks and months that followed their arrival, however, the FEB's commanders, sensing a need to enter the fight engaged in international diplomacy and secured equipment and training. The first combatants subsequently entered the front lines in September 1944. What was the driving force behind this desire to engage the hostile German forces? This thesis supports McCann's claim that this determination to succeed "was rooted not in confidence but in abhorrence of the consequences of failure. Not only did their individual careers depend on success, but the honor and the future position of Brazil were at stake."¹⁴²

From the time of its creation the FEB was envisioned as a political and military force. Policy makers in Brazil and other Latin American nations hoped that successful participation in Europe would help them secure more prominent positions at the peace table. The Ecuadorian Ambassador, Gonzalo Zaldumibe pronounced, "All of America is proud to see Brazil valiantly

¹⁴² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 408.

fighting this war for an ideal. It is this country the principal figure of the South. Your flag symbolizes our hopes.” At the same time, officials in Washington hoped the alliance would lead to the expansion of U.S. influence in the southern hemisphere.

When the first contingents of Brazilian troops arrived in Naples they quickly came to understand just how unprepared they truly were. The officers soon learned that they were completely dependent on the United States. For those who arrived with the first contingent, the future must have seemed bleak. Due to troubles with shipping, the FEB’s American equipment did not arrive for nearly a month and in the meantime, the Brazilians learned that the uniforms and boots they were issued in Brazil “unserviceable.” Within a few weeks, both were falling apart. Furthermore, the febianos had not received sufficient combat training and most were unfamiliar with the modern weaponry they would soon be issued. But the FEB, did not have time to dwell on these and other adversities. In the summer of 1944, the Fifth Army was advancing across Italy and its commanders hoped to destroy all German resistance before the snow began falling in the Apennines. The FEB had to undertake whatever training it could procure and enter combat quickly because, as its commanders were well aware, in order for it to accomplish its objectives the FEB had engage the German army and gain victories on the battlefield.

Between July and October, the General staff overcame the first cycle of logistical and bureaucratic difficulties while the febianos worked to familiarize themselves with American weaponry and tactics. As a result, on September 15, the 5,000 members of the Brazilian combat team, led by General Zenóbio, entered combat in the Serchio River basin near Viareggio, twenty-five miles north of Pisa. By late October, after forty-five days of combat, their experience and confidence had grown through engagements with German forces that were slowly falling back to

the infamous Gothic Line. Such exertions led General Mark Clark later remembered, “They never complained and always were anxious to carry their share of our burdens.”¹⁴³

The Voyage

The cobra lit his pipe on the morning of July 2, 1944, when the *USS General W.A. Mann* sailed from Guanabara Bay, and after one and a half years of arduous diplomatic negotiations and military planning, the “First Embarkation Squadron”¹⁴⁴ of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force accompanied by its commander General Mascarenhas de Moraes, bid farewell to Brazil.¹⁴⁵

General Mascarenhas de Moraes recorded: “From Corcovado, covered with mist, emerged the statue of Christ, gazing on his subjects who were departing for other lands with the objective of defending, shoulder to shoulder with our allies, the rich heritage of the Christian civilization.”¹⁴⁶

On September 22, a Brazilian known only as Ramsés, sailing with the second embarkation squadron, expressed his sentiments. “I was awoken, like most, with the news that the ship left the port. It was one of those moments of true ‘confusion of sentiments.’ The idea of departure, the sublime sense of uncertainty with what we would encounter, the indefiniteness of the

¹⁴³ Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 410.

¹⁴⁴ The Brazilian Expeditionary Force was deployed to Italy in five embarkation squadrons. The first squadron sailed on July 2, 1944 and the fifth sailed on February 8, 1945.

¹⁴⁵ The First or Advanced Embarkation Squadron was composed of: “the 1st EID headquarters; Gernarl Staff of the 1st EID; the 6th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Company and the 1st Mortar Platoon of the 11th Infantry Regiment; the II/1st Self-Propelled Mortar Regiment; The 1st Company of the 9th Engineers Battalion; one third of the Supervisory and Maintenance Section of the 9th Engineers Battalion; 1st Platoon of the Reconnaissance Squadron; the Reconnaissance Section and elements of the Command Section of the 1st Signal Communications Company; the 1st Evacuation Company, the treatment platoon and elements of the command section, all of the 1st Medical Battalion; the Maintenance Company; the Platoon of Military Police; a Vehicle Platoon; a section of the Service Platoon and elements of the Command Section of the 1st Supply Company; and elements of the BEF attached to the 1st EID; the Postal Service, the Supply Depot, the Stationary paymaster’s office; war correspondents, elements of the Primary Hospital, Justice Service, and Bank of Brazil.” Of the 5, 075 in the squadron 304 were officers. See, Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary*, 14.

¹⁴⁶ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 16.

mysterious destiny that makes you dream.”¹⁴⁷ Many men likely felt similar sentiments when they sailed from Rio de Janeiro.

In the spring and summer of 1944, American planners and diplomats were aware that both the Brazilian-American alliance and the dictatorial government of Getúlio Vargas were extremely fragile. Furthermore, they knew that a Nazi submarine attack on the only military force to represent both Brazil and Latin America would have devastating political ramifications. Therefore, both governments utilized all available security precautions to ensure that the FEB arrived at its intended theatre of operations. In early spring, American planners informed the FEB's commander that the Brazilian merchant marine would not be responsible for the transport of the FEB. Instead, larger faster American vessels that could carry up to 6,000 men would be responsible for troop transport.¹⁴⁸ Although Brazil did not possess ships necessary for transport, several Brazilian destroyers, joined by others from the U.S. Navy, escorted the troop transport across the Atlantic Ocean. As the convoy sailed from Rio, three Brazilian destroyers and an American blimp accompanied it out to sea; several other American warships soon joined the convoy.

On July 14, the convoy reached the Straits of Gibraltar where it rendezvoused with the Royal Navy. At that point, the Brazilian Navy bid farewell to their compatriots and began the return voyage to Brazil. General Mascarenhas de Moraes took the occasion to tell the commander of the Brazilian fleet: “In the name of the Brazilians here on board who are departing for the frontline to continue the glorious work of our navy in defense of our sovereignty, I send you my farewell, and very deep gratitude for your antisubmarine protection.” Mascarenhas de Moraes received the following response. “The representatives of the Brazilian Navy have had the

¹⁴⁷ Ramses, “Crônicas na Itália: Despedida do Rio”, Caixa 411, Arquivo *Histórico do Exército*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

¹⁴⁸ John W. F. Dulles, *Castello Branco: The Making of a Brazilian President*. (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1978), 70.

great honor to convoy our forces and all send our wishes for the success and greater glory of the Brazilian Forces.”¹⁴⁹ As the convoy continued its journey through the Mediterranean, aircraft and blimps based out of North Africa provided it with permanent air cover. On 16 July 1944, after two weeks at sea, the convoy arrived in Naples.

Prior to arriving in Rio de Janeiro, the *General W. A. Mann*, commissioned on October 13, 1943, delivered contingents of troops and supplies to the North African theatre making four consecutive round-trip voyages to Casablanca and one to Oran.¹⁵⁰ Consequently the ship’s commander and his crew were well aware of the hazards the accompanied transatlantic travel. During the voyage, the navy deployed the latest security measures including the use of depth charges, the armament of the troop transports, the continuous use of radar, the deployment aircraft from U.S. escort cruisers, and daily abandons ship exercises. However, certain necessary measures including the need for the ship to be “blacked out” made the voyage very difficult for the febianos. In order to accomplish the task of blacking out the ship, “all the embarked personnel were crowded into their quarters, which were closed up to prevent the leakage of the least beam of light.” Although this prevented light from escaping it also prevented fresh air from entering. The stifling heat made it difficult to sleep in the closed compartments that were “crowded to the ceilings.”¹⁵¹ To make the situation even more challenging, an order from the ship’s Captain made it obligatory for the men to wear their life jackets at all times. Carlos de Meira Mattos recalled, “The trip to Italy was arduous, for the discomfort... The beds were stretchers and we had to keep our life jackets on the entire day – sleep . . . eat . . . – that was one

¹⁴⁹ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force by its Commander*. (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1966), 17.

¹⁵⁰ Department of the Navy – Naval Historical Center, “General W.A. Mann,” http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/g3/general_w_a_man.htm (accessed February 16, 2011).

¹⁵¹ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 16.

of the orders that the ship's captain rigorously required.”¹⁵² Benedito Nunes de Assis explained that the convoy “left Brazil in mid-winter, at the height of the cold, but as soon we came to Bahia, heading north, we started to feel very hot, aggravated because we always wore our life jackets, we could not even remove them to sleep.”¹⁵³

Because the navy transported more than 5,000 men in each of the FEB’s five embarkation squadrons, the space aboard transport vessels was tight and the logistics of food preparation were complicated. The combination of tight quarters, small rations, nausea, and a general sense of apprehension caused many of the febianos to remain sick in their bunks for most of the voyage. Augusto Alfredo Pinto wrote in his diary each day of the voyage. On July 3, 1944 Augusto he simply recorded, “There are many sick soldiers and a large number are getting sick and vomiting; everywhere you step in vomit. So far I have been relatively good, not sick yet.”¹⁵⁴ With the exception of a few groups, including the military police, officers and enlisted men only received one complete meal per day. However, to supplement the daily rations the crew prepared and distributed sandwiches to the men in their quarters. Nevertheless, when reflecting on the voyage a number of soldiers recalled that hunger was one of the many discomforts they faced. According to Plínio Pitaluga, “The trip on those full ships was a new experience for us all. The food was different, the discipline tough and lots of cleaning was required. The living quarters were below the water line and there was the danger of the ship being torpedoed.”¹⁵⁵ Waldemar Levy Cardoso also concluded: “The trip was a sacrifice for the troops because of the difficulty in

¹⁵² *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1 General-de-Divisão Carlos de Meira Mattos, 72.

¹⁵³ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 3 Capitão Benedito Nunes de Assis, 88.

¹⁵⁴ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 8 Soldado Augusto Alfredo Pinto, 318. The military transcribed the journal that Alfredo Pinto kept during World War II.

¹⁵⁵ General-de-Brigada Plínio Pitaluga, 145.

providing one complete meal each day and by the continuous blackouts. Officers and enlisted men only ate one meal each day, with the exception of those in the military service and special service among whom I was included having been appointed chief of police on board. It was really impossible, physically impossible to feed the more or less five thousand five hundred men crammed in the basement.”¹⁵⁶

The majority of the men the government drafted or recruited to fight in Italy were not members of Brazil’s upper class that had for so long accepted the notion that European culture was superior to Brazilian culture. Rather those sent to defend the motherland came from small rural towns and poor urban neighborhoods. On the ships and battlefields, soldiers embraced uniquely Brazilian cultural elements, including samba and carnival. With the exception of those involved in the modernist movement, the elite still largely associated this Brazilianization with the country’s uneducated lower classes. On several occasions when the Brazilians came together singing, dancing, and playing samba, they showed the Americans what made them distinctively Brazilian. When reflecting on the night before his departure from Rio, former febian Benedito Nunes de Assis recalled: “I do not know where the soldiers got a guitar and started playing their Samba, but soon the Americans that came to observe found it very interesting, because Brazilians were different from other people they had transported, that normally traveled sad and slaughtered. The Brazilians no; the first day they awoke on the high seas they already made their music what is interesting is that the Americans also accompanied our rhythm.”¹⁵⁷ When the convoy crossed the equator on July 6, Augusto Alfredo Pinto wrote that despite being hungry, nervous, and sick a group of febianos came together and celebrated. “At 14h, we crossed the equator, at this time, a musical ensemble of my unit began to play a "samba" soon a real carnival

¹⁵⁶ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1, Marechal Waldemar Levy Cardoso, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Capitão Benedito Nunes de Assis, 88.

formed, where almost everyone sang and danced. The animation was so great that even soldiers who were sick, unable even to go to the dining hall being necessary to take them to bed an apple at every meal, generated courage, forgetting that they were sick, entering the samba with great animation. At this point, we were filmed by the war correspondent of the FEB.”¹⁵⁸ When the febianos arrived in Naples they were happy to leave the cramped quarters of their transport; however, none could have known that the many difficulties they encountered while crossing the ocean faded in comparison to those they would confront in Italy.

The Arrival

After disembarking in Naples on July 16, 1944, the general staff, and likely most other febianos, quickly came to understand the extent to which they were unprepared. The Brazilians contrasted other foreign units that fought alongside the U.S. Fifth Army in Italy, because they possessed none of the equipment “necessary for an independent existence.”¹⁵⁹ Minister of War Eurico Gaspar Dutra did not create the FEB as an independent command; rather it was a “Brazilian corps serving as part of an American army.” During the first days in Italy, the expeditionary forces must have questioned their participation in the war and their ability to engage the enemy. Because the U.S. Army, according to the agreements signed by the Joint Brazil-United States Defense Commission (JBUSDC), was supposed to provide supplies and equipment the first embarkation squadron arrived without, kitchen equipment, tenting, sleeping gear, vehicles or

¹⁵⁸ Soldado Augusto Alfredo Pinto, 320.

For documentary footage of Brazilians singing aboard transport ships see, “WWII - FEB - Segunda Guerra Mundial - Brasil - Parte 1” YouTube video, 04:14, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BI-7VmqaY>

¹⁵⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 405.

even weapons.¹⁶⁰ Chief of Staff Floriano de Lima Brayner wrote, “We were badly uniformed, badly shod and badly equipped. And above all unarmed.”

When they departed from Rio the plan called for them to disembark in North Africa where “outfitting depots” and “training areas” existed. There the U.S. Army was to outfit and train the Brazilians before they transported to the front in Italy. However, in route the allied command changed the destination to Naples, where neither facility was available. Perhaps it was a sign of the difficulties the Brazilians would encounter in the immediate future that when they disembarked in Naples, the Italians saw their olive green uniforms and treated them with hostility because they mistook the unarmed troops for German prisoners.¹⁶¹ “Brazilians did not escape a few expletives from Italians already tired of the old ally who had brought the war to your country.” However, “The swearing stopped when the Italians saw blacks among “prisoners,” and wisely concluded that they could not be German.”¹⁶²

In his diary, Augusto Alfredo Pinto gave a detailed account of the events that transpired after arriving in Naples:

July 16, 1944 – Sunday

In the morning, we began to entering the Port of Naples, where he saw more than one hundred cargo ships and warships. In the air, dozens of balloons were tethered. . . . The harbor is mined, there are many ships and even submarines submerged and destroyed. The city, especially the area near the Port was almost destroyed. On the streets, you saw people covered in rags, almost naked. Most of the people dressed themselves in black. After disembarking, we marched about 30 minutes to an underground train station, where we caught a train on which we traveled about 20 minutes, almost exclusively below ground. After jumping from the train, this was around 15h, we marched nearly two hours by road where every once in a while we saw camps of American troops. We did the march feeling very

¹⁶⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance* 362.

¹⁶¹ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 72.

¹⁶² Ricardo Bonalume Neto, *A nossa Segunda guerra: os Brasileiros em combate, 1942-1945*, (Rio de Janeiro: Expressão e cultura, 1995), 136.

hungry, because we were only served a small meal on the ship at four o'clock in the morning.

During the movement, we encountered Italians who traded various peaches and plums for two or three cigarettes. They seemed crazy for cigarettes, because they advanced like lions. On the roads, we also encountered trucks with Italian soldiers who begged us for a cigarette. We arrived at the campsite at about 17h. Our site was located in a place surrounded by a mountain, on top of which a type of wall exists where many families live. On this first night, we slept out in the open, and because I was given guard duty, I had to sleep in the bush; so I woke up with an inflamed neck. During the night, an unknown observation aircraft passed over our site and our air defense positioned on the hill above opened a violent barrage that lit up our camp. Near here, there is a camp for Italian soldiers and they love to talk with us and exchange fruit for cigarettes. They tell amazing stories about the Germans, the facts appear to be truthful because they all report the same issues and we have had evidence of much of what they are speaking.

...Where are in our barracks, the dust is incredible, bathing and washing clothes are difficult. During the day is hot and at night is very cold, even though it is summer. At night, we wear a lot of clothing to protect us from the cold because we received three blankets, two woolen uniforms, a jacket, a cape, long johns, wool shirt and sweater. When winter arrives, we believe it will be very difficult.¹⁶³

The camp described by Alfredo Pinto was a densely wooded area in the crater of the volcano Astronia located close to the suburb of Bagnoli near Naples. When the Brazilian arrived at the camp, they found no buildings and in fact, the Americans had not even delivered tents. It is strange that no preparations were made for the arrival of the Brazilian forces; after all, earlier that morning Lieutenant General Jacob Loucks Devers, Commander of all the American forces in the Mediterranean, met the FEB's commanders so the America's evidently anticipating their arrival. The lack of tents was only a small concern for the Brazilian commanders, who

¹⁶³ Augusto Alfredo Pinto, 339.

immediately came to understand that they were only a small contingent attached to one of the world's largest armies.

The blame for the continual breakdown in the supply chain can be passed amongst diplomats, policy makers, military officers and politicians stretching from Washington D.C. to Rio de Janeiro that did not clarify the exact specifications outlined for in the JBUSDC agreements. This left the Brazilian officers in a precarious situation with little help from authorities in Brazil. According to Mascarenhas de Moraes, "The Brazilian military authorities in Brazil were deaf to the information gathered in December 1943 by the 'Group of Observers' sent to Italy and North Africa, and to other information, no less important communicated by Brazilian officers with the Fifth Army." The General Staff, aware that they were in need of equipment, was not even aware if they had the authority to seek out American commanders in an effort to procure necessary items. It is highly unlikely that the Americans ever had malicious intent; however, it is also clear that the Americans were not initially impressed with the Brazilians and this may have led some American officers to act slower than necessary. The Brazilians particularly had difficulties securing any equipment from the Peninsular Base Section (PBS), which controlled the dispersal of all equipment in the Bagnoli region. In fact, according to Mascarenhas de Moraes, it was only the "personal action of General Mark Clark" that the Brazilians were able to secure necessary supplies.¹⁶⁴

Whatever the cause for the delays, whether it be a lack of availability or simply an oversight, it caused many in the FEB's general staff to question the intentions of their American counterparts. Chief of Staff Brayner was well aware of the many deficiencies that confronted the FEB, and on at least once occasion, he accompanied General Mascarenhas de Moraes to the supply headquarters in order to petition the U.S. commander for supplies that the Brazilians were

¹⁶⁴ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 22.

in need of, including uniforms.¹⁶⁵ The American General in charge of the PBS, following a brief discussion, asked the Brazilian commander curtly “What did you bring to fight with?” The American translator, Captain J. Russo, quickly reminded his superior “General Mascarenhas was the Brazilian commander who organized the defense of the Brazilian northeast for America.” To which Mascarenhas de Moraes, without waiting for an interpretation responded, “For America, no! For the threatened world.”¹⁶⁶

Although the American general quickly softened his attitude and agreed to do all he could to help the Brazilians for Brayner, the implications were clear. “We should not have come. That is the cold truth.” “If we came for example, like the South Africans, or Canadians, or New Zealanders, who brought everything from their country, including transport and maritime escort, the Americans would have received us with a number one smile. But we were there only with cannon fodder and the great loyalty typical of Brazilians.”¹⁶⁷

Training

Prior to departing for Europe, the foremost impediment to proper training was not an absence of desire or competency on the part of the FEB’s officers or men; rather it was the absence of proper training centers and material. In 1943 and 1944, the United States was involved in a two-front war while supplying the British and the Soviets with vital armaments. As the threat of Nazi invasion in the western hemisphere diminished, Brazilian officials lost some bargaining power.

¹⁶⁵ According to the agreements reached by the Joint Brazil-United States Defense Commission (JBUSDC), the United States was to provide the Brazilians with helmets and armament, but Brazil was responsible for providing its troops with proper uniforms. Unfortunately, for the Brazilians shortly after their arrival in Italy it became apparent that their uniforms were of such poor quality that they were already falling apart. “Rain gear was not waterproof, the colors ran in the shrinking uniforms, and the boots fell apart.” For more information see McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 406.

¹⁶⁶ Brayner, *A Verdade sobre a FEB*. 117-120.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 117-120.

Minister of War Dutra, possibly fearing continued U.S. occupation in the northeast after the war, refused to deploy the well-trained and equipped forces from that region. Then to make matters worse he insisted on the construction of training centers in three different regions. United States officials, frustrated with Dutra, were not willing to provide him with the equipment necessary for the creation of the three centers. They wanted him to establish one large training center in Rio de Janeiro. In the end, the United States, much to the disliking of Dutra and others who never fully embraced the alliance, only agreed to send to Brazil fifty percent of the equipment necessary for training one infantry division. The troops were to train with this this equipment then leave it behind for the next contingent. Then upon arrival in the theatre of operations, the United States would re-equip the Brazilian troops.¹⁶⁸

The plan may have worked but delays on the part of Brazilian officials, most of whom were not members of the FEB's general staff, the high demand for weapons and the threat of Nazi submarines in the Atlantic, prevented the timely delivery of the promised training materials. By mid-1944, Brazilian officers and politicians were aware that if they waited for all the material to arrive, it was very likely that the war would end before the Brazilians ever reached the front. Consequently, the government deployed the first contingent with the understanding that the Americans would train them in their theatre of operations.

Throughout the Italian campaign, but particularly during the first month in Italy, supply chain delays created a general sense of anxiety amongst the general staff. Not only did they not have basic items such as uniforms and boots, they also lacked essential materials and facilities to continue their combat preparation. The commanders were further exacerbated because the U.S. Army had in its possession sufficient material to equip the 5,000 troops, but the PBS expected the Brazilians to wait for the arrival of the equipment specifically assigned for their division.

¹⁶⁸ Conn, *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*, 328.

From the first days of their stay in Bagnoli, General Mascarenhas de Moraes continually worked to see that the squadron received proper equipment and a transfer to a region where they could complete their training.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the only courses conducted during the month following their arrival in Bagnoli were a few on combat leadership and mine warfare; only a small number of English speaking personnel participated in the courses.¹⁷⁰

Throughout the first month, it seems that the febianos did more sightseeing than training. While stationed in Bagnoli, in his journal, febiano Durval Prata often recounted his frequent visits to Naples. Reflecting on the ruined state of the city he wrote, “In short Naples was a beautiful city, it is too bad the war reduced it to wreckage. I would rather die a thousand times than see Brazil the way Italy is today.”¹⁷¹ The journal entry that Augusto Alfredo Pinto recorded for August 2 and 3 by described the boredom that engulfed the soldiers within the camp. “The novelty today is that a large fallen tree branch destroyed two tents; fortunately, there were no casualties because no one was inside, and those that were close to the tree, sensed danger and ran. Distractions for the soldiers are playing cards, chatting, and some tend to take a stroll down the wall on top of the hill that surrounds our camp, often returning drunk, dusty, and bleeding from falls, with the “head of chalk”(MP) running on his heels... .”¹⁷² Officers however, continued to push for the FEB to complete its training and enter combat because as Frank McCann explained, “The National inferiority complex fed whisperings to the effect that the troops were not really fighting but only having a holiday in Italy.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 23.

¹⁷⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 410.

¹⁷¹ Durval Prata and Alexandre Prata Picanço, *Roberto contra o mundo: diário de guerra do expedicionário Durval Prata, um dos primeiros brasileiros a combater as forças do Eixo na Itália*. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Agora da Ilha, 2001), 22.

¹⁷² Soldado Augusto Alfredo Pinto, 327.

¹⁷³ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 404.

Throughout the first weeks in Italy, Mascarenhas de Moraes' determination gained him the respect of American commanders. On July 26, after repeated meetings, U.S. authorities agreed to move the FEB north to the Tarquina region about 100 kilometers north of Rome. Because of his efforts, when the FEB arrived in the north they were officially incorporated into the United States Fifth Army and within a few days, they received "a veritable mountain of varied and complex war material."¹⁷⁴ The incorporation into the Fifth Army along with the arrival of their supplies provided the febianos with a needed boost in morale. Durval Prata recorded in his journal: "We received the news that, as of August 12, The FEB, to which I belong, will be incorporated into the American V Army. Soon, their commander, the brave General Clark, will come to conduct and inspection. This was great news for us."¹⁷⁵

The role of Mascarenhas de Moraes cannot be underemphasized. As soon as he completed one objective, he moved to the next. Now that the Brazilians had modern armaments, they were in need of proper training. Shortly after arriving in Tarquina, Lieutenant General Mark Clark, the Commander of the Fifth Army, invited Mascarenhas de Moraes and other officers to visit him at his headquarters in Cecina. This visit marked the beginning of a new era for the FEB. Generals Mascarenhas de Moraes and Clark quickly developed a mutual respect for one another and Clark, who was likely aware of the politics surrounding the FEB prior to the meeting, listened intently as Mascarenhas de Moraes effectively accentuated the precarious situation in which the FEB found itself. After the meeting, Clark agreed to do all he could to help the Brazilian commander. In his memoirs, Clark later recorded: "The performance of the Brazilians

¹⁷⁴ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 24.

¹⁷⁵ Prata, *Roberto Contra o Mundo*, 25.

was, of course important politically as well as militarily. ...we were eager to give them a chance to make a good showing.”¹⁷⁶

Clark authorized the movement of the FEB to the Vada Rosignano area, about twenty-five kilometers south of the front lines at Arno.¹⁷⁷ Augusto Alfredo Pinto wrote, “We arrived at the new camp near the town of Vada, at six o'clock morning of August 19 - Saturday. The trip that lasted nine hours, more or less, without rest and on roads unfamiliar to us. It was very bad not only because of accidents but also due to fatigue and discomfort.” Now that they had the equipment and facilities they needed, combat training commenced.

Brazilian Army’s Soldier’s Day

On August 25, 1945, the allied armies reoccupied Paris; however, in Vada it was the “Day of the Brazilian Soldier.” General Mark Clark and other American officers reviewed the “Tactical Detachment” commanded by General Zenóbio da Costa and following the demonstration, the Brazilians “harmoniously and enthusiastically sang the Brazilian National Anthem and the American song ‘God Bless America.’”¹⁷⁸ High-ranking officials and young privates both in Italy and after the return to Brazil revered Mark Clark. Even in later years veterans referred to him as a great commander. Perhaps he gained such loyalty because from the earliest days of the campaign he showed genuine interest and support for the Brazilians. Following the parade on August 25, he told the assembled febianos that their presence in Italy was “but another indication

¹⁷⁶ Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 389.

¹⁷⁷ Prior to their arrival in Vada the FEB the Peninsular Base Section was responsible for supplying the FEB; however, beginning in mid-August, after the meeting between Mascarenhas de Moraes and Clark, they began receiving their gasoline, munitions, and other material directly from the Fifth Army in Cecina. See *Mascarenhas de Moraes, The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 26.

¹⁷⁸ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 27.

of the solidarity of purpose which exists between our two great nations.”¹⁷⁹ Frank McCann correctly concluded that August 25 was a “watershed” day for the Brazilian troops. “Before Vada the FEB was afflicted with uncertainty and difficulty, afterwards it grew in confidence and was eager for battle.”¹⁸⁰

The “period of final instruction” in Vada began on August 22, 1944. Over the next three weeks, the first combat squadron underwent an intensive training course taught by about 270 American officers and noncommissioned officers.¹⁸¹ The training consisted of “familiarization with the firing weapon . . . , unit tactical training in offensive and defensive measure, and finally, a combat team in the attack exercise with full artillery preparation and support.”¹⁸² On September 9, Mascarenhas de Moraes and his generals assembled at the headquarters of the IV Corps in Staffoli, where for the first, they met the corps commander Major General Willis J. Crittenger.¹⁸³ Once again, an American commander was impressed with the ambition and sincerity of the Brazilian commander. In the meeting, those present agreed, “the Brazilian troops then in Italian territory would constitute a tactical group under the command of General Zenóbio da Costa, the Brazilian 6th Combat Team.”¹⁸⁴

The final instruction concluded with a thirty-six hour training exercise designed to simulate combat and test the readiness of the Brazilian troops. The exercise included “a march of 36 kilometers” and “an important and difficult combat exercise, in which use was made of an abundant quantity of war munitions.” General Mark Clark came to oversee the exercise and nearly 300 U.S. officers played the role of umpire. “This ‘exercise-test,’ in which more than

¹⁷⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 413.

¹⁸⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 412.

¹⁸¹ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 75.

¹⁸² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 412.

¹⁸³ Throughout the remainder of the war the FEB was attached to the IV Corps.

¹⁸⁴ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 48.

4,000 expeditionary troops took part, was almost true combat.” The final decision of the umpires was that “the magnificent result evidenced in this exercise attested to the excellent grade of combat training.” After the umpires delivered the results, General Clark declared that the First Embarkation Squadron prepared to enter the front lines. Reflecting on the events of that day General Mascarenhas de Moraes wrote, “The patriotic exultation which then seized the Vada Camp is indescribable.”¹⁸⁵

Early Successes and the 6th Combat Team

Throughout its initial month on the front lines, the 5,000 members of The Brazilian 6th Combat Team successfully engaged retreating German troops and recaptured a number of Italian villages while suffering a minimal number of casualties. On the battlefields of Italy these engagements were nominal military successes because German forces were already in the process of retreating to their defenses behind the heavily fortified Gothic Line, but they greatly added to the FEB’s prestige in Brazil where many had doubted that the FEB would achieve success so early, if ever.

On September 18, the Brazilian combat team captured a key communications center, Camaiole, then in the days that followed Brazilian forces liberated several other small villages, including Monte Prato, where four febianos died— they were the first to lose their lives in action. On September 28, the IV Corps moved the combat team to move into the valley of the Serchio River approaching Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, a heavily fortified German position. However, upon arriving in the valley the IV Corps “borrowed” men from the combat team to support other allied forces along the coast. General Zenóbio was not pleased with the loss of these forces

¹⁸⁵ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 29.

because it temporarily removed his team from combat. Thus, in the first weeks of October, they were involved in little more than reconnaissance work.¹⁸⁶

During this “pause in action,” the Brazilian Minister of War Eurico Gaspar Dutra visited the Italy. At the time of his visit, the FEB was achieving success on the battlefield, which consequently led to favorable press coverage at home. On September 21, *O Cruzeiro do Sul* printed the headline “New victories of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy.” The article told those in Brazil; “The Brazilian infantry forces of the Allied Fifth Army inflicted a new defeat on the army of German Field Marshal Kesselring in front of the Gothic Line.... Dispatches from the front report that the Brazilians faced a fierce resistance by the Nazis, which was broken after heavy fighting.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, on September 29, the headline read “General Eurico Gaspar Dutra at the battlefront.” Like many other high-ranking army officers Dutra had risen to the top during the tumultuous 1930s, and although he was at times apprehensive over the creation of the FEB, he was willing to take credit for all the FEB’s successes. As a calculated politician, he never allowed Mascarenhas de Moraes or the febianos outshine him. When he later wrote of Dutra’s visit, Mark Clark recalled that Dutra “expressed a desire to see action.” Clark, who for some time had been playing the dual role of general and diplomat, assembled what he called the “Dutra Task Force” and put a number of Brazilian troops supported by American troops into action under the temporary command of Dutra.¹⁸⁸ While this incident may have been little more than a general seeking the opportunity to play soldier, it reflects the way in which Dutra and his cohort interacted with the FEB. During its periods of success, Dutra overemphasized his

¹⁸⁶ Dulles, Castello Branco, 81-84.

¹⁸⁷ “General Eurico Gaspar Dutra at the battlefront,” *Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul*, September 29, 1944. <http://memoria.fua.org.br/jornal1912a43/>. (accessed March 12, 2011).

¹⁸⁸ Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 395.

individual role and made efforts to stymie the political influence of its commanders; after a defeat, he questioned its existence and sought to separate himself from the division.

Dutra offered Mascarenhas de Moraes the command of the First Expeditionary Division not only because he was a respected commander, or because he was the first to respond to his invitation,¹⁸⁹ but also because he was not a perceived political threat. Dutra, Vargas, and others were aware that he possessed little political ambition.¹⁹⁰ However, because the FEB was a political force, he could not escape the political machine in Rio de Janeiro. By the time Dutra visited the front, the 6th Combat Team's successes secured a great amount of prestige for General Zenóbio and as a result, his devotees began making plans for the advancement of his career. To Dutra they proposed a plan that called for Zenóbio to receive command of the division, while for his hard work, "Mascarenhas would be pushed upstairs to carry out glorified administrative work and promoted to some new superior rank of generalship not yet in existence."¹⁹¹ After Dutra returned to Brazil, Clark, recently learning of the proposal, informed Mascarenhas de Moraes. Infuriated by what he called a "diabolical plan," Mascarenhas de Moraes quickly declared his opposition to such a move. In his memoirs, he wrote, "But as I was not consulted beforehand about this intended change of command, I protested against these surreptitious demarches in a letter addressed to the Minister of War."

When the combat team returned to full strength in mid-October, Zenóbio, seeking to build on the FEB's earlier successes, appealed to Crittenberger for the go ahead to mount a

¹⁸⁹ Carlos de Meira Mattos was present when Dutra offered the command to Mascarenhas de Moraes. He later recalled, "I was in this role, an encrypted radio message from the Minister of War Eurico Gaspar Dutra arrived asking whether he would accept the command of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. He responded at that moment... 'I'm available, I accept the command.'" According to Meira Mattos, Dutra sent the same message to four other generals, but only Mascarenhas de Moraes responded in a timely manner. "The others asked for time to respond"

¹⁹⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 426.

¹⁹¹ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 88.

João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes, *Memórias*, (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1969), 197-201.

mission and take the stronghold Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. As one Italian lieutenant later recounted, the Brazilians were “galvanized by their feat.” In just over a month, “they had advanced from Bagni di Lucca almost to Castelnuovo di Garfagnana.”¹⁹² Earlier reconnaissance reported that the area was particularly rugged and the Germans had constructed concrete-reinforced pillboxes. Intelligence made it clear that Castelnuovo di Garfagnana was being reinforced because it was one of the few positions in the Germans were determined to hold. In a show of diplomacy, Crittenberger consulted Mascarenhas de Moraes because at the time the 6th Combat team was under the direct command of the IV Corps. With the support of both commanders, the attack was scheduled.¹⁹³

Despite continual rainfall and heavy fog, the first phase of the attack began on October 30 1944. All through day, the Brazilians encountered heavy resistance, but around 6:30 p.m., the combat team successfully completed the first phase with the capture of Monte San Quirico. “We were then 4 kilometers from Castelnuovo di Garfagnana,” Mascarenhas de Moraes later recalled. The first major reversal for the Brazilian Expeditionary Force came around 2:30 a.m. when the Germans launched a counter offensive. More experienced troops may have expected such an attack, but in late October, the Brazilians had only a minimal amount of training and combat experience. Rather than preparing for a German attack, “soldiers huddled around fires to warm themselves and to dry out clothing. Instead of digging foxholes and trenches and carefully setting out fields of fire, they sought shelter in shell holes, behind rocks, in natural depressions, and in scattered buildings.”¹⁹⁴ When the Germans attacked, the Brazilians were not prepared. Despite

¹⁹² Fiaschi, Operation Winter Storm – The Gothic Line, <http://sites.google.com/site/progettolineagotica/memorielineagotica>

¹⁹³ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 88.

¹⁹⁴ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 416.

mounting a strong defense that lasted until they nearly ran out of ammunition, sometime around 12:00 p.m. on October 31, the Brazilians retreated.

Already on October 30, at a conference in Vada, Clark, desperately needing men to fill his depleted ranks, chose to bring the entire Brazilian division into action in the Reno Valley. Clark, supported by Mascarenhas de Moraes, made the decision despite reports from American officers that “emphasized in no uncertain language the problems experienced in the Brazilians and the low level of preparation that these troops received before arrival in Italy.” Because of this decision, the end of the Zenóbio combat team coincidentally corresponded with the reversal at Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. After the defeat, all talk of replacing Mascarenhas de Moraes with Zenóbio ceased. Mascarenhas de Moraes seemed to think his appeal to Dutra might have prevented the plan’s fruition. However, it is more likely that the 6th Combat Teams failure to capture and secure the communications center led the Minister of War to table the plan. Zenóbio became the division’s infantry commander, but after the reverse at Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, “Zenóbio’s earlier brilliant accomplishments went unrecognized... ‘His wings’ were broken.”¹⁹⁵

The FEB was its own enemy. If it succeeded in its mission, a surplus of officers, many of who remained in Rio throughout the war, were ready to take full credit and undercut the decision-making ability of those in the field. However, when the FEB suffered setbacks, as it did during the winter of 1944-1945, these same officers questioned the FEB capabilities, placing the blame on Mascarenhas de Moraes and calling for his resignation.

¹⁹⁵ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 90.

Chapter 4

From Uncertainty to Victory

After the capture of Monte Cassino in May 1944, the Allied advance across Italy accelerated, by June 5, Allied Forces had entered Rome. Many in the United States and Brazil consequently began to believe that the campaign in Italy would conclude before Christmas. That fall, however, retreating German and Italian forces established new defensive positions along a series of mountainous ridges known as the “Gothic Line.” Throughout the fall and winter of 1944-1945, the U.S. Fifth and British Eighth Armies suffered a series of setbacks while attempting to dislodge the German forces, dashing hopes that the campaign would conclude before winter weather began to set in.

The winter in the mountains of Northern Italy was difficult for all Allied forces, but it was particularly difficult for raw Brazilian troops accustomed to a tropical or moderate climate; very few had ever experienced negative temperatures and fewer had ever seen snow. In his memoirs, Mascarenhas de Moraes labeled this period, “the dark months of December 1944 and January 1945.”¹⁹⁶ Because of its defeats at Monte Castello, American patience and confidence began eroding, while at home, anti-FEB defeatist rumors, which challenged the prestige the FEB gained after its early successes, began circulating. This period was the baptism of fire for the FEB. Rather than retreating to the rear, its commanders, understanding the political and patriotic significance of the FEB’s mission, requested that their advanced headquarters remain at the battlefield. Consequently, when the hostilities ceased in May 1945, the Brazilians could boast that they had maintained continuous contact with the enemy for 239 consecutive days. When the snow began melting in the Apennines Mountains, the febianos, having prevailed over the

¹⁹⁶ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 36.

political storm and thousands of German artillery rounds, were prepared to engage their foe. On February 21, the FEB attained perhaps its most celebrated victory, finally dislodging German forces from their fortified positions on Monte Castello. Then in April, when the IV Corps began its spring offensive, the FEB engaged and defeated the German Army in a number of battles during the final weeks of the Italian campaign.

This chapter takes the reader through this dark phase, examining the causes of the FEB's setbacks and their political and military consequences. It argues that the FEB overcame fledgling international confidence, a lack of domestic support, continual artillery bombardments, sickness, freezing winter weather, negative German propaganda, and even defeat. In the spring of 1945, the FEB emerged as a well-trained fighting force that quieted skeptics on both sides of the Atlantic and secured its legacy as a national icon. It proved Brazilian officers and infantrymen were not inferior to their American allies or German adversary; given the proper time and training, they could successfully plan and conduct offensive operations. When they returned home the FEB was a symbol of national pride, but during the winter of 1944-1945, the success of its mission was uncertain.

Monte Castello

The most devastating military setbacks the FEB encountered during its year-long deployment took place in November and December 1944. Only weeks after the reversal at Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, German forces successfully repelled four Brazilian assaults on Monte Castello. If this was not bad enough, the FEB's precarious situation was further complicated by a successful German maneuver around Christmas in which the "Fifth Army felt the brunt of the offensive." The movement resulted in the loss of Braga, and exposed Brazilians and American holding

positions facing either Monte Ververde or Monte Castello to enemy fire. Consequently, the Germans were able to rain artillery fire down on the Brazilian advanced headquarters.

It is impossible to study the FEB without coming across numberless references to Monte Castello. The febianos spent nearly four of their nine months in combat looking up at the mountain while the Germans continually poured artillery shells down upon them. Former febiano, Waldemar Levy Cardoso quoted Mascarenhas de Moraes in a recent interview, saying, “The conquest of Mount Castello, as Gen. Mascarenhas de Moraes said, was imperative for the dignity of our military.”¹⁹⁷ In their efforts to take this objective, the Brazilians suffered their most demoralizing reversals and most celebrated victory. In many ways, the eventual triumph at Monte Castello was psychologically so important that it overshadowed the FEB’s later accomplishments, which were strategically more substantial. This chapter will show that each defeat had serious domestic and international political consequences.

Since the end of the war, much of the war’s historiography has focused on the operation in France rather than Italy. Nevertheless, as Brayner stated, “The Brazilian soldiers, the Americans or British who were on patrol in the icy mountains of Italy in the winter of 1944-1945 played their part in the war, just as the American soldiers who perspired profusely on some Pacific island, or the soldiers who landed in Normandy.” During the late summer of 1944, the Allied high command withdrew seven of the most experienced combat divisions, three American and four French, from the Mediterranean Theatre to support the allied invasion of southern France “Operation Dragoon,” which began on August 24, 1944. According to Mark Clark, the reassignment of these divisions left the Fifteenth Army Group with gaping holes in its ranks, its strength diminishing from 249,000 to 153,000 men. Clark further contended that because Allied

¹⁹⁷ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. Marechal Waldemar Levy Cardoso, 28.

commanders gave the operations in France top priority when it came to men and material, “the Italian campaign came to have a different character and purpose.”¹⁹⁸ As a secondary theatre of operation, the Allied objective in Italy now called for the army group to “keep a substantial part of the German Army under permanent pressure through stationary offensives in order to prevent the Nazi-Fascist command from transferring any combat-seasoned divisions to France.”¹⁹⁹

On October 30, at the Vada Conference, Mark Clark asked Mascarenhas de Moraes when the second and third contingents of the Brazilian division would be ready to enter combat. Mascarenhas de Moraes told him, “It would depend upon the development of the training period.” According to Moraes, Clark assured him that the troops receive necessary training before entering combat; delays in the receipt of equipment, however, prevented Clark from fulfilling his promise. In the fall of 1944, allied commanders expected Mark Clark to mount a continuous offensive despite reduced troop strength and supply shortages. To accomplish this, he used all available forces. For example, the army created U.S. Task Force 45, which fought alongside the Brazilians as infantry, from several antiaircraft battalions. In addition, the U.S. 92nd Infantry Division (the Buffalos), the only all African-American Division to see combat in the war, was also called into action and spending several months on the Brazilian left flank. In the case of the FEB, many of those that entered the lines in November and December came from the second and third contingents that arrived in October with even less training than those that arrived three months earlier.

Was Clark actually aware that the Brazilian troops entering the lines were utterly unprepared? Because of his personal intervention in the equipping, training, and combat operations of the FEB, it is difficult to believe that he or his staff members would not have read

¹⁹⁸ For more information about the withdrawal and change in objective see: *Calculated Risk*, 368-372

¹⁹⁹ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 43-44.

reports from the American advisors placed in charge of training the Brazilians; therefore, he should have been aware. Reporting on the training of recent arrivals American advisor Lieutenant Colonel Nathan S. Mathewson stated that the Brazilians were in good physical condition, but “they were not sufficiently trained for heavy combat.” Most were “not thoroughly familiar with care and cleaning of equipment, mechanics of weapons and techniques of fire.” He also explained: “The majority of the troops are intelligent and not lazy and should, in time, make good hardened soldiers. Enemy contact is a great teacher and these troops will learn and assimilate many lessons the hard way. But until these lessons are learned, they will not secure the results that are necessary to effect [*sic*] a decisive defeat upon a well-seasoned enemy as now confronts them.”²⁰⁰

After the initial defeats on Monte Castello, the words of Mathewson’s report may have seemed almost prophetic to those that read them. American commanders should not have been surprised to learn of the FEB’s defeats in November; on the contrary, they should have been impressed that such untrained troops nearly accomplished the objective assigned to them. The language of this report made it clear to the Fifth Army that the Brazilians were not ready to undertake any major offensive operations. Nevertheless, many Brazilians entered the lines after only a week of combat training in Italy, because the army needed men and Brazilian commanders were eager to maintain a presence at the front.

By mid-November, the IV Corps prepared to mount an offensive campaign in the Reno Valley, “Aggressive Defense.” If the Allies were able to push the Germans from their strongholds, the Allied forces would not spend the winter in the Apennines Mountains. The IV Corps tasked the FEB with taking the mountain later known as Monte Castello. Former war correspondent Joel Silveira explained the strategic importance of the peak: “Between the peaks

²⁰⁰ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 419.

dominated by the Germans, one stood out for its important strategic position: Monte Castello.”²⁰¹ He explained that the taking of Monte Castello would eliminate a threat that was “always hanging over Highway 64” and their “communication and supply route.” If the allies did not take Monte Castello, however, their march towards Bologna, “the goal General Mark Clark . . . wanted to achieve before the first winter snow began to fall . . . would be stopped.”²⁰² Febiano Carlos de Meira Mattos expounded on Silveira’s assessment stating, “Monte Castello was the bulwark of mountain range and its occupation represented practically the opening of the axis of the road 64.” According to him, following its capture “. . . the operations to open the way to Highway 64 became easier.”²⁰³

William Waack, however, in his book, *As Duas faces da gloria a feb vista pelos seus aliados e inimigos*, challenging the commonly held assertions regarding the combat mission of the FEB including, claims that Monte Castello was of great strategic importance. He claims that the “Brazilians at Monte Castello fulfilled a secondary tactical mission, a maneuver supporting the principal attack . . . it was not the decisive struggle, nor did it fundamentally influence the outcome of the battle.” Waack drew his conclusions from interviews he conducted with former German officers in the early 1980s, and examinations of the Wehrmacht’s “War Diaries.” In the interviews, many of the officers did not remember Monte Castelo; rather, they recalled the importance of the larger Monte Belvedere and the war diaries simply called it point “101/19.” For Waack, Monte Belvedere, not Monte Castelo was the keystone. It is difficult, however, to base such an argument on German records when you consider, as McCann explained, “the

²⁰¹ Nevertheless, as Waack affirmed, “This in no way diminishes the value of the sacrifice of those that fought” Waack, 90-94.

²⁰² Silveira, *A Luta dos Pracinhas*, 26.

²⁰³ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1, General-de-Divisão Carlos de Meira Mattos, 76-77.

German records pertaining to the fall of Belvedere, Castello, and Torracchia had all been destroyed after the war in a fire.”²⁰⁴

One of Waack’s’ strongest critics is Frank McCann. In his article, *The Forca Expedicionaria Brasileira in the Italian Campaign, 1944-45*, he correctly identified several glaring weaknesses with Waack’s argument. Beginning first with his sources, McCann argued that Waack ignored a significant number of sources within the historiography and failed to read the FEB war diary, which explained that the FEB was tasked with attacking the “M. TORRACCIA-M. BELVEDERE Ridge;” Monte Castello was simply the point along the ridge seen as the most strategically important and therefore, the area the Brazilians chose to attack. Furthermore, as he explained, following its capture the American liaison detachment diarist wrote, “. . . this feature had been the objective had been the objective of two previous attacks, in which they suffered considerable casualties. Its capture was a distinct loss to the enemy, since it deprived him of his last good observation of BAGNI della PORRETTA.” Additionally, as he stated, “it would be natural for Brazilians to give more importance to the names of the terrain they faced than did either the defending Germans or the American concerned with the broader front.”²⁰⁵

Each time the Brazilians attacked the mountain, several high-ranking American Commanders including, Clark, Truscott, and Crittenberger, found them at the Brazilian forward headquarters. Although it is true that the Americans felt a need to help the Brazilians succeed, it is doubtful that so many officers would converge on the headquarters if the objective were only a “secondary tactical mission.” Monte Castello was strategically important. The continuation of Allied operations depended upon its capture. If the mountain were insignificant, why would

²⁰⁴ McCann, *The Forca Expedicionaria Brasileira in the Italian Campaign*, 7.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 6-7.

allied commanders have launched five assaults against its fortified guns? If the Brazilians had not taken the hill the IV Corps would have assigned another the task, allied forces had to silence the German guns atop Monte Castello if they were to continue their trek across Italy.

On November 24, 1944, Allied forces launched their first offensives against the Belvedere Hill mass. Crittenberger scheduled the surprise, which called for two American battalions to take Monte Belvedere and Monte della Torraccia while the third battalion of the Brazilian sixth Infantry Regiment was to take Monte Castello. General Mascarenhas de Moraes did not conduct the initial attack on Monte Castello; despite initial disapproval from Mascarenhas de Moraes, the Americans placed the components of the Sixth Infantry Regiment involved the attack under the command of the IV Corps' Task Force 45. "Mascarenhas de Moraes did not like the fragmentation of his First Division by such borrowings,"²⁰⁶ furthermore the Brazilians involved "had been in combat for sixty eight straight days without rest or replacements and were displaying extreme fatigue and low morale."²⁰⁷

Looking down from its fortified positions, with a "complete view of the approaches," was the German 232 Grenadier Division with previously established "interlocking fields of fire." The experienced German forces quickly repelled the Brazilian frontal assault with intense fire. The Brazilians suffered heavy casualties, many of which came after the U.S. 92nd Division withdrew from the left flank without informing their international companions. On November 25, the Allied forces once again threw themselves at the fortified Germans; the results were the same. In spite of an aggressive allied attack, the Germans still maintained control the high ground. "The attack revealed Brazilian command deficiencies in reconnaissance, in coordination between

²⁰⁶ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 96.

²⁰⁷ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 420.

Brazilian and American forces, and in the amount of artillery deployed. Most of all however, the attackers underestimated the German defense.”²⁰⁸

Throughout most of the campaign, a cordial relationship existed between the Brazilian General Staff and the Commanders of the Allied forces – many remained close friends for decades – however, following defeat, tensions were high; both Brazilian and American commanders felt pressure to capture Monte Castello. On the morning of November 26, a heated exchange between Mascarenhas de Moraes and Crittenberger took place. Mascarenhas de Moraes, no doubt understanding the reception the FEB defeats were receiving in Brazil, and frustrated with the performance of American troops, including the 92nd Division, demanded that Crittenberger no longer place the febianos under American command. To this Crittenberger responded “that he was there to employ the troops assigned to the IV Corps, and that he had nothing to do with diplomacy.” However, “because Mascarenhas felt his responsibility to the Brazilian government required that the entire FEB remain under his command at all times,” Crittenberger declared he would, “pass the ball” to him. Mascarenhas de Moraes replied curtly, “I take the ball, but in very bad condition.”²⁰⁹

Over the next three weeks, the Brazilian commanders, determined to prove themselves, waged two more frontal attacks on the mountain. The third mission, which was doomed to fail, occurred on November 29. Not only were the Brazilians once again employing the same frontal assault, the troops that had been assigned as reinforcements were located some distance from the point of attack and had to be quickly brought up to the front, some from training, “still poorly equipped.” Furthermore, on November 28, a German counter attack had driven the Americans from Monte Belvedere. As Mascarenhas explained, “The enemy occupying this position,

²⁰⁸ C.C. Maximiano & R. Bonalume N, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2011), 11.

²⁰⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 420; Dulles 98; Brayner, 245-252.

constituted a serious menace to the left flank of the Brazilian Division.”²¹⁰ Not only were the Brazilian positions exposed, many of the Brazilian reserves arrived at the front less than two hours before the attack was to begin. Rather than conducting proper reconnaissance, the reserves spent the night “struggling with ice and mud.” Consequently, “they were in full view of the Germans” when the sun rose.²¹¹ After more than twelve hours of heavy fighting once again, the Brazilians retreated in defeat. The third assault ended even more catastrophically than the previous two. At one point, a captain in the second company, witnessing devastation on all sides, “refused to continue, and ceded his post to a Lieutenant in the midst of battle.”²¹²

The entire Fifth Army, not only the Brazilians, suffered setbacks in the final weeks of November. Yet, while American failures were only considered temporary setbacks, anti-FEB and anti-American forces in Brazil depicted the FEB’s failures as total defeats. Because the commanders were determined to remove the Germans from their positions in the mountains and then converge on Bologna before Christmas, the IV Corps delivered to the FEB’s commanders at their headquarters the following order on December 5: “It is up to Expeditionary Infantry Division to capture and retain the crest of Mount della Torraccia-Mt Belvedere.”²¹³ In other words, Monte Castello, located at the center of the Belvedere-Torraccia line, was once again to be the main objective of the next Brazilian offensive.

The army scheduled the fourth attack for December 11, but the weather forced the FEB to delay until the following day; unfortunately, by that time conditions had improved only slightly. The battle plan called for the second and third battalions of the first infantry regiment to

²¹⁰ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 88.

²¹¹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 422.

²¹² *Ibid*, 422.

²¹³ Silveira, *A Luta Dos Pracinhas*, 28.

“surprise the Germans by moving out at dawn without prior artillery preparation.”²¹⁴

Unfortunately, American artillery prematurely opened fire on Monte Belvedere, which led the second battalion to commence their attack ahead of schedule, allowing German artillery to hold down the third battalion for more than two hours. Communicating by radio with his commander, Major Franklin Rodrigues de Moraes, Waldemar Levy Cardoso stated, “We are stuck to the ground, all movement is impossible; any man who rises is riddled with bullets.”²¹⁵ Heavy rain and cloud cover prevented the allies from successfully deploying air or artillery cover, and the muddy roads rendered many of the tanks useless. By midafternoon, the FEB once again prepared to retreat.

As previously elucidated, the politicization of the FEB forced its commanders to be in tune with the way in which authorities in Rio perceived events taking place in Italy. These authorities expected the FEB to achieve success against experienced German forces without suffering heavy casualties, because despite the best efforts of the government and its propaganda machine, supported by Nelsons Rockefeller’s, Office of Inter-American Affairs; in Brazil even after the deployment of the FEB, total support for the war was never achieved. Unfortunately for Mascarenhas de Moraes, on the eve of the FEB’s fourth assault on Monte Castello, Air Minister Joaquim Salgado Filho arrived in Italy and began touring the front. Although he claimed that he was not a “government spy,” those within the Brazilian high command were aware that Filho, upon returning to Rio de Janeiro, would report all of his observations to both Vargas and Dutra.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 423.

²¹⁵ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1, Marechal Waldemar Levy Cardoso, 27.

²¹⁶ Brayner, *A Verdade sobre a FEB*. 285.

Around 3:00 p.m. Lieutenant Colonel Castello Branco, covered in mud, arrived at the Brazilian headquarters where Mascarenhas de Moraes meeting with General Crittenberger and Salgado Filho. In a letter to his wife Castello Branco explained, “I was looking for the generals, including the American, in order to resolve the situation before nightfall.”²¹⁷ He reported on the situation in the field and then argued that the commanders should terminate offensive operations. Crittenberger visibly angry at this request, told General Mascarenhas de Moraes: “If you have not yet deployed your reserves and have a balance of 8,500 rounds of artillery and mortars, and being only 15 hours, you decide to forgo continuing the attack, other stronger reasons must exist that prevent you from fulfilling the mission.”²¹⁸ Although the literature does not confirm that the Americans at home and in the field were more willing to sacrifice human life to achieve an objective, by the fall of 1944 American forces had been fighting on several continents whereas the Brazilians had not seen combat since the 1860s. The Brazilian psyche was not prepared to sacrifice large numbers of their men for a cause that they did not fully understand.

Understanding the impact of Crittenberger’s statement and its consequences, General Mascarenhas de Moraes sought to circumvent the situation, “noting that General Crittenberger had forgotten his diplomatic mission to Minister Salgado Filho.” Meanwhile, Colonel Brayner turned to the Minister, who with or without a translator was clearly aware of the tension in the room, and explained, “In war, Mr. Minister, things do not always go well.”²¹⁹

As a war correspondent, Silveira was at the front with the FEB. He interacted with the commanders and the soldiers on a regular basis. Therefore, he could authoritatively state, “If someone asked . . . any febianos, which in their view was the darkest day from the Italian

²¹⁷ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 103.

²¹⁸ Brayner, *A Verdade sobre a FEB*, 284.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 284-285.

campaign, the answer would surely be: December 12, 1944.”²²⁰ Once again, the Brazilians made initial progress up the steep rocky slopes but failed to withstand an aggressive German counter attack. Looking down on the hill from a Piper L-4H Grasshopper spotter plane, war correspondent Rubem Braga noticed “dense pine trees” on the German side, “their dark green color contrasting with our side, [which was] arid and smooth.” Understanding how the difficult topography limited the FEB’s offensive capability Braga reported, “I asked myself if our men could ever climb that damned mountain one day.”²²¹ The German’s were reportedly amazed at the stubbornness of the Brazilians. A German captain told a captured Brazilian, “Frankly, you Brazilians are either crazy or very brave. I never saw anyone advance against machine guns and well-defended positions with such disregard for life... You are devils.”²²²

The Brazilians were not the only forces that failed to attain their objectives that day; the “lack of success was repeated all along the Fifth army front – Bologna and the Po Valley would remain in German hands for one more Christmas.”²²³ That night, however, members of the Brazilian General Staff met with Crittenberger at his headquarters. At that time, those present discussed the future role of the FEB. As commander of the FEB, Mascarenhas de Moraes took full responsibility for the failure, even though factors that were out of their control along with a lack of training and experience contributed to the defeat. Crittenberger and Mascarenhas de Moraes agreed that the FEB had shown “a lack of offensive spirit” that resulted from an overall lack of training, “principally in regards to the processes of modern warfare.”²²⁴ The Americans, with the permission of the Fifth Army’s commander, suggested that the Brazilians should be

²²⁰ Silveira, *A Luta Dos Pracinhas*, 24.

²²¹ Maximiano, *Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II*, 12.

²²² Emílio Varoli, “Aventuras de um prisioneiro na Alemanha Nazista,” *Depoimento de Oficiais da Reserva*, 447.

²²³ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 423.

²²⁴ Brayner, in later years made it clear that he did not agree with this determination. “To think that the men who conquered Camaioire...had no offensive spirit and was badly instructed, it seems a great injustice.” Brayner, 287.

retired from the front. Undoubtedly, Mascarenhas de Moraes and his staff were aware that if the IV Corps removed the FEB from the front, the naysayers in Brazil would claim that the Brazil was incapable of fighting the superior Europeans; they would claim that the FEB had been defeated. In the end Crittendenberger; who was not generally concerned with the politics of warfare, decided that the Brazilians would remain on the front lines, but having been unable to prove that they could mount an effective offensive operation, “were relieved, at least for the time being, of playing an aggressive role in Operation Aggressive Defense.”²²⁵

Explaining Things at Home

After the first expeditionary contingent sailed from Rio de Janeiro in July, some optimistic currents began to surround the FEB’s mission; newspaper headlines began praising the FEB and its symbolic role. In July 1944, *O Jornal* claimed that because it sent troops to Europe, Brazil was now playing “a role equal to its reality as a great power,” and *Diário da Noite* argued that “with the presence of these troops we break forth as a great nation among the free powers.”²²⁶ Yet, many within the political ranks and general population continued to argue pessimistically that the FEB’s mission would end in disaster. In August, the American Consul General in São Paulo reported that an “undertone of anxiety” existed amongst the populace because they maintained “a very deep lack of confidence in their troops and were afraid that they would cover themselves in ridicule and that their effort would be a complete fiasco. This inferiority complex manifested itself in jokes and criticism, as well as a large amount of unfavorable comment to the effect that the government’s policy in sending such a force was

²²⁵ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 105.

²²⁶ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 404.

nothing less than an absurdity.”²²⁷ In August 1942, the populace, in a series of public demonstrations, had demanded that the government declare war on Germany. Still, most expected the Brazil’s involvement to be a token contribution; few could imagine that Brazil would actually send men to Europe. The decision to create and deploy the FEB was a political calculation. As journalist Carlos Haag explained in a recent article, “the FEB – unwanted by the Allied Forces and the product of a pragmatic negotiation by the Estado Novo regime, in search of higher global exposure –went to the battlefield.”²²⁸ This belief was bolstered when in January 1943, Roosevelt indicated to Vargas that he would sit by him at the peace table. Therefore, accounts of the FEB’s early successes contributed to the preexisting belief that the FEB was a vital element of Brazil’s ambitious post war international agenda. The FEB was supposed to prove to the Americans that Brazil was not a backward South American nation, but instead a hemispheric power that could stand alongside the United States after the war. One month after the FEB arrived in Italy the Brazilian newspaper, *A Manhã*, reiterated this belief. “We have thus conquered undeniable rights to sit at the peace table and to defend our interests in the reorganization of the future world, as well as in the distribution of economic, military, and political power in South America.”²²⁹

Throughout the initial stages of the FEB’s development, expectations were so low that the public must have felt shock and pride when newspaper reports began recounting the FEB’s successes. A September 21 headline in *O Cruzeiro do Sul* read, “New Victories for the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy.”²³⁰ The result of the early success was an exponential increase in

²²⁷ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 404.

²²⁸ Haag, “For whom did the snake smoke?”

²²⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 413.

²³⁰ “Novas Vitórias da Força Expedicionária Brasileira na Itália,” *Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul*, September 21, 1944. <http://memoria.fua.org.br/jornal1912a43/>. (accessed March 12, 2011).

expectations. Now the government and the public unrealistically expected the FEB to triumph each time it engaged the enemy.

During the winter of 1944-1945, German forces incessantly bombarded the FEB from the peaks they had been unable to capture; in a sense, “Monte Castello stood defiantly – mockingly some felt.” As Castello Branco recorded, it left “deep marks in the spirit of the men.”²³¹ The plummeting morale of the troops, however, was not the only obstacle the FEB faced; the reverses on the battlefield forced the commanders to confront the politicians and cynics in Rio. The initial victories in September had stifled some of the disparagement; however, during the long winter months the Brazilian inferiority complex began reemerging.

Shortly after the fourth defeat at Monte Castello, Mascarenhas de Moraes informed his artillery commander, General Cordeiro de Farias, that he intended to resign from his command and return to Rio where he would present the Minister of War with his letter of resignation. Cordeiro de Farias encouraged him not to take such an action, telling him, “You cannot abandon us . . . to another command. You brought us to war: and together we shall return victorious. You are able and respected by your subordinates, and without doubt will achieve the success you so desire. Do not resign, do not walk away from mission you were given.”²³² With his other officers, expressing similar sentiments Mascarenhas de Moraes instead sent his Chief of Staff, Colonel Floriano de Lima Brayner, to Rio in an effort to “explain things at home.”²³³

Brayner arrived in Rio de Janeiro on January 12, 1945 to find “the incessant rumor-mill of fifth column creating a pessimistic attitude toward the FEB.” Attempting to counter such assaults, he “did his best in newspaper interviews and private conversations to give a more encouraging view.” The FEB had many enemies amongst those officers that stayed in Brazil and

²³¹ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 100.

²³² Mascarenhas de Moraes, *Memórias*, 229.

²³³ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 424.

many were now “commenting pejoratively on events and spreading rumors of impending disaster.” During the organizational stages many officers had done all they could to secure a release from service in Italy. Consequently, more than one third of the officers who served in Italy were reservists. However, as the FEB’s prestige elevated, many officers began to question their decision to avoid combat and remain in Rio. As the war progressed they became keenly aware that if the FEB succeeded, those officers that filled its ranks would be quickly promoted in the post-war military. Therefore, many within the officer’s corps became some of the FEB’s greatest detractors and during the difficult winter months of 1944-1945.

On January 25, Brayner met with Vargas who was “alarmed that the news from the front had turned from good to bad.” He was concerned over circulating reports that claimed the “fights at Monte Castello were massacres.”²³⁴ As previously discussed, the situation in Italy was complicated and Mascarenhas de Moraes often had to make difficult military decisions knowing they would have political consequences. The Americans often wanted the Brazilians to launch continued assaults that would perhaps result in the conquest of an objective, but the cost of life would be higher than those in Brazil were willing to accept. Brayner told Vargas that the febianos “had entered the line before they were ready because Mascarenhas could not adequately explain to the Americans, without suffering a loss of prestige, their lack of preparedness.”²³⁵ The Americans had expected the Brazilians to undergo basic combat training before sailing for Italy, but, as the American commanders quickly discovered, this was not the case. The Brazilians were more worried about symbolically sending troops to Italy than training them properly. Brayner’s responses to the President’s questions are a reflection of these difficulties. He told him that when General Clark, at the Vada Conference on October 30, asked Mascarenhas de Moraes to

²³⁴ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 425.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 425.

commit his division, “he felt that Brazil’s honor demanded that he comply,”²³⁶ and as a result, many the febianos had entered the front lines before they were ready. It was not that he believed the untrained forces would somehow defeat the enemy; at Vada, Clark assured Mascarenhas de Moraes that adequate training and the delivery of all necessary equipment would take place before he sent the Brazilians into action. Mascarenhas later stated, “It is lamentable therefore, that General Mark Clark, faced with the imperatives of war, could not fulfill the promises he made then concerning the training of the Brazilian force which was shown to be deficient in the first combat.”²³⁷ The demands of war sent hundreds of Brazilian troops into combat unprepared.²³⁸ Considering the lack of training the Brazilians had received, it is remarkable that they even came close to taking Monte Castello in November or December. Vargas must have been content with the responses he received from Brayner because, he did not remove any of the FEB’s ranking officers from their command.²³⁹

The Dark Days of Winter

Before mid-December, commanders in Washington had decided on the slogan “Bologna before Christmas.” But, after a number of setbacks, the allies realized that the capture of Bologna and the advance into the Po Valley would have to wait until spring.²⁴⁰ Therefore, the current phase of their operation was renamed “Stabilization.”²⁴¹ For the FEB, the temporary removal from offensive operations provided the much-needed time to reinforce and retrain its forces. Special

²³⁶ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 425.

²³⁷ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*,

²³⁸ Few Brazilians spoke English and even fewer Americans spoke Portuguese. In a memorandum dated April 10, 1945, Lieutenant Colonel Amaury Kruehl reported that only seventeen officers of enlisted men holding the rank of Major or lower spoke a foreign language; of those, only ten spoke English. See language Doc.

²³⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 426.

²⁴⁰ The Allies had only twenty-four divisions to contend with thirty heavily fortified enemy divisions.

²⁴¹ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 107.

training programs intended to improve the combat effectiveness of officers and men took place throughout the winter. Moreover, because they did so while maintaining a presence at the front the Brazilians retained their pride. The cessation of offensive operations, however, did not mean the front, became silent. That winter the FEB defended an eighteen-kilometer stretch of the front, which required daily patrols and raids on German positions. As McCann argued, “The FEB’s role was a tactical one; the bulk of its combat experience was at the platoon level.” The Brazilians recognized this and therefore they never claimed, “That their role or its impact was strategic.”²⁴² However, because the German still controlled the peaks overlooking the Allied positions, the Brazilians spent the next few months under a constant barrage of enemy artillery.

On November 6, the Brazilian division established its advanced headquarters in the former resort town Porretta Terme, located on the banks of the Reno River. Silveira later described the location stating, “The advanced headquarters of General Mascarenhas de Moraes, in Porretta Terme, was like a courtyard, in the river valley, surrounded by mountains, in a radius of 15 km, entirely dominated by the Germans. Between Mount Belvedere to the west and Mount Vendetta to the east, the enemy had privileged positions...submitting them [the FEB] to surveillance without rest, without reprieve for one minute.”²⁴³ Over the next several months, both medium and heavy German artillery continually shelled the Brazilian headquarters.²⁴⁴ Reporting on the conditions at the front, Brazilian war correspondent Egydio Squefe reported two bombs fell nearby while he was in a press conference with Colonel Brayner.²⁴⁵ In January, American correspondent Henry Bagley explained: “Heavy German shelling of Brazilian sector slackened

²⁴² McCann, *Brazil and WWII*, 24-25.

²⁴³ Silveira, *A Luta Dos Pracinhas* 26.

²⁴⁴ Dulles, *Castello Branco*, 92.

²⁴⁵ FEB 1 D.I.E. Sec Esp do Cmdo da FEB, Correspondente Squeff, Copias de Reportagens dos diversos Correspondentes de Guerra Junto a FEB, Pasta 37, documento Numero 3, Armario No 5, Caxieta No 165, Arquivo da Secao Especial, Arquivo *Histórico do Exército*, Rio de Janeiro, BR.

today as snowstorms swept wide area Artillery fire which been going on sporadically since Christmas not been followed by German attempt to take ground . . . instead Germans thus far been satisfied maintain their strong defensive positions this region while trying knock out Brazilian targets slightly to rear with shellfire and same time striving keep Brazilians on edge.”

[sic]²⁴⁶ Helio Portocarrero de Castro commander of the 7th Company 6th Infantry later recalled:

Our combat positions were too close to the German lines, with a difference: we were in the low terrain, in a situation of inferiority, and the enemy had the high ground with excellent observation posts. They were extremely vigilant, and didn't forgive the smallest carelessness. Our resupply of ammunition had to be done at night, and even the distribution of food to be consumed that night and on the morrow. During the day we could only make any movements as individuals – fast, and over short distances.²⁴⁷

The American liaison officer, Major Vernon Walters, remembered, “The town where the Brazilian division had its headquarters...was normally under fairly heavy enemy shellfire often lasting all night. Walters and the Brazilian staff’s Operation Officer, Humberto Castello Branco, shared the top floor of a hotel in Porretta and one night when the shelling was particularly heavy, Walters phoned Castello Branco to see if he thought they should go down to the shelter below. To this Castello Branco replied, “That he was a Brazilian and did not like the cold. He was snug in his sleeping bag and had no intention of getting out of it, shelling or no shelling.” Walters, not wanting to lose face, also stayed on the top floor. On another occasion, a shell exploded so close to a window that shell fragments filled the shutters. Once again, Walters phoned Castello

²⁴⁶ F.E.B. – 1 DIE, Sec Esp Do Cmdo da FEB, Correspondente Bagley, Cópia de Reportagens dos diversos correspondentes de Guerra Junto a FEB, Pasta 37, Documento Numero 8, Arquivo da Secao Especial, Arquivo *Histórico do Exército*, Rio de Janeiro, BR.

²⁴⁷ Maximiano, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II*, 11.

Branco and asked if he thought they should move to a more secure location. This time Castello Branco told him “That it was just as easy to move into trouble as out of it.”²⁴⁸

The fourth and fifth contingents of troops, 10,000 men, arrived in December 1944 and February 1945. The majority of these men spent the winter months in the FEB’s replacement depot at Staffoli and from March 19 until May 15, American personal supervised the training of these contingents. These men became the only fully trained Brazilian troops, but they never saw combat. Many of the men arrived with the final contingents because they sought the distinction of serving in the FEB, but did not want to engage themselves in combat. For those that spent the winter on the front lines, life was cold and dreary. Therefore, as McCann explained, it became common for those that spent the winter conducting dangerous night patrols and sleeping in foxholes to resent those that spent the war behind the lines.²⁴⁹ At night, Brazilians had to fear not only the German artillery but also enemy patrols. Domingos Ventura Pinto Júnior described this period, stating, “We were living in the defensive phase during the winter. It was the time of our patrols and German patrols. Patrols went out with white robes, sometimes meeting face to face. If not meeting, they tried to bring prisoners and information about the enemy.”²⁵⁰

The febianos spent the winter fighting the Germans and the elements. Just as it was difficult if not impossible for the Americans and Europeans to adjust to the desert climate of North Africa, the Brazilians, most of who had never seen snow, found winter in the mountains challenging and demoralizing. Rubens Mário Brum Negreiros explained, “The big problem that

²⁴⁸ Vernon A. Walters, *The Mighty and the Meek : Dispatches from the Front Line of Diplomacy*, (London: St Ermin's Press, 2001), 182.

²⁴⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 432.

²⁵⁰ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1, General-de-Divisão Domingos Ventura Pinto Júnior, 59.

we all faced was the issue of climate; we went from a hot region like ours, to a cold climate, in November when we went to Porretta Terme, the temperature was near zero degrees [Celsius].”²⁵¹

The Germans, hoping to capitalize on the low moral that winter ushered in, bombarded the Brazilian forces with messages intended to cause the Brazilians to question the reasons for Brazil’s entry into the war. As war correspondent Rubem Braga reported, “Their arguments are exactly the same as those constantly employed by the illustrious fifth column in Brazil. The only difference is that the fifth columns write in Portuguese with a little more caution.”²⁵² Within each leaflet, “the Principal argument questions why the Brazilians are fighting in Italy;” they told Brazilians that rather than dying for a cause that was not theirs, they could surrender and happily spend the rest of the war in a German prisoner of war camp. The messages generally carried a pro-Brazilian, but anti-American anti-capitalist tone. Bagley reported that one day while he was sitting with several Brazilian pilots listening to the radio:

A German program in Portuguese directed to Brazilian troops came on radio. Between ancient samba tunes and Argentine tangos announcer told about “critical coal shortage in Brazil” and warned that war “probably last for several years.” Said Brazil could not get anything from the war for herself and Brazilian fighting men merely fulfilling demands “Yankee imperialism. Most time fliers listened to music but paid little attention speaker except comment bad pronunciation or laugh at particularly blatant propaganda.” [sic]²⁵³

A pamphlet declared:

“Brazilian! Your marvelous country is the richest in the world . . . Why is it that you cannot sell the coffee . . . The Americans do not want you to! Why it that Brazil produces so little rubber...Why is it that the exploitation of minerals is not more developed . . . The Americans do not want you to! The

²⁵¹ *História oral do Exército na Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2001. TOMO 1, General-de-Exército Rubens Mário Brum Negreiros, 38.

²⁵² Rubem Braga, *Crônicas De Guerra; Com a FEB Na Itália*, Diariio carioca, (Rio de Janeiro: Editôra do Autor, 1964), 80.

²⁵³ F.E.B. – 1 DIE, Sec Esp Do Cmdo da FEB, Correspondente Bagley, Cópia de Reportagens dos divrsos correspondentes de Guerra Junto a FEB, Pasta 37, Documento Numero 24, Arquivo da Secao Especial, Arquivo *Histórico do Exército*, Rio de Janeiro, BR.

Americans want to take control of Brazil so that their capitalists can explore the riches of your land. For this reason, being the best Brazilian soldiers, you were taken from Brazil to die in Europe and never return to your homeland.”²⁵⁴

Although Brazilians did not throw down their weapons and surrender to the Germans, these efforts caused officials to fear discussion within the ranks, because Brazilian and American commanders did find it necessary to distribute a leaflet entitled, “Why the Brazilians are fighting against the Germans.” The leaflet explained that Germany had attacked Brazil and that Brazilians were fighting because they wished to live in a free world,²⁵⁵ which was ironic considering the Vargas’ dictatorship still controlled the Brazilian government. Furthermore, as late as December when new soldiers arrived in Italy, they were required to sit in on four additional sessions of moral education that discussed “German Propaganda - Its ridiculousness- its goals” and “Are the Germans tolerant with us? How do they treat our wounded? What they do to the medical personnel? Must we hate them? Why?” These were intended to counter the specific messages the Germans were disseminating.²⁵⁶

Operation “Encore”

By mid-February, the Fifth Army began a series of attacks that were to secure a “springboard” for the coming spring offensive. In order for the IV Corps to advance on the Germans bunkered along the Gothic Line in late February 1945, it was essential for the army to

²⁵⁴ *Brasileiro, A casa dos Expedicionarios, Curitiba, Paraná, Arquivo, Documentos Originais IV (Livro), Propaganda, Communication Code.* I received this document from Uri Rosenheck in the fall of 2010.

²⁵⁵ *Porque Nós Brasileiros Lutamos Contra os Alemães, A casa dos Expedicionarios, Curitiba, Paraná, Arquivo, Documentos Originais IV (Livro), Propaganda, Communication Code.* I received this document from Uri Rosenheck in the fall of 2010.

²⁵⁶ Adaptação de Novos Praças, Archivo do Regimento Sampaio, Vila Militar, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Documentos Originais 2, segundo batalhão.

remove the Germans from their strongholds on Monte Belvedere, Monte Gorgolesco, and Monte Castello. Showing a renewed faith in the FEB's offensive capabilities, the IV Corps once again tasked them with removing the Germans from their mountain stronghold as part of a mission code named Operation Encore.²⁵⁷ On the February 19, the well-trained and recently arrived U.S. 10th Mountain Division attacked points on Belvedere and Gorgolesco, both located to the east of Castello. The plan called for the Brazilians to move against Monte Castello as soon as the 10th Mountain had secured the other peaks. The Americans, however, met stiff German resistance, which prevented them from securing the locations until February 20. At 5:30 am on February 21 the signal was given, the first infantry regiment (the Sampaio Regiment), began an attack on the flanks of Monte Castello. In each of the four previous attempts, the Brazilians were engaged in a fatal frontal assault of the mountain.

Late in the afternoon Generals Clark, Truscott, and Crittenberger visited the FEB's advanced headquarters. Crittenberger immediately wanted to know why the FEB's reserves had not yet gone into action; and Mascarenhas de Moraes told him "it was not yet opportune." To this Crittenberger, pointing at his watch said, "It is 1600 hours. Nightfall is imminent and Monte Castello, nothing once more!" Clark quickly stepped in and reminded his subordinate that the Brazilians were in charge of the attack and they had not asked for any assistance. After the Americans left, Mascarenhas de Moraes ordered General Zenóbio to speed up the attack saying, "We will not lose the confidence of the American commanders."²⁵⁸

The regimental commander, Colonel Aguinaldo Caiado de Castro, told General Zenóbio, who had also become impatient with the slow movement, that the advance had been slow because he was trying to prevent "exaggerated sacrifice, aggravating the losses that we are

²⁵⁷ Maximiano, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II*, 16.

²⁵⁸ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 434.

suffering.” Zenóbio, like Mascarenhas de Moraes and the other Brazilian commanders, must have felt an immense amount of pressure to capture the mountain. They were surely aware that if the fifth attempt failed, their role in any in the spring campaign would be limited, and they would return to Brazil stained with defeat. Therefore, in a sarcastic tone he asked Caiado de Castro, “Do you want to capture Monte Castello with men or with flowers.” Shortly after this exchange, the Brazilian guns were concentrated on the German positions “in a long rapid-fire bombardment.”²⁵⁹ At 5:50 pm on February 21, 1945, Zenóbio phoned Mascarenhas de Moraes and told him “the mountain was theirs.”²⁶⁰ “Even though Monte Castello was not a major bastion in the German defensive line, their several reverses there made it an obsession for the Brazilians, a powerful symbol that needed to be overcome.”²⁶¹ The Brazilians did not stop the drive with the capture of Monte Castello; next, they successfully captured both Monte della Casellina and Bella Vista. As historians C.C. Maximiano and R. Bonalume N. argued, “this operation was a perfect example of one hand washing the other: the taking of Belvedere by the 10th Mountain Division facilitated the Brazilian attacks on February 21, and the taking of Castello – and even more importantly, La Serra – helped the Americans take Monte della Torraccia on the 24th.” With the taking of the mountains, the febianos had proven they did possess an offensive capability.

For the Brazilians the victory at Monte Castello was more than just the conquest of a military objective. As Frank McCann successfully argued, “Monte Castello was the barrier that stood between the FEB and maturity as a fighting force. Other difficult battles lay ahead, but the fight for self-confidence and for the respect of the American field commanders had been won.”²⁶² As the snow began to melt in the mountains, the Brazilians prepared for the final spring

²⁵⁹ McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 434.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 434.

²⁶¹ Maximiano, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II*, 12.

²⁶² McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance*, 435.

offensive. Having silenced their critics at home and abroad, they had shown that they could plan and carry out a successful offensive operation against a well-fortified enemy. Speaking of the success at Monte Castello, Crittenberger stated, “Capture of the M. Castello-M. Belvedere hill mass in February 1945 and the subsequent advance against determined enemy resistance demonstrated an offensive spirit and the part of the Brazilian forces engaged that made military history.”²⁶³

On the morning of April 14, 1945, the United States Fifth Army, under the command of Lieutenant General Lucian Truscott, commenced the initial phase of its final spring offensive, “Operation Craftsman.”²⁶⁴ Although the main attack was reserved for the next day, after heavy bombing followed by and intense artillery barrage,²⁶⁵ three divisions, the 1st armored, the 10th mountain, and the 1st Brazilian Infantry Division, attacked to the west of Route 64 in an effort to confuse the enemy.²⁶⁶ Several hours later the FEB’s 11th Infantry regiment, led by Major Lisboa, “with singular offensive spirit,” penetrated the town of Montese, “enveloping and breaking up the enemy’s defenses.”²⁶⁷ Over the next three days, Brazilian infantry regiments advanced despite heavy fire from German artillery – between April 14 and 18, the Brazilians located on the Montese ridge “received more rounds of enemy artillery than all the remainder of the IV Corps front.”²⁶⁸ Yet, when the shelling ceased on April 18, the FEB forces had accomplished their main objective, capturing and securing the town of Montese.

²⁶³ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, iv.

²⁶⁴ Ernest F. Fisher, *Cassino to the Alps*, (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1977), <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-MTO-Cassino/USA-MTO-Cassino-27.html>. (accessed March 1, 2011).

²⁶⁵ United States, *The Final Campaign Across Northwest Italy; 14 April 2, May 1945*, (Italy: Headquarters IV Corps. U.S. Army, 1945), 16.

²⁶⁶ Robert Wallace, *The Italian Campaign*, (Alexandria, Va: Time-Life Books, 1981), 43.

²⁶⁷ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 149.

²⁶⁸ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 154.

Later that year, the U.S. Fourth Corps in its history recorded: “The efforts of the 1st Infantry Division, BEF [FEB], during the first phase of the spring (sic) drive had been effective, and the Brazilians had made their distinct contribution to that part of the IV Corps attack. Their aggressiveness had undoubtedly held in place both infantry and artillery which the German, had he dared move them, could well have used elsewhere.”²⁶⁹ General Mascarenhas de Moraes pointed out “the entire Fourth Corps staff broke out in spontaneous and immense rejoicing when it learned of the capture of the town of Montese.”²⁷⁰ On April 13, 1947, former commander of the Fourth Corps Willis D. Crittenger sent a telegraph to Mascarenhas de Moraes in celebration of the two-year anniversary of the victory at Montese. In the telegram, Crittenger told Mascarenhas de Moraes: “The fall of Montese was one of the prophetic battles of the spring offensive, pointing to our final overwhelming victory. With the Panaro valley in our possession, continued hostile resistance could not have prevented our debauchment into the Po valley. Your division, on its own for the first time, made military history 2 years ago tomorrow.”²⁷¹ The praise poured out upon the Brazilian Expeditionary Force by American commanders is astounding considering that when the FEB’s first contingent arrived in Naples less than a year earlier, it was completely unprepared to play any combat role in a modern war.

During the final spring offensive, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force achieved remarkable success at not only Montese but Zocca, Collecchio, and Fornovo as well. While at Monte Castello, the Brazilians took only a few dozen German prisoners while at Fornovo, the Brazilians captured 14,000 enlisted men, 800 officers, and 2 generals. Monte Castello, however, was responsible for providing Brazilian forces with the psychological and military preparation needed to participate in the spring campaign. That is why over the last six decades, Monte

²⁶⁹ United States, *The Final Campaign across Northwest Italy*, 27.

²⁷⁰ Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, 154.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 155.

Castello has overshadowed the later victories. As the Brazilians prepared to return for home, they could do so knowing that their skeptics could not dispute the success they had achieved on the battlefield. Yet, the FEB story did not end with the war

CONCLUSIONS

Brazilian efforts culminated on 29, April in a heavy fire fight near Fornove and the subsequent surrender of the 148th German Infantry Division and the Italian Division. This feat of arms was an indication of the combat effectiveness of the Brazilian Division at the end of the War — an achievement all the more striking when one recalls the division's inexperience and lack of battlefield training a few months earlier when it first landed in Italy.

—Lieutenant General Willis D. Crittenberger
Commander U.S. IV Corps, World War II²⁷²

Before the Allies fought their final battles in Europe, political instability at home began directly affecting the FEB. Vargas sent the FEB to Europe, claiming that the febianos were fighting for democracy; yet, in Brazil, he exercised dictatorial powers. As early as November 10, 1943, Vargas, feeling pressure from the pro-democratic opposition, had promised that after the war “in the appropriate environment of peace and order and surrounded by guarantees of liberty and opinion we shall readjust our political structure and devise ample and suitable formulas for the consultation of the Brazilian people.”²⁷³ In early 1944, while the FEB was preparing to deploy, he reaffirmed his earlier claims telling Brazilians that they would soon “declare themselves and choose their representatives within democracy, law and order.”²⁷⁴ By the time 1945 rolled around, Brazilians were calling for Vargas to fulfill his promises. As Alfred Stepan explained, “the semifascist regime Vargas installed with the support of military officers in 1937 had originally derived a fair measure of support from the fact that at the time authoritarian regimes seemed to presage the pattern of politics of the future. By late 1944, however, not only

²⁷² Mascarenhas de Moraes, *The Brazilian Expeditionary Force*, iv.

²⁷³ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 48.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

was it becoming increasingly apparent that the authoritarian governments of Germany and Italy would lose the war, but many in Brazil had begun to doubt the appropriateness or efficiency of authoritarianism.”²⁷⁵ In February, Vargas, under immense pressure, announced that Presidential elections would be held and more importantly, he would not run for office. By May, Vargas declared December 2 as the date for the elections and soon after, two candidates emerged: Air Force Commander, Major General Eduardo Gomes, a former tenente, and Minister of War Eurico Gaspar Dutra.

Before the FEB left Europe, the U.S. invited Brazil to participate in the post-war occupation of the devastated continent. Brazil, however, for unknown reasons declined the invitation. Instead, on June 6, 1945, more than a month before the febianos returned to Rio, Dutra demobilized the FEB. The Minister of War also sanctioned orders that set a limit of eight days that the febianos could wear their uniforms and the symbolic smoking cobra insignia. Additionally, the Minister forbade soldiers from making any unauthorized comments about their wartime experiences and he prohibited the establishment of veteran’s organizations. Why did Brazil not participate in the post war occupation? Why did the army effectively repress and silence the febianos? Who really feared the influence of the FEB, high-ranking conservative officers or Vargas? What role if any did the FEB play in the overthrow of Vargas? These are only a few of the many questions that continue to puzzle historians.

Scholars agree that FEB veterans played a significant role in Brazilian politics in the decades that followed the war but they disagree over the uniformity of the veterans political positions. In recent years, Shawn Smallman reopened a historiographical debate centered on the FEB’s literal or symbolic participation in the collapse of the Vargas regime in October 1945 and

²⁷⁵ Alfred C. Stepan, *The Military in Politics; Changing Patterns in Brazil*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 87.

its post-war political involvement, especially within the internationalist and nationalist divisions that split political parties and the military in the post war years. Alfred C. Stepan in his book, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil*, and Frank McCann in his article, “The Brazilian Army and the Problem of Mission, 1939-1964”, each argued that the febianos learned “democratic ideals” from their American counterparts while serving together in Italy influenced their post war political leanings. According to their conclusions, the majority of febianos favored an “internationalist” policy that included democracy at home and the recruitment of foreign investors to continue the development of Brazil’s nascent industrial sector. Shawn Smallman, however, in his article “The Official Story: Violent censorship of Brazilian Veterans, 1945-1954” contended that this image of the FEB “was distorted [by the military] for political ends.”²⁷⁶ According to him, FEB many veterans were staunch nationalists. He argued that just as division existed within the army, the FEB was divided politically. He also contended that the popular image of the FEB as portrayed by contemporary historians as a fighting force that helped restore democracy in Brazil only emerged after the internationalist, used brutal techniques to smash the nationalist wing of the military and secured power in the mid-1950s.

Stepan work asserted, “In conversation with these officers, two themes were often aired. One was that the participation with the United States had favorably impressed the Brazilian contingent with the technical achievements and the ability of the United States and the utility of cooperation. Thus the ex-FEB officers tended to be less fearful of cooperation with the United States after the war.”²⁷⁷ McCann reinforced this view stating: “The FEB’s utter dependence for weaponry, munitions, food, and clothing upon the United States had several results: it graphically demonstrated Brazil’s material weakness and made the febianos determined to instill

²⁷⁶ Smallman, “The Official Story,” 258

²⁷⁷ Quoted in, Stepan, *Military in Politics*, 242.

organization and will power in their countrymen as a prerequisite to development; and it gave them a profound trust in their American ally's sincerity."²⁷⁸ To support their arguments McCann and Alfred Stepan each quoted former febiano, General Edson Figueiredo, who explained, "In the war the United States had to give us everything; food, clothes, equipment. After the war, we were less afraid of United States imperialism than other officers because we saw the United States really helped us without strings attached."²⁷⁹ Did the Americans really provide everything with no strings attached? For McCann this question does not matter as much as his belief that the febianos believed it to be the case. He argued, "ex-officers of the FEB believed it, and would struggle against what they considered the exaggerated nationalism of their colleagues"²⁸⁰ Stepan also quoted General Golbery do Couto e Silva who explained why many febianos favored U.S. private investment in Brazil:

The attitude of FEB members was important for opening the country to foreign investment because they feared the United States less . . . the FEB members wanted rapid development in Brazil.

The FEB was not only important because of going to Italy. Possibly even more important, the FEB members went to the United States and saw at first hand a great democratic industrial power. It was an opening of horizons, I went and it made a great impact; for me it was absolutely apparent the a free enterprise country had been successful in creating a great industrial power.²⁸¹

Smallman countered this traditional argument stating, "There is some truth to this portrayal, in that the experience of war strengthened the ties among the few anti-Vargas officers in the high command. The individuals, however, did not represent the thought of the FEB as a whole."²⁸²

²⁷⁸ McCann, "The Brazilian Army: the Trouble with Mission," 120.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 120, Stepan, *Military in Politics*, 242.

²⁸⁰ McCann, "The Brazilian Army: the Trouble with Mission," 120.

²⁸¹ Quoted in, Stepan, *Military in Politics*, 243.

²⁸² Smallman, "The Official Story," 236.

Smallman argued that few soldiers were regularly in contact with their American counterparts; furthermore, few spoke English so it was unlikely that ideological discussions took place. It is true that little contact occurred, and it is true that Mascarenhas de Moraes did all he could to shield febianos “from any information that could undermine their loyalty to Vargas’ regime.” Smallman, therefore, reasoned that because of this isolation “all but a few commanders remained ignorant of political events in Brazil, let alone the ideals of American democracy.”²⁸³

While political interchanges took place in Brazil, thousands of Brazilian soldiers remained on the front lines. Did Mascarenhas de Moraes successfully shield those febianos from the external information? Were they ignorant to the political events taking place in Rio? How did the officers and soldiers serving in Italy feel about Vargas? The post-war history of the FEB is complicated; some like McCann have claimed that Vargas feared the FEB while others, like Smallman, have asserted that it was Dutra and other officers including Goes Monteiro who feared the FEB. Adding his opinion to the historiographical debate, Francisco Ferraz stated, “For a long time, the belief was that Vargas feared the soldiers’ return because he allegedly felt that this would speed up the end of his regime. However, the highest distrust came from the top Brazilian military authorities, namely Generals Dutra and Goes Monteiro, and from the politicians, who feared that the FEB soldiers might undermine their authority because of their exposure to a more open society. . . .”²⁸⁴ In a recent presentation McCann explained, “The key documents that might have an explanation, namely the 1945 and 1946 *Relatórios* of the Minister of War, were never placed in the army’s own archives and seem to have disappeared.”²⁸⁵ A lack of evidence has simply prevented historians from uncovering the entire history. Increased access

²⁸³ Smallman, “The Official Story,” 237.

²⁸⁴ Quoted in, Haag, “For whom did the snake smoke?”

²⁸⁵ Frank McCann, “Lessons from Brazil-US Military Relations 1930s – 1977 and Beyond” (Presentation, 2nd Hemispheric Security and Intelligence Symposium Orlando, FL, December 13, 2008).

to private and public archives, including the military archives, however, should allow the next generation of historians to work with previously restricted documents. For now, the official transcripts of American war correspondent Henry Bagley, found in the *Arquivo Histórico do Exército* (Army Historical Archives) in Rio de Janeiro shed some light on these questions.

On February 25, 1945, Bagley reported that he discussed the upcoming elections with officers and soldiers. According to him:

New elections planned Brazil created interest and desire more information. General reaction officers was 'it's excellent' but they asked quote 'you know any details query when how holding elections query who candidates presidency' There are some officers too who said they preferred continuance of Vargas regime and hoped Vargas would candidate presidency in elections. War correspondents with BEF enthusiastic in expectation tight controls on press would be removed." [sic]

"Soldiers mostly youth who have only slight recollections democratic forms in Brazil showed little comprehension subject although there were exceptions. Question quote 'what do you think about elections query unquote' usually answered 'eye don't know anything about them unquote' 'quote eye not politician or interested in politics unquote' those who manifested interest wanted to know whether they would vote even though abroad. Semiweekly army newspaper *cruzeiro do sul* and daily two page publication *ze carioca* printed announcements from rio de janeiro about elections and *o globo* expedicionario with more details²⁸⁶ was being distributed today." [sic]

This report shows that while censorship was indeed taking place, Brazilians were not completely ignorant to the politics of Brazil as Smallman argued. Although many of the men – especially young uneducated enlisted men – were politically ignorant, we can surmise that not all febianos were uninformed to the events taking place in Rio. Furthermore, we learn that while many officers, especially within the General Staff, were anti-Vargas, not all officers felt this way.

²⁸⁶ F.E.B. – 1 DIE, Sec Esp Do Cmdo da FEB, Correspondente Bagley, Cópia de Reportagens dos diversos correspondentes de Guerra Junto a FEB, Pasta 37, Arquivo da Secao Especial, Arquivo *Histórico do Exército*, Rio de Janeiro, BR. This is quoted from the original telegraph, hence the broken sentences.

Some even told Bagley that they favored the continuation of Vargas' regime. Soldiers on the other hand did not universally support Vargas or a return to democracy. It is important to remember that, as Bagley reminds us, many of the young febianos were only children when the Old Republic collapsed in 1930.

Evidence clearly shows that the members of the General Staff were continuously in contact with American officers; therefore, it is likely as Stepan and McCann argued that these officers were influenced by American political ideology and economic policy. For me, the real question that remains unanswered is; how much contact did junior officers and enlisted men have with their American counterparts? I would argue that even if contact was limited, the very fact that they were essentially serving in the U.S. army would have caused them to feel American influence. Yet, just because Americans influenced them it does not mean that they were anti-Vargas; in fact, it makes sense that most of these men would have been pro-Vargas. Most Brazilians, including many of the febianos, were poorly educated and came from rural communities that saw Vargas as the "Father of the Poor." Vargas returned to power in 1950, when in a general election, the people elected him President. How many febianos voted for or against Vargas in 1950? To the best of my knowledge, historians have not compiled that data. The problem with the current arguments is that historians continue to place the febianos into large categories when it is more likely that the political beliefs, if they had any, of most febianos were as diverse as the men themselves. I believe that the febianos became the most politically aware and involved only several years after their return. If the army had not gone to great lengths to reduce the impact of the FEB, it is likely that its less prominent members would have become embroiled in the political battles of the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1889, 1930, and 1937 the Brazilian armed forces determined the outcome of political unrest but handed power to civilian authorities. In 1945, this was once again the case. Politicians and officers, understanding the power of the FEB's image, attempted to either attach themselves to the FEB or stifle its political power and downplay its combat successes. Between July and August, Vargas organized several parades to welcomed home the victorious febianos. Despite his claims that he would step down after the presidential election, the parades and speeches increased popular support for Vargas' regime. Consequently, Góes Monteiro stepped in and oversaw the removal of Vargas because he, like Minister of War, General Serzefredo dos Passos fifteen years earlier "was so concerned that Brazil was heading for a civil war."²⁸⁷ Therefore, pro-Vargas officers like, Nero Moura, who served in Italy as part of the Brazilian Air Force, claimed that Góes Monteiro, Dutra, and other officers disbanded the FEB because they "feared that Vargas might use the FEB to retain power."²⁸⁸

Before the date of the scheduled elections, however, Góes Monteiro, now Minister of War, and others who feared Vargas would make a final attempt to reorganize and remain in power forced Vargas out of office. Shortly after the military removed Vargas, it handed control of the government over to the Chief of the Supreme Court who subsequently oversaw elections a month later. By the end of 1945, Vargas was in exile in his home state of Rio Grande do Sul and Dutra was the democratically elected president of Brazil. Within the military, however, factions were emerging. As Carlos Haag explained, "many conscripts from the upper classes contrived to find someone with the power to pull the strings and exclude them from the FEB. The same was true of a significant number of professional officers from the regular Army, who found ways to

²⁸⁷ Smallman, "The Official Story," 239-240.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 238.

circumvent their obligation of joining the war effort.”²⁸⁹ Officers who had chosen to stay safely at home, therefore, attempted to slow the influence of those that served in Italy.

The Brazilian Expeditionary Force was a military force with a political mission. What was that political mission? Initially as Leticia Pinheiro argued, its mission was to “strengthen the Armed Forces and provide Brazil with a globally prominent position as an ally of the United States.”²⁹⁰ How was the FEB to accomplish these objectives and was it successful? For the FEB, success was contingent upon its ability to organize, train, deploy, engage enemy forces, and attain victories on the battlefield while strengthening Brazil’s image on the international stage. The FEB accomplished all of these goals despite significant difficulty; therefore, I argue that yes, the FEB’s mission was a success. In fact, the FEB was too successful; therefore, after it return, as on the battlefield, the FEB Brazilian politics affected the FEB. Its successes made it a symbol of national pride — its officers and enlisted men were heroes. In the decades that followed their return, as Ferraz explained, “There was flagrant ill will towards the FEB among the government authorities, and many career officers feared they would be sidelined in future career promotions, to promote FEB officers and soldiers who had gone into battle,”²⁹¹

While some febianos did achieve a great deal of success after the war, for example, Castello Branco became the first president after the military takeover in 1964, most spent the next few decades looking for work while waiting for the government to fulfill the promises Vargas made in 1944. Veterans did not receive their promised pension until 1988; however, by

²⁸⁹ Quoted in, Haag, “For whom did the snake smoke?”

²⁹⁰ Quoted in, Haag, “For whom did the snake smoke?”

²⁹¹ Ibid?

that time less than 10,000 of the 25,000 men that served in Italy lived to receive the benefits of their service. Haag summed up the post war experience of most febianos declaring:

Many FEB soldiers bitterly realized that their battle front experience, the only one of its kind in South America, would not be used to shape a new Army. Instead, they were sent out to far-flung army posts. In addition, many FEB soldiers faced unemployment, because their employers, who had been obliged to re-hire them, soon fired them, alleging that they were misfits, neurotics, or professionally incompetent . . . The veterans, who had no bargaining power with government authorities - many of whom had been high-ranking army officers during the military dictatorship and had managed to flee conscription – kept their mouths shut in order to survive. Because of ideological confusion and irony, the image of the FEB veterans was associated with the military officers who had engendered the coup d'état, which led people to question the memories of the FEB even more.²⁹²

When I began working on this project, I envisioned a social history that would use primary sources to tell the story of the enlisted men that served in Italy as part of the FEB. However, as often happens, the documentation directed my writing. Over the last year, therefore, this study morphed into a top-down study of the FEB and the politics of its mission. Several prominent American and Brazilian historians have confirmed my belief that the FEB historiography is still in a nascent state. This study therefore, is only a minor contribution to a much larger field that should continue to draw the attention of students and historians.

²⁹²Haag, "For whom did the snake smoke?"

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