

The Latin America Readers

*A Series Edited by Robin Kirk and Orin Starn*

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THE

*History, Culture, Politics*

BRAZIL

READER

*Edited by Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti*

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## New Year's Address, 1938

## Getúlio Vargas

*Getúlio Vargas weathered numerous challenges during his first years as chief of state. They included a civil war in São Paulo, a communist-led uprising in 1935, the rise of the paramilitary fascist Integralist movement, the collapse of coffee exports, and Brazil's burdensome foreign debt. By late 1937, however, the country appeared stable enough to hold elections for a new president. Perhaps Vargas interpreted the situation differently or, perhaps, he simply craved power. For whatever reason, with the army's backing, Vargas overthrew his own regime in November 1937, canceled the elections, and promulgated an authoritarian constitution. Vargas justified the Estado Novo (New State) directly to Brazilians in his 1938 New Year's Day radio speech, in which he played the paternal protector, stern yet fair, optimistic yet fearful of disorder. Over the next eight years, Vargas would cultivate that image to the maximum.*

At the dawn of the new year, when in the hearts and souls the call of hope and happiness is more lively and crackling, and we feel more strongly, and overwhelmingly the aspiration for victory, achievement, and progress, I come to communicate with you and speak directly to everyone, without distinction of class, profession, or hierarchy, so that united and in brotherhood, we might lift quite high the idea of an irrevocable vote for the greatness and happiness of Brazil.

I have received from the Brazilian people, in grave and decisive moments, unequivocal proof of a perfect communion of ideas and sentiments. And for that very reason, more than ever, I judge myself obligated to transmit to the people my word of faith, so much more opportune and necessary if we consider the responsibilities arising out of the recently instituted regime, in which patriotism is measured by sacrifice and the rights of individuals have to be subordinate to the obligations to the nation.

It was imperative, for the good of the majority, to change procedures and agree to a labor policy, consonant with our realities and the demands for the country's development.

The Constitution of November 10 is not a document of simple, legal regulation of the state, made to order, according to fashions in vogue. It is adapted concretely to the current problems of Brazilian life, considered in origins of formation, defining, at the same time, the directions toward its progress and enrichment.

The actions practiced, in these fifty days of government, reflect and confirm the decisive will to act inside of the principles adopted.

We are suspending payment of the foreign debt, because of the imposition of circumstances alien to our desires . . .

We are modifying the onerous policy followed in relation to coffee, and in the same manner the monetary regimen, which was in force for our trade . . .

Alongside these resolutions of an economic and financial character, there figured others of not lesser significance, in the political-administrative sphere. I want to allude to the acts of abolition of political parties, of organization of the national court, and regulation of pensions in the public, civil service.

By the first, there was had in view elimination of the interference from factious interests and groups in the solution of the problems of government. The state, according to the new order, is the nation, and because of that, ought to dispense with political intermediaries in order to maintain contact with the people, and consult their aspirations and needs. By the second, there were created national courts, causing the disappearance of organizational contradictions and anomalies in which we had as many courts as existing federated units. The codification of national law, already initiated, will come to complete these measures of notable reach for the strengthening of the ties of national cohesion. Just as a single flag supremely protects all Brazilians, the law also ought to assure, by a uniform method, the rights of citizenship in the entire national territory. By the last, it is fitting to refer to the law that prohibits accumulation of public offices. For more than a century, this provision challenged the legislators of good intention. The solution encountered is, without doubt, strict. It will bring about sacrifices to some people, but it represents a benefit for the collectivity and demonstrates, in an undeniable manner, the moralizing proposal of abolishing all situations of privilege. Permit-

ting more equitable distribution for access to the public offices, it implicitly benefits more people and offers an opportunity to assure equivalent remuneration for services rendered.

We will persist in the willingness to eliminate the barriers that separate zones and isolate regions, so that the national economic body might be able to evolve homogeneously, and the expansion of the internal market might be done without restraints of any type . . .

In the regimen of the revoked Constitution, it was not possible to take these initiatives, nor assume the responsibilities of such heavy duties . . .

Until recently, our equipment for teaching was limited to the minimum necessities for individual competence. . . . There was an abundance of Ph.D.s and a lack of qualified technicians; the man competent in his trade was rare; artistic technique declined in front of the machine, without us being able to make free use of industrial workers.

The national government resolved to undertake, in this respect, a decisive task. In addition to modernizing the existing establishments, increasing their capacity and efficiency, it initiated the construction of large professional schools, which ought to constitute a vast network of popular teaching, radiating throughout the country. It will attend, also, to the initiatives of local governments, by means of auxiliary materials and technical guidance . . .

The sentiment of human solidarity is one of the most noble and highest manifestations of the Christian spirit. When the state takes the initiative of projects of economic assistance and supports the struggle of the worker, it is to attend to an imperative of social justice, giving an example to be observed by all, without need of compulsion . . .

The multiplicity of sectors in which the state acts does not exclude, but instead affirms, a fundamental rule: that of security for the work and achievements of general interest. The public order and tranquillity will be maintained without vacillation. The government continues vigilant in the repression of extremism and is going to segregate, in fortified military prisons and agricultural colonies, all those agitating elements, recognized by their seditious activities or condemned by political crimes. We will not permit that the struggle and patriotic dedication of the good Brazilians might come to endure turmoil and alarms originated by personalistic ambitions, or the ideological craziness of false prophets and vulgar demagogues . . .

Brazilians! In the hour of cheerfulness and promise, I bring to you my friendly greeting.

Like you, I believe in the high destiny of the fatherland and, like you, I work to achieve it. In the New State there will be no place for the skeptics and the hesitant, unbelieving in themselves and others. There are those who, at times, interrupt your journey's repose honestly earned, with the alarm of their fears and the rumor of slanderous negativism. With trustful heart and uplifted enthusiasm, you devote yourselves to the daily labor and to the cares of the home, where you have guarded the hopes of happiness and find the comforting shelter of dear ones.

To all those who live under the bright protection of the Southern Cross, I give, in this dawn of the new year, the best vows of good fortune and prosperity. And from all of you—Brazilians!—I ask and hope, at this moment, for the solemn promise to well serve the fatherland and to do everything for its enrichment.

## Rural Life

### Photographers Unknown

*These photographs from the early 1930s are from the município of Caxias do Sul, not far from Vargas's birthplace. The first photograph shows children at their first communion in the village of Galópolis. Many are immigrants or children of immigrants; there are very few children of mixed race in the Brazil of the far south. Two nuns—very rare in Brazil in the twentieth century—stand at the rear. The next photograph is the Fidelis Gomes family in Criúcia, in the same município. There are eleven children; the dark-skinned boy in the first row may be the child of a servant or neighbor. The photographs of farm life come from Ijuí in Rio Grande do Sul. Immigrant families stand next to thatched-roof shacks, which may either have been used for storage or have been their residence. A woman wearing wooden shoes holds a curved knife alongside a pulley devise and a primitive hoe. The men with the horse-drawn cart are harvesting wheat; the workers in front of the barnlike structure pose with their harvesting wagon, which is pulled by oxen. Agricultural workers attempt to combat swarms of locusts. In the absence of pest control, this is a futile endeavor. Lastly, two men prepare to butcher a hog, as a woman watches from the doorway of her hut.*



Children at their first communion in front of Galópolis Church in Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, in 1933. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



The Fidelis Gomes family from Criúcia, Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, circa 1930s. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



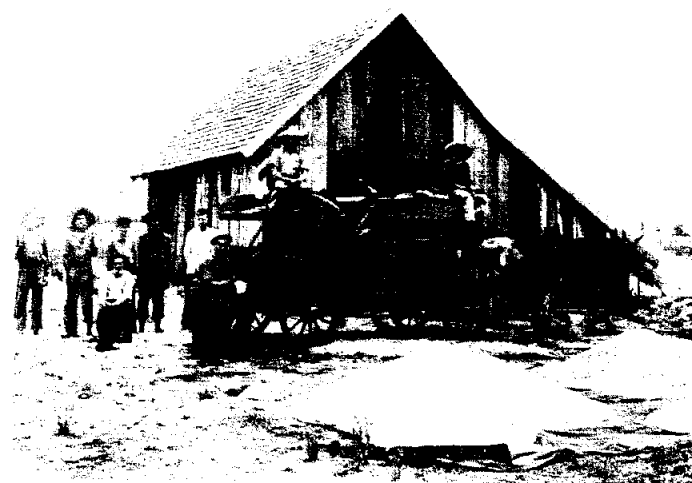
On a coffee plantation. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



A farm woman. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



A scene from agricultural life. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



Workers pose with some of the tools of their trade. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



Swarms of locusts plague workers. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



Two workers preparing to butcher a hog. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)

## Ordinary People:

### Five Lives Affected by Vargas-Era Reforms

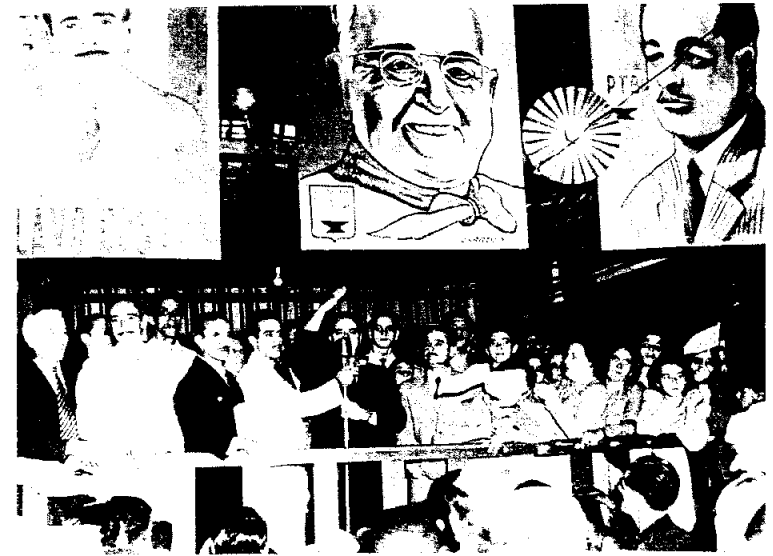
#### I. Life as a Cadet

APOLONIO DE CARVALHO

*The life story of a youth from a military family who rose to be an army general (and as a young officer, a member of the Brazilian Communist Party and a volunteer for the Spanish Republican Army against Franco) illustrates the role played by the armed forces in providing career opportunities for those from nonelite backgrounds. These youths could not aspire to university educations, but they could apply to the government-run military schools, where training was rigorous, and for the most successful, they could rise within the ranks unimpeded by class or social distinctions. Given that the armed forces dominated Brazilian political life for much of the period between 1930 and 1954, and again from 1964 to the early 1980s, many of Carvalho's classmates rose to national leadership positions, although his leftist credo subjected him to persecution.*

I was born in Corumbá, in Mato Grosso. My father was a northeasterner from Sergipe, a career military officer transferred from place to place. My mother was a *gaúcha*, from Bagé. I am, as they say, very Brazilian . . . with blood from north to south. In terms of my birthplace, I could say that I am an (im)prodigal son of Mato Grosso, because I left there sixty years ago and never returned.

I spent my childhood there. I started my schooling in Campo Grande; then I went to the Realengo Military Academy in Rio de Janeiro. I was commissioned as an officer. As a youth from the interior, I brought with me distinct perceptions of seeing things, different from those born in the big, modern, cosmopolitan cities. In Realengo, people were from all over, and this produced a fertile learning experience for us cadets as we learned together. The cadets were, for the most part, from the middle class, with modest economic backgrounds. Some were almost poor, but



Getúlio Vargas's presidential campaign in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, in 1950. (CPDOC, Rio de Janeiro)

they brought with them personal aspirations to improve their standing in society. In Brazil, unlike other countries, we do not have a traditional military class. My father, for example, was the son of poor agriculturists who became a worker, then took the entrance exam for the Praia Vermelha Military Academy, finally becoming an officer . . .

In military school, I learned to read more and to study. At the same time, I became involved in intellectual and political issues. This was a slow process, very slow. In the beginning, I was simply an observer, someone curious. Gradually, I caught on to what was happening in Brazil, coming to understand its social problems. I brought something with me as well: my family was proud of its dislike of authoritarian regimes, of imposed force, of corruption. Both my father and my older brother were supporters of the *tenente* movement [in 1930], believing that it would bring democracy. There were between 750 and 800 of us in military school, all more or less from modest origins. We were from what you might call the "people," although we were not from the lowest class. For this reason, we had a collective predisposition to understanding the problems of the mass of the population.

Our curriculum was very professional. We studied ballistics, mili-

tary strategy, topography, military history, mathematics up to integral and differential calculus. We also received a general education, learning about health, the exact sciences, the humanities. We had excellent teachers. The nonmilitary curriculum was weaker, however, so I learned on my own. I studied about history, about the evolution of society, about the debates over the transformation and destiny of peoples, some things about how politics worked. I was at Realengo at a propitious time, between 1930 and 1933, and I learned about the relationship between the military and society. . . . There was a sense of political openness and a democratic atmosphere within the academy. We discussed intensely all the problems of the time. We had a student magazine where we expressed our opinions, and I took advantage of this, writing articles, reading others to debate with colleagues, helping to produce dialogue . . .

In a way, my own social history started in 1930, when I came from Mato Grosso, still rather naive, without any real notions of Brazilian politics. I soon came to have contact and was challenged by what I saw in the federal capital. During this time, the armed forces were in the middle of political life, as an extension of the nationalistic movements of the 1920s. . . . [But] when I left the school in 1933 as a lieutenant, I was still somewhat confused. I knew that society was complex, made up of social contradictions, and I had to learn to deal with them. I knew of the existence of positive forces seeking concrete changes, in favor of the people and the nation, but that also there was a dominant class reluctant to yield its power . . .

## II. Life of a Rural Schoolteacher

GERALDO VALDELÍRIOS NOVAIS

*The 1930 Revolution committed itself to improving public education, which was second-rate and negligible prior to Vargas's victory. For the first time, government funding permitted the opening of public schools in the countryside; young teachers, mostly men and often with little formal training themselves, were hired to work in these new schools. One of the first was Geraldo Valdelirios Novais, from Lorena, in the coffee-growing zone of the State of São Paulo.*

My name is Geraldo Valdelirios Novais, the son of José Batista Novais and Ana Rosa do Prado Novais. I was born in Lorena, São Paulo, on December 21, 1912.

My father was an artist who made his living as a carpenter, the profession of Saint Joseph. My mother took care of our home. . . . I studied at the Salesian parochial school in Lorena, a secular school run by the Salesian fathers . . . so famous that it received students from other countries, Bolivia and Paraguay. Most of the students came from land-owning families, many from other Brazilian states.

We had excellent books and excellent teachers. We studied French, English, Latin, Portuguese . . . we studied religion in depth. It is one thing to be religious, quite another to understand the fundamentals of religious faith, to have a solid foundation. We received instruction in morality and civics; we learned the rights and responsibilities of citizens; about elections and the rules of eligibility for voting. . . . I graduated in the same year as Vargas's Revolution, 1930. I stayed at home the next year, thinking about what I might do with my life. In those days, there weren't as many opportunities as today. I came from a modest family and had to wait for some favorable occasion to get a start. . . . I wanted to study law, become a judge, or enter the diplomatic corps. Be a judge, a consul, ambassador, these things. But it didn't work out. I left school at a time of economic depression and political upheaval. There were few jobs. Things only began to improve after 1933.

Of my parents' seven children, six became teachers. In the end, it was my only option . . . as it was for my three sisters and two brothers. One of them finished only after great difficulty, because he had to work, and only graduated after he was married. One took ill with rheumatism and had to stop studying. He ended up working in a pharmacy. One brother died of influenza in the 1918 epidemic; I caught it, too, and almost died, but a medical student, one of those drafted by the government to help, saved me. He warned me that my lungs would always be weak, but he was wrong: [so far,] I have lived into my eighties.

Because of a change in regulations put into effect in 1932 by the federal education ministry, I was able to enroll in the Taubaté Normal School for Teachers when the teachers' school in Guaratinguetá was filled. It was a state-run school and it was free. Most charged tuition then. Later, I transferred back to Guaratinguetá. But classes were suspended when the 1932 civil war broke out in São Paulo, and the city was punished because it housed *paulista* troops. São Paulo lost, but its moral position was so strong that, in 1933, Getúlio called elections for a constituent assembly. . . . The students at the teachers' school supported the 1932 Revolution: we wanted to participate in it. . . . My older sister volunteered to

sew uniforms for the soldiers. Others volunteered in the coffee fields in place of soldiers called up to fight. . . . I served as well, in the hospital in Lorena. I was a kid, eighteen years old, and I carried wounded men from the wagons in which they were delivered up the steps of the hospital. . . . There was an outpouring of support, a sense of quiet solidarity. People donated rings, bracelets, necklaces, jewelry to pay for the war effort.

Classes started again in November after the Revolution ended. We took the final examinations and most of the students passed. I ended up studying only six months to be a teacher; everything else I learned on my own. As a result, I developed some of my own teaching methods, like explaining the rules of grammar.

After graduation, I applied for several teaching openings but was unsuccessful. The old pre-1930 ways carried over. Teaching as a career fell under the 1933 national educational reforms. Before that, many teachers lacked formal training; they prepared themselves one way or another, and then got their jobs through political influence. The only way to get a teaching job was through connections. I did have a letter from someone influential for a position in Sorocaba, but another applicant had one from someone more important, and he got the job. Eventually, the open competitions through examinations gave everyone equal opportunity. The number of points you got depended on your score and your previous experience. . . . Getúlio Vargas supported this because he was in favor of educational reform. He forced the states to adhere to national standards. As a result, at the end of 1933, I got a provisional job at a primary school in Riberão Bonito, in the Paraíba Valley. . . . in the following year, I was named a French teacher at the São José Normal School in Lorena. I taught for a year. Then, in 1936, I started working for the State of São Paulo and continued to do so for thirty-five years, until 1971. I was a primary schoolteacher, then school director, and ultimately supervisor of education.

My first job as a state employee was at a boy's school in the coffee-growing region, in São João da Bocaina, near Jaú. . . . It was isolated, rudimentary, in a building with only two rooms. There were three teachers, one in the morning and two in the afternoon. [In spite of the name of the school] some classes were for boys; others coeducational. Students of all ages were mixed. Conditions were very modest. The schools were usually on the grounds of an agricultural property. When

the landowner felt like helping, things went all right. But when he didn't care, the teachers faced adversity. Some landowners ordered the sharecroppers on their property to send their children to school, while others did not. . . . When harvest time came, fathers pulled their children out of school. The students, poor things, came without shoes, dressed raggedly, almost never able to buy pencils or notebooks. Many of us spent our entire salaries providing assistance to these pupils.

We lacked equipment and teaching materials. Many times, we had to make our own things or pay for supplies out of our own pockets. Transportation was difficult. There were no buses. Some teachers rode on horseback to their schools. Some landowners gave rides to teachers in their cars. It was difficult to find a place to live. Some owners let the teachers live with them in their houses. Others set up boarding arrangements for teachers. Once in a while, a landowner provided housing for teachers.

In this school, I earned about 300 *mil-réis* [\$26] a month, a pittance. But I lived in a boardinghouse in Bocaina, took the train directly to work, and still had something to send home to help my family . . . today this would hardly be possible. During the 1930s and 1940s, teachers were not well paid, but we earned enough to maintain our families. This is not true today for teachers. When you sign a contract to teach today you are signing a vow of poverty.

At one point, the State of São Paulo established a program to help rural schools and offered specialized training for teachers who would be assigned to rural areas. This included instruction in agricultural methods, planting, and so on. It was a very good program, but after some time, the program was terminated.

### III. Life of a Bricklayer

FREDERICO HELLER

*This is the story of Armando, written in 1942 by Frederico Heller. Armando's father was Italian and a bricklayer by profession. Recently married, he and his wife emigrated to rural São Paulo in 1908. He worked for a year and a half on a plantation in rural Alta Paulista. When his wife became pregnant, they moved to the state capital. His son, Armando, was born in 1910 and attended school until eleven years of age. In the selection below, he constantly talks about the cost*

of things. Money was always in chronic shortage and poor people's lives were deeply affected by small increases in prices.

The boy distinguished himself above all in arithmetic and design. At first, his father nourished the idea of registering his son in a professional school for mechanics because there was not adequate opportunity to learn, thoroughly, the family's traditional trade: that of bricklayer. The father desisted, finally, from this plan in the hope of gaining through working as a team—he as a mason, his son as a hod carrier—ownership of their own house. In 1929, the great dream became a reality: the family owned, in a suburb of the *paulista* capital, a house with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a shower, and a shed in which to keep the material, scaffolding, and tools.

Armando's parents were satisfied, and also, his fifteen-year-old sister, whose marriage possibilities increased with the family's social ascension. The only discontent was Armando. As a result of the paternal labor system, his professional instruction was being neglected. The father was accustomed to accept projects in a type of piecework by which the payment was by thousands of bricks laid. Thus, he lacked the time to transfer to his son more solid knowledge of the trade. In the end, the son asked his father to stop sacrificing the needs of his career to the economic interests of the moment. He also complained of never having received so much as a nickel for a salary. Thus, family disagreements arose in which Armando always displayed a certain lack of energy.

Influenced by a girlfriend, he left, in 1930, his parents' home and started to work as a mason's helper for the salary of a hod carrier, learning the trade in a very short span of time, although, as was natural, a bit superficially.

The work no longer being as lucrative as before because of his son's desertion, the father mortgaged the house and opened, "because he already had worked enough," a shop for construction materials.

Armando, however, loved the daughter of a proprietor of some small houses, president of a sports club, and "leader" of the parochial center. The young lady's family did not nurture great friendliness for Armando, who seemed to them an intelligent lad, but with little energy. Still, after certain hesitations, they did not oppose him because their daughter already was twenty-three years old and, as a result, had few possibilities to arrange a marriage in accord with the ambitious desires of her father.

In 1931, at twenty-one years of age, Armando married the young lady, moving to a house belonging to his father-in-law and whose rent was raised a little earlier. "If that lad were not my son-in-law, I would never give him the house . . .," is the argument with which the father-in-law sought to justify the increase in rent. But Armando did not just pay for the honor of being tied to that family of great social prestige in the neighborhood with an exaggerated rent and with hardly spontaneous presents to diverse family members: he also received some material advantages from this kinship. To gratify the family and show his boss his dedication, Armando carried out renovations on many of his neighbors' houses. Such renovations were numerous because of the dismal state of the majority of the houses, which were over forty years old, and because of the hygienic demands of the prefecture, which started to become interested, during this era, in the sanitary conditions of the neighborhood, until then left out of the general progress of the *paulista* capital.

In his heart, the father-in-law was convinced that his son-in-law did not merit preference from many proprietors, but despite this, he felt honored by the fact that even its most humble members would share in the family's prestige.

Two years after his marriage, Armando already constructed houses for some residents of the suburb related to his wife's family. By not being a licensed builder, difficulties emerged, which the father-in-law solved with his connections. The father-in-law could remove certain difficulties and make it so that Armando would obtain the title of "licensed builder," but not wanting to let him leave the sphere of his protection and dependence, he did nothing of importance in his favor. In 1935, the father-in-law unexpectedly died; thus, important financial losses arose for Armando. The family prestige tended to decline, and in virtue of this, the number of the customers also diminished. In addition, demands and expenses increased in arranging for a licensed builder who would sign the ground plans and "lend" his placard. After asking, in vain, for an abatement in rent from his mother-in-law, disagreements with his wife's family soon were accentuated.

However, the small commercial house of Armando's father went bankrupt, resulting in the loss of the mortgaged house. The fall in status of the wife's family and the consequences for his own professional career induced Armando to become closer to his father, employing him as a construction foreman. This attitude, motivated by sentimental reasons

and not by a cold rationality, was from the monetary point of view counterproductive, since Armando's crew—two bricklayers and two hod carriers—by no means needed its own foreman, better paid (by 30 percent) than a common bricklayer. In addition, the father did not recognize his son's authority, demoralizing in this way the entire crew.

The fact of not possessing his own license involved a reduction of 8 to 12 percent in the liquid profit of each construction. The employment of his father, with the better-paid salary sometimes for inferior services, and also rainy days produced an additional diminution of the liquid profit, which amounted to 3 to 5 percent in the construction of new houses, and 5 to 7 percent in cases of renovations and repairs.

From 1935 to 1937, Armando worked only to earn rent, food, and clothing, and also to pay expenses related to the birth of a son. In the beginning of 1938, a small grocer in the neighborhood negotiated with Armando the construction of two identical houses, conceding to him very liberal conditions. The project gave Armando a liquid profit of six *contos de réis*. Armando purchased, with the money earned, scaffolding material (until then, expensively taken on loan) for 2 *contos de réis*, a bicycle for 600 *mil-réis*, two suits and other clothes for 800 *mil-réis*, and furniture for 1 *conto de réis*. The father received 400 *mil-réis* for the deposit on a house recently rented. Four hundred and fifty *mil-réis* were spent on dresses and 900 *mil-réis* on dentures for his wife. An illness of the son cost 400 *mil-réis*. Finally, Armando spent 300 *mil-réis* on a fishing trip made in the company of two friends. Thus, there remained a "deficit" of 850 *mil-réis*, augmented by the fact that there existed an overdue debit of 300 *mil-réis* at the grocery store and another in the amount of 280 *mil-réis* at the hardware store. He added an appreciable elevation to his standard of living.

At the end of 1938, Armando accepted the construction of an elegant, multilevel home. Contrary to the earlier construction, the owner was not from Armando's social class or a close social companion. Contrary to the earlier project, the contract did not stipulate advanced payment of installments. The builder could receive the diverse installments only after having entirely terminated the respective phases of the construction, since the contract ought to guarantee the interests of the proprietor, who risks his money, while Armando is unable to give any guarantee.

In order to receive as soon as possible the amount of the first installment, Armando wanted to expedite approval of the ground plan by the

prefecture; he fell into the trap of a dishonest shipping clerk and spent, in the end, for the approval that ought to have cost, with the inclusion of the fees for the licensed builder, 1 *conto* and 300 *mil-réis*, nothing less than 2 *contos* and 100 *mil-réis*. More and more, the conditions of the contract obliged Armando to purchase all the material for the construction on credit at a small store in the suburb specializing in dealing with small "contractors" without their own capital. This dependency raised the prices by 15 to 20 percent for sand, bricks, whitewash, cement, and wood for the floor and the roof, and likewise doors and windows. The plumber who also depended on the small store charged, for each meter of pipe put in place and the sanitary fixtures, almost 30 percent more than a plumber who receives and pays in cash. To complete the predicament, misunderstandings arose with the proprietor over the interpretation of some of the contract's clauses. What does it mean to say, for example, "first quality" in the case of plaster, ornamental tiles, windows, and paints?

The interpretation did not depend exclusively on the legal and technical rules; it was, in great part, a question of local usage, just as good or bad faith. Until then, when a misunderstanding arose, the settlement was made in the ambiance of a bar on equal footing on the basis of the same economic possibilities and the same social level, but now the case was different: the proprietor had all the trump cards in his hand. But to avoid any appearance of arbitrariness, he consulted an official appraiser, an architect from the city, a man very correct and above any suspicion of partiality, but beforehand hardly friendly to "this small fry who only knows how to toil more or less, and bungles all the prices."

The architect agreed with the proprietor much more than the latter would have imagined; Armando had to acquiesce completely to the friendly advice of the appraiser and the enduring demands of the proprietor. Delivering, at last, the construction finished according to the desires of the owner, his total financial loss mounted to 8 *contos de réis*, in addition to the lost profit.

Armando sold the scaffolding for 1 *conto* and 500 *mil-réis* and took 2 *contos* borrowed from a friend. To save her quite-threatened family prestige, his mother-in-law gave, after much discussion, a bond to the hardware store, for which he was responsible to pay 4 *contos de réis* within two years. The interest was 12 percent annually.

All these complications, exaggerated by some malicious scandalmon-

gers, jolted Armando's commercial reputation, whose earlier situation already was delicate owing to the lack of his own capital. No one any longer wanted to risk anything advancing him money for the acquisition of material, since the mother-in-law's bond included only the debt. Furnishing new material, the store calculated an increase over the common prices never less than 20 percent. In this anguishing situation, Armando dismissed his father, and his wife started to sew for people outside the family. With superhuman efforts, which furthermore helped to consolidate the marriage, until then hardly happy, both succeeded in reducing in two and a half years the debts to 2 *contos* and 600 *mil-réis*.

However, the neighborhood has developed rapidly. Armando is not able to benefit much from this circumstance because of the lack of capital or, at least, the lack of credit at reasonable interest. One other difficulty is that of not being a licensed builder. Those interested in construction, attracted by the relatively modest prices for land in this neighborhood, do not place much trust in the somewhat rustic builders and masons from the semirural settlement. Armando is one of these disqualified outcasts: he does not wear fine clothing, he does not make use of a modern office, and he owns, instead of the latest model automobile, just a bicycle.

On the other hand, the number of renovations of old houses is increasing. Without economic and sentimental relations with the new residents of the neighborhood, and in opposition to them, there is produced in the original center composed of homeowners, artisans, and clerks, a unity of interests and points of view until then unknown. As a result of the social disparity [between new and old residents], the sports rivalries between the two local clubs, and even the national resentments between the old Portuguese and Italian immigrants, are disappearing.

These economic and mental transformations improved Armando's professional possibilities a bit. The rise in prices for material at the beginning of 1941 signaled a new setback for him and all the other small contractors. Because of a lack of capital and, sometimes, foresight, they could not save themselves from the effects of scarcity and speculation. In June of the same year, Armando arranged, for the first time since the disaster at the end of 1938, the construction of a house. This time, execution of the project obeyed a more efficient pattern. The profit of 4 *contos* was spent on the renovation of some of his mother-in-law's shacks, having already settled the remaining debit at the hardware store. In February 1942, Armando began to employ his father, since he finds that he is "morally obligated" to that.

#### IV. Life of a Railroad Worker

MAURÍLIO THOMÁS FERREIRA

*Looking back on his life nearly a half century later, Maurílio Ferreira, who was born in 1915 in rural Espírito Santo, recognized that obtaining a job with the railroad had been the turning point. Regular employment meant school for his children, a future. To be a railroad worker meant security and a pension. Perhaps because he understood that so few other workers received these benefits, Ferreira idolized Vargas, considering him his personal benefactor. He would have scoffed at social scientists writing that Vargas's labor measures were enacted to control the labor force. As long as Ferreira belonged to the union, his wife would buy food at reduced prices at the union-run store. He would receive protection from arbitrary dismissal, and his children would be eligible for scholarships available to families of union members. This would have been impossible were it not for the social legislation of the 1930s and early 1940s.*

My full name is Maurílio Thomás Ferreira. I had a whole bunch of brothers, five or six. Most of them were older. I even have a photograph of them. Three were drafted into the guard (*Tiro de Guerra*), all at once, and they had to go even though they were married and had small children. . . . Before the Vargas government things were out of hand. . . . We lived on my father's land he had bought . . . everyone in the family had a little house and a small plot. . . . He distilled *cachaça* (rum) from sugarcane. . . . I had four sisters also. My father was angry because he now had to take care of his three daughters-in-law and their kids. My father had to pay for their uniforms, shoes—in the countryside, you had to provide everything yourself.

I attended a rural school, very rudimentary. After primary school, I studied with a teacher my father hired for all of us. Getúlio regulated lots of things. Before that things were disorganized. I was now the oldest boy living at home. My father decided to send me to the army, too, to get it over with, so I lied about my age. . . . I served in the army in 1930 when I was fifteen. . . . I was sent first to Vitória and then to Rio de Janeiro, to the Praia Vermelha barracks. I got out in December. I returned to work with my father and, when I was twenty-two, I got married, in 1937. I grew corn, potatoes, and coffee beans, and raised pigs. There was no place to sell things, so I had to transport my produce, and this was expensive. We made very little money. Things grew well; my father sometimes harvested 10,000 sacks of coffee. But we had too little land for all of my broth-

ers and their families. All of my family were *crentes* (evangelical Protestants). There was a church in Córrego Rico. We went. I directed a choir. We were baptized. I met my wife there, when she was twelve years old.

[In 1942] I decided, all of a sudden, to leave. We had two children already. We went to [the town of] Muniz Freire and bought a house with my savings. I had no job, nothing. I worked as a barber but didn't make very much; the town was too small. I worked for the mayor's office. I got one job through one of my brothers-in-law, who was a driver for an Arab. I became foreman on his farm, but he didn't pay me. I stayed for a year and then left for another foreman's job. Then I got a job with the railroad. I got it [in 1945] when I went to Cachoeiro to sell chickens. A fellow I sold them to told me to try and get a railroad job, that they were hiring many people. He introduced me to some officials of the Leopoldina Railroad. They hired me. I liked the idea of living in Cachoeiro because there was a school there my kids could attend. My children all studied, one as far as the fifth grade, the others to high school. And railroad workers were eligible for pensions; [we were] one of the first. . . . When I started working, they registered me in the railroad pension institute. There was an enormous union building in Cachoeiro. The union sold provisions and merchandise to us at cheaper prices. Later on, the union gave a scholarship for my youngest son to study at high school.

Starting in 1945, my wife and I always voted in elections, every year. . . . I joined the PTB . . . and became active in the union. . . . I admired Getúlio Vargas, always voted for him. . . . He named the state intervenors. . . . He was leading Brazil forward. . . . When he killed himself, it was an enormous shock. . . . I kept his photograph [which the union had given to us] and a copy of his suicide letter, to remind me of what he did for poor Brazilians. . . . He was the chief organizer of this country.

## V. Life of a Factory Worker

JOANA DE MASI ZERO

*Joana de Masi Zero, the daughter of Italian immigrants, joined the ranks of millions of urban Brazilians who loved Vargas in spite of his flaws. Her testimony explains how his social reforms improved her life.*

My name is Joana de Masi Zero. I was born in São Paulo on October 23, 1916, in the district of Mooca. In those days, Mooca wasn't like it is today.

There were few houses; you could walk around. There wasn't much movement, although the streetcar passed by Ipanema Street . . . you catch it and were downtown in ten minutes.

We lived on Guarapuava Street. The houses there were simple, like all of the ones on old streets, close together. Ours was a duplex, with large rooms with high ceilings. The privy was outside. Later on, we built one inside, but the old outhouse remained in use, too. Our yard was ample, with many plants, including guavas, oranges, and even a pear tree. We kept chickens in the back of the yard. We also had Angora cats, who jumped over the wall and ran around everywhere, but they didn't get close to the chickens . . .

My sister Carmela and I stayed by the front door; when neighbors passed by we would chat with them. My mother didn't let us go out alone because we were girls and it could be dangerous. When Carmela and I and our friends did go out we all would hold hands; sometimes we walked singing. I only went through primary school. It was a good school; I started when I was eight. In those days, you started then and went until you were twelve.

I studied in a private school, Sete de Setembro, and then went on to another. My sister Carmela and I finished, but our older sister had to stop and go to work. In school, boys and girls had separate classes. No one mixed in those days, even during recess. The boys stayed on one side and the girls on the other. The school yard was divided so that no one could have contact with anyone from the other group. They entered on the left side and we on the right. The boys' teacher was very energetic. Boys are more rebellious; sometimes the teachers punished the boys right in the corridor. We wore uniforms. On regular days, we had blouses with the school emblem embroidered on it. On special days, we wore uniforms of white linen, pleated skirts, and white blouses. We wore white pants for physical education. . . . Everyone was neat and well groomed.

We studied many things: Portuguese grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, science, sewing, singing, gymnastics, everything. We studied four hours each day, from eight to noon . . .

My family worked hard. My father was a textile supervisor. In those days, they earned a good living . . . 200 mil-réis a month in 1920. This was good money. Salaries weren't meager, like today. You could buy what you needed at home. My mother even saved a bit. We built our house and paid it off fairly quickly, but then my father had an accident and died. He was handling a machine when it injured him. He hung on for a

month. On his death certificate it said he died of pneumonia, because he couldn't breathe. My mother wanted to give him medicine against infection, but he refused, saying, "I'm not going to take anything!" He said his blood was good, that he didn't need anything.

I was five when my father died. My grandfather came to live with us, but he died, too. Only the women remained, my mother, my grandmother, and we three sisters.

The house was my mother's, but the rest? For food and clothing we had to work. First, my mother went to work in a chicken coop; later, she started to sew men's clothing at home. My oldest sister started working when she still was a girl. She was the first, when she was twelve. Then I went to work, and finally Carmela. At first, she stayed at home, doing chores: she would prepare lunch and keep house. My older sister worked in a textile factory, going from one to another. It was she who taught Carmela how to do textile work. My first job was sewing carpets by hand. I was twelve. I worked for a year and a half. It was in a private house, and they hired girls to work. Then I went to a factory, the Santa Madalena, on Bresser Street. When I went to work there my mother had to get me a work permit because I was still a minor, fourteen years of age. Actually, I was younger; I started in July, but my birthday was in October. Only then I worked legally. Only my sisters and I left school. Our other friends continued because their parents could afford it. . . . When I was fifteen, I moved to a more difficult machine in the factory. You earned more . . . forty-five *mil-réis* a month if you produced up to your daily quota . . .

I went from factory to factory . . . finding different jobs. . . . I worked in one factory for twenty-five years. Getúlio was president. Many people said that he was a dictator, but he did many things for us workers. His labor laws were good. There were no strikes, at least never at places where I was working. Sometimes, to avoid strikes, the bosses dismissed us early, saying to us: "You go home; we're going to stop the machines so we won't have any fights at the door." They meant with the militants. All the laws we have today were thanks to [Vargas]. . . . The first minimum wage was forty *mil-réis* a month. Then they started to withhold payments for pensions—three *mil-réis* a month. Everyone paid whether they wanted to or not. It was taken out of your pay envelope. Later, this system changed for the worse; retirement paid almost nothing. Every time the politicians changed the laws they took more from us. Getúlio's

time was good; later, I don't know. We earned well and prices didn't go up. You went out to buy milk, for example, and the price was always the same. We didn't live in luxury; we made our own clothes—we knew how to sew—we were well dressed, we had money to go to the movies every week, sometimes twice. We ate well, we lived well. They say he was a dictator, but for us he was good.

But when the factory moved to Mooca, with new machinery, production didn't go well. We earned little at the beginning . . . our salaries were affected. But then the law required that the employers give raises of 35 percent. My employer said that he couldn't, that he couldn't even pay 5 percent more. . . . He didn't even want to negotiate. We went to the union, and the union officials took our case. Unions worked well then, at least ours did. It had a lawyer who worked for it, Dr. Paranhos. We could talk to him about any problem we had. The complaint took more or less a year to be decided, and in the end we won. So the boss left Mooca and moved the factory to Vila Maria, because he wanted to cheat us. He hired others and paid them less. On the whole, though, our bosses were decent, human. They came to visit; my mother invited them into the living room. They always asked about how my mother was.

When Getúlio died it was like a death in the family. People were sad. No one talked; everyone was quiet. It was a really sorrowful day, especially for the workers. Things were closed for, I think, three days.

I retired when I turned sixty-five. The first month I earned the same as I had made when I was working, and after that, for a while as well. Then they began to take a little here and there, and the government took more and more, and now I earn almost nothing.

# IV

## *The Vargas Era*

Getúlio Vargas came to power in 1930 at the head of the military-backed Liberal Alliance coup that its partisans called a “Revolution.” If so, Vargas was, in Antonio Gramsci’s phrase, a “passive revolutionary from above.” The losing candidate in the national election earlier in the year (an election marked by fraud on both sides), he remained in power as head of state until 1945, and governed as elected president from 1950 until his death by suicide in 1954. Vargas’s government transformed Brazil, for better or worse. An advocate of safe but bold change, he grafted new constituencies and new rules were grafted onto traditional political practices. Although his career spanned three constitutions and enormous changes in the political climate, his pragmatism always prevailed. He was willing to take risks, a trait that explains not only his political longevity, but also the miscalculations that led to his ouster in 1945 and later drove him to suicide. He was able to adjust to changes in national and international circumstances, but he fundamentally left unaltered much of the fabric of Brazilian life. Some things endured throughout his decades in power, including the readiness of the armed forces to intervene and the elite’s tenacious hold on privilege. Brazil’s distribution of income remained among the least equal in the world, but Vargas did not perceive this as a problem that needed to be solved.

In 1930, he had stood at the center of forces united in their demand for change and sharply divided over what results they sought. Because of this, Vargas needed to devote almost all his energy to negotiating among factions and keeping himself in power. Indeed, he was more concerned with staying in office than in holding to any firm purpose. Only in 1932,

when São Paulo revolted to restore the old system, did he show that he could act decisively and with the use of force. He believed in granting regulated citizenship without disharmony, that is, without the freedom to dissent. Putting a good face on Vargas's regime in the early 1940s, a visiting political scientist called it "despotism mitigated by sloppiness." Corruption remained a national institution; little could be accomplished without bribes to expedite action.

Vargas's style was rooted in the tradition in which supplicants sought personal intervention from officials to cut through red tape or bestow favors. An irony of Vargas's legacy, therefore, was that although he championed a merit-based civil service program, the old style of personal favors not only survived in the states, but increased at the national level as a result of the government centralization. Brazilian archives are filled with personal requests to cabinet ministers (and to Vargas himself) for jobs for relatives, favorable treatment in granting contracts, or to overrule regulations—all in violation of what Vargas said he was trying to accomplish. The more government bureaucratized state employment, moreover, the more power individual administrators accumulated, and it was never certain that they would act in the interest of their constituencies. Consequently, many of Vargas's reforms ended up—intentionally or not—*para inglês ver* ("for the English to see"). His corporatist framework also encouraged authoritarian decisions, since Vargas believed that the needy would otherwise continue to be ignored.

In making himself the chief of state of all Brazilians, Vargas limited the potential for competitors to emerge. During his first government, he logged 90,000 miles visiting every corner of the country. His fame spread by word of mouth and was transferred to popular culture. Due to Vargas's unrivaled popularity, the communists had to ally with him and the political organizations he left behind after 1945, and at the same time, compete with them. Vargas also confounded his enemies by continually experimenting: during the to-be-dashed 1937 presidential campaign, for example, he had Labor Ministry officials truck in workers from government-sponsored unions to political demonstrations.

He did not hide his admiration for persons secure in their wielding of power. Goiás's state boss Pedro Ludovico recalled an encounter between Vargas and a Carajás chieftain during an excursion to a reservation in his region. When the tribesman presented Vargas with a petition, Vargas asked him by what authority he spoke for his people. "Because I have the

most power," came the reply. When Vargas asked him, affably, how long he would continue to hold this power, the chief replied, "As long as I'm alive." Vargas laughed, because this was his outlook as well.

His most far-reaching goal was to modernize the country yet preserve its national independence. While this overall aim evaded him, his achievements in this regard yielded more "revolutionary" change than any other policy. The effort also usurped great resources. Government centralization was costly: funds for such massive projects as the Paulo Affonso hydroelectric station on the São Francisco River, for example, could never have been raised by states, given their constant bickering and depleted credit ratings. As a result of World War II, just as Vargas and other nationalists had feared, Brazil had become more dependent on the United States and influenced by its culture—through advertising, movies, consumer goods, and the direct effect of the behavior of the thousands of American servicemen stationed at Brazilian bases during the war.

Vargas's constant shifting produced different reformist streams. Since practicality came first, he was able to play political poker by dealing from different hands. He reorganized civil society, bringing benefits to many (but not all) urban employees and workers. The 1930 Revolution ended the more blatant abuses of the old "politics of the governors" by renewing interventionist powers that the national executive had lost in 1889, but it placed patronage and coercive powers in the hands of his intervenors, and after 1945, created a hybrid form of backroom brokering involving partisan politics. The regionalist dimension of politics might have survived even more than it did had not the *paulistas* been pragmatists as well, suppressing their resistance because they agreed with Vargas's social corporatism and his measures to intervene in the economy. In the other outlying states, Vargas's interventors replaced the clans in power before 1930, but in most cases, new oligarchic alliances emerged; in the decades after Vargas's death, prominent local elites continued to dominate state politics in the old ways.

An assiduous politician and manipulator, Vargas ostracized the Left by winning over centrist nationalists in the armed forces command. Soon, he turned his attentions to the problem posed by São Paulo, the country's most powerful state, still smarting from its political defeat in 1930. São Paulo demanded a return to constitutional rule—in other words, to the pre-1930 system by which São Paulo dominated the federation. The

bold measures taken by the state's leadership and the unprecedented support from ordinary *paulistas* is captured by Cristina Mehrstens's essay in this section on the "Gold for São Paulo" campaign in 1932.

Vargas ignored the countryside, even though he himself was a man of the rural frontier. The photographs of rural life in this section come from Vargas's own home state, Rio Grande do Sul. He left many institutions untouched, including Brazil's half-century-old Civil Code, a conservative legal document that reinforced patriarchal social relations, declaring husbands the legal head of their households and leaving married women virtually without rights. He left charity work in the hands of the private sector, although he turned them into semipublic agencies by giving them subsidies. During the 1920s, a number of *paulista* factories had pioneered the concept of the "workers' villages" (the Vila Operária Maria Zélia, for example), in which workers were given housing and provided with a comprehensive program of social benefits, including schools, infant-care centers, chapels, and soccer teams. The archdiocese of São Paulo maintained a Metropolitan Catholic Workers' Central, with local agencies in the working-class neighborhoods of Moóca, Penha, Bras, Barra Funda, Itaquera, Ipiranga, and Lapa. The organization built children's playgrounds, showed films, and sponsored classes for women on hygiene and domestic skills. Patrícia Galvão's novel, *Industrial Park*, excerpted herein, conveys the tensions of working-class life during the Great Depression, when Vargas and his officials attempted to squelch labor unrest by offering favored treatment to co-opted labor leaders, ignoring, in so doing, the harsh inequities of the workplace. This piece is followed by a photo essay, "Two Versions of Factory Life," which illustrates some aspects of this issue.

The collection of documents seized from members of the Brazilian Communist Party, a sampling of which are reprinted in this section, reflects the polarization in ideology that characterized the early Vargas years and the vacuum created by Vargas's decision to suppress the Left. They come from the now-famous Dossier 20 from the Political Police, opened under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's policy giving access to historians of previously classified materials in government archives.

Vargas also tolerated the far Right, especially the fascist Integralist movement headed by would-be führer Plínio Salgado and the brains behind the movement, Gustavo Barroso, born João Dodt to a German

family in the northern State of Ceará. Barroso played on Brazilian distrust for the State of São Paulo as well as anti-Semitic attitudes among the elite by accusing Jews of controlling São Paulo's financial markets, a laughable charge that did not gain many serious listeners. Francisco José de Oliveira Vianna was a more formidable voice from the far Right. A jurist and enemy of participatory democracy, he counseled Vargas privately to govern on the corporatist model: that is, to follow the fascist model of an all-powerful and all-knowing nationalistic state. Oliveira Vianna's contempt for democracy and his strange pride in his origins in the State of Rio de Janeiro's aristocracy is expressed in his obsequious letter, included in this section, to the author of a book extolling the virtues of Vargas's Estado Novo, the dictatorship imposed by the armed forces in November 1937. Reproduced here as well, Vargas's New Year's address of 1938 offers his reasons for overthrowing his own government and his plans for the country under corporatism.

Estado Novo officials aggressively announced that they were creating a new Brazil, as seen here in the propagandistic selection, "A New Survey of Brazilian Life." Outsiders viewed the Estado Novo more critically, as exemplified in two pieces. When U.S. General George C. Marshall came to Brazil in 1939 to encourage support for the allied cause, his wife, Katherine Tupper Marshall, recorded his impressions in a memoir. Scholar Bailey W. Diffie analyzed the Estado Novo in unflattering terms in his correspondence with officials of the Department of State.

The Estado Novo left a mixed bag of legislation, much of which promised major changes, but without adequate funding, failed to reach most Brazilians. Leading educational reformer Anísio S. Teixeira, whose lifelong vision for a free and high-quality system of public education was never realized, offers here an assessment of the failure of the government's efforts under Vargas. Vargas lauded public schoolteachers as the "little, overshadowed heroes of daily life," but he did little to improve their pitiful wages. At the secondary level, Brazil had fewer than a dozen no-tuition secondary schools. While Vargas's educational reforms varied enormously from state to state, his National Educational Plan, which called for free and semimandatory public education, was made part of the 1934 Constitution. In Rio de Janeiro, Teixeira took dramatic steps to professionalize education, expand matriculations, and improve schools, but he was fired as being too liberal. São Paulo achieved progress mostly under its own auspices, under the unwritten arrangement its elite had

made with Vargas after 1932 to let the state carry out its own programs. The drive to modernize Brazil led Vargas to create free, comprehensive universities, but few nonelite youths who did not attend private secondary schools could hope to pass the rigorous *vestibularios* (entrance examinations).

Ousted from power by the military in 1945, Vargas regrouped during the late 1940s, capitalizing on his popularity among ordinary Brazilians. His social legislation, much of which remained in place until the late 1990s, had benefited the middle class through the creation of a vast number of bureaucratic jobs. Working-class Brazilians also benefited if they held regular jobs. When the minimum wage was introduced in 1940, eligible workers in Rio de Janeiro received the equivalent of \$131 (U.S.) in 1998 value a month. This was a generous amount, although it is telling that workers continued to stay out of officially sanctioned labor unions, which not only guaranteed the minimum wage, but added benefits. The national monthly minimum wage rose to the equivalent of \$252 by 1954, but thereafter went into free fall, bottoming out at \$120 a month in 1992. The five personal testimonies reproduced toward the end of this section show to what extent Vargas did alter the lives of individuals; whether their stories are typical or not, however, cannot easily be verified.

Although popularly chosen in 1950 (the first time he had actually won a national election), Vargas's presidency in the early 1950s floundered. Inflation and rising expectations made it difficult for Vargas to deliver on his campaign promises, and his own supporters were divided over ideology and goals. In August 1954, confronted by an imminent military coup to oust him from the presidency, he took his own life. His suicide produced outpourings of grief that matched in intensity and scope the heartfelt shock experienced by most Americans at the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945. Even though Vargas had not provided very much, and even if the archaic hierarchical structure of the Brazilian oligarchy had remained completely intact, he was the first politician to extend dignity to the Brazilian people. In numerous places, many of the social initiatives of the 1930s (free milk for infants, water projects, inspection of meat, child care centers) were discontinued in the mid-1950s for lack of funding.

The contrast between the political spirit of the Old Republic, which despised the common people, and the uplifting rhetoric of Vargas's radio broadcasts, speeches, and public appearances even to the most remote

reaches of the vast country, was striking. Vargas really had become the "father of the poor" in the minds of the mass of the population. And for nationalists, the stridency of his admonition against imperialism and foreign interests, which had dominated his suicide letter, confirmed that he was a prophet and seer. In some ways, Vargas's alarm paralleled his contemporary Dwight D. Eisenhower's warning to Americans about the "civil-military complex." Whereas Eisenhower was ignored, in Vargas's case, his campaign against foreign domination galvanized a certain sector of public opinion, even as it yielded to the developmentalism of the late 1950s, as well as the military regime of the 1960s and 1970s.

Educated Brazilians understood that the government's propaganda machine had inflated the concrete accomplishments it claimed. They also knew that their problems had not been solved, nor had their standard of living risen as far as the broadcasts and speeches promised. But Vargas had made them aware of Brazil's vulnerable place in the world, and from the first days of his Liberal Alliance presidential campaign in 1930, he had let them know that he cared about all Brazilians, not just the powerful. To the majority of the population with barely enough to eat, this mattered little in any tangible way, yet for many of these men and women, it was enough that Vargas had spoken on their behalf. Still, Brazil's "father" treated his children differently; those with darker skin and who lived in the countryside were benignly neglected in favor of those he considered to have the potential to carry out his dreams of national construction.

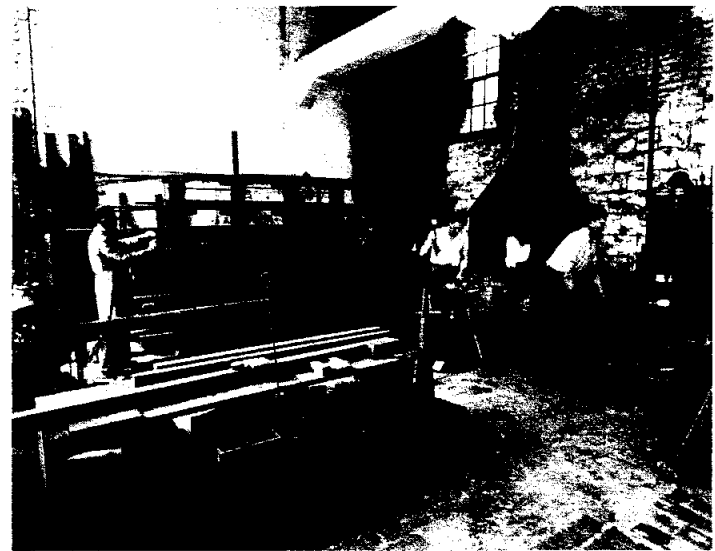
## Two Versions of Factory Life

### *Photographers Unknown*

*One of the truths of the Vargas administration was that his Labor Ministry officials devoted more attention to creating bureaucracies than to enforcing the government's new labor laws. The first set of photographs depict the official view of the workplace: dynamic, hygienic, energetic. Men and boys, with a few women in the background, are leaving work; they are well-dressed, healthy in appearance, and the street is swept clean. Compare this to the second set of photographs, the first of which is dated 1941, the other dated "decade of the 1950s." The photograph of workers on the factory floor is dated 1941. It was taken at Abramo Eberle Metalworks in Caxais do Sul, the same factory whose posted rules are found at the end of the second section of this book. While the workshop is clean, the men wear neither gloves nor protective eyeglasses, although they are working with molten metal. Workers are standing in pools of floodwater; even after the flood subsided, conditions remained primitive and dangerous. The seated workers are manufacturing gold-plated religious objects in preparation for the Fourth National Eucharistic Congress held in São Paulo in September 1942. The other photograph shows a shoeless boy at a machine press at the same factory, in clear violation of both child labor laws and regulations requiring protective clothing.*



A model factory in 1942 in Rio Grande do Sul. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



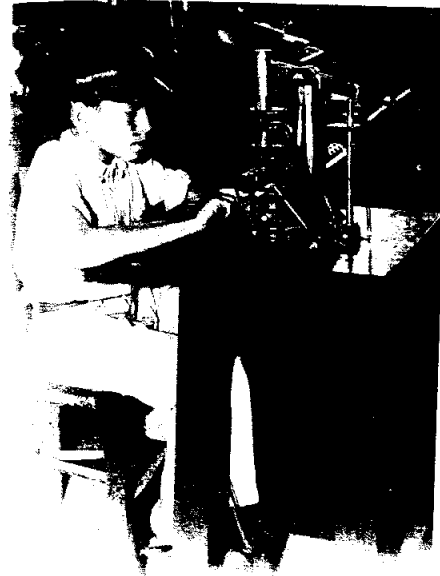
Metalworks in Rio Grande do Sul in 1940. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



Quitting time outside a factory in Rio Grande do Sul in 1940. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



The interior of Abrams Eberle Metalworks in 1941 in Caxias do Sul, RS. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)



A shoeless child laborer, circa 1950s, in the Abrams Eberle Metalworks in Caxias do Sul, RS. (Museu Antropológico, FIDENE / UNIJUI, Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul)

# Seized Correspondence from Communists, 1935–1945

## Dossier 20, Police Archives

These excerpts from letters sent by members of the Brazilian Communist Party and from party propaganda were held for years in the famous “Dossier 20” in the Security Police headquarters (DOPS), and only became available to researchers in mid-1997. “Condemned to Death” not only reveals the terrible conditions under which political prisoners were kept, but that Brazilians—in this case, imprisoned physicians—had hopes of reasoning with the authorities. The poem “Cavalier of Hope” shows the esteem in which Luís Carlos Prestes, the jailed communist (and longtime nationalist) leader, was held by militants on the Left. “The Open Letter to Integralists” displays the contortions the Brazilian communists were forced to undergo when the Moscow party line changed—here, after Stalin signed his short-lived nonaggression pact with Hitler, abruptly making allies of Brazil’s communists and their bitter enemies, the fascist Integralists. The “Open Letter to Getúlio Vargas” followed Vargas’s declaration of war on the Axis. Vargas’s maneuver put him on the same side as the Soviet Union, forcing the communists, many of them still in prison, to praise the Brazilian dictator.

### I. Condemned to Death

*A petition from imprisoned physicians in the House of Detention,  
December 3, 1936*

The tragic penal colony of Dois Rios has received another shipment of some of the Brazilian people, many of them youths, kidnapped from

Sobrenome VASCONCELOS

Nome Severino Vicente de Lima

Idade 22 anos Nascido em 16 de Setembro de 1914

E. Civil Solteiro Nacionalidade Brasileira Natural de Estado Ailante

Rio Grande do Norte Filiação: pai Francisco Vicente de Lima

Mãe Mrs. Maria da Conceição Instrução Analfabeto

Profissão Ex-Enfermeiro Militar Residência Avenida Onze

Notas Oculométricas: Cor Parda Cabellos Castanhos Estatura: 1 m. 66 cts.

Barba Não tem Bigode tem Olhos Castanhos


Preso em 16 de Janário de 1936 Identificado em 16 de Janário de 1936

SINAES PARTICULARES

Photographa tirada em 16 de Janeiro de 1936

OBSERVAÇÕES

Implicado na revolta de carater comunista irrompida em Natal a 23 de Setembro de 1935



ASSINATURA DO IDENTIFICADO

*Severino Vicente de Lima*

REGISTRO GERAL N. 42 Oficial Manuel Botelho de Lima

INDIVIDUAL DACTILOSCÓPIA

SERIE

POLÍCIA DO ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO NORTE Gabinete de Identificação e Estatística Criminal	SISTEMA DE FUSTICION REGISTRO GERAL N.º	SERIE	MÃO DIREITA	MÃO ESQUERDA	Polígono	Intelectos	Mãos	Impressões	Mãos
					RECUVA				

1936

The police registry card for the prisoner Severino Vicente de Lima, arrested in 1936 for participating in the 1935 communist insurrection in Natal. (Rio Grande do Norte State Police)

their families by the treasonous government of GETÚLIO VARGAS. In this Siberia, placed in a wretched and dilapidated barrack, sleeping on a dirt floor covered with sand, miserably fed, exhausted by forced labor, afflicted by a barrage of humiliations, which include being forced to walk with crossed arms when not working, frequently beaten, a wave of epidemic disease is sweeping the place . . . pneumonia, dysentery, and so on. Some of the prisoners arrived with acute symptoms of disease—bloody spittum, colitis, difficulty in breathing. . . . We, as physicians, are horrified at what we have seen . . . some of them have been taken from the barracks and vanished, and we believe that they will never be seen again.

#### Political and Cultural Activities among Political Prisoners in Rio de Janeiro

Being a political prisoner is a fecund opportunity in the life of a revolutionary to learn more. This is what is happening among political prisoners all over Brazil. Following the November [1935] uprisings . . . conditions have been created for the invaluable exchange of personal experiences between thousands of prisoners, ranging from the revolutionary leaders to those caught up in the movement who were completely distant from what was happening. On the prison ship *Pedro I*, in the houses of detention, in the prisons, peasants, workers, soldiers, sailors, labor organizers, teachers from all levels, artisans, college graduates, physicians, engineers, armed forces officers, journalists, legislators, artists, in sum, representatives of all social groups, have taken advantage of the circumstances created by the repression to realize a gigantic educational endeavor to study and debate the conditions under which the country lives . . .

What we have done is to organize the life of prisoners, to make the most efficient use of time. We hold democratic elections among the general prison population, to select a “collective.” We have started, ironically, the first people’s university in Brazil. We offer courses in political consciousness and general culture. We produce theater performances, posters, musical concerts; we compose and sing revolutionary songs; we produce within the prison walls illustrated underground newspapers, which are passed from hand to hand. This educational

work is a valuable part of revolution making. Our “arts commission” handles cultural activities. We teach prisoners to read Portuguese, French, English, German, Russian, and Esperanto; we teach geography, mathematics, history, physical and natural sciences, economic issues, courses in military tactics and strategy, Morse code, how to take apart motors, sexual education—in short, all of the things that can be imagined that can be taught in classes or lectures. Our revolutionary university stimulates interest, and encourages debate and discussion. We circulate books about prisoners. We offer daily classes in hygiene, and organize physical exercise and the practice of sports. Most important, of course, is our work in political consciousness-raising . . . in the ten months we have been imprisoned for our political beliefs, we have created the most effective schools for revolutionary training that Brazil has ever seen.

#### II. *Cavalier of Hope*

*A poem written in honor of Luís Carlos Prestes by a prisoner at Maria Zélia prison, São Paulo.*

Prestes, the gentle heart of our people  
is filled with your presence; the hand that imprisons you  
Knows that our struggle at your side will rise again  
To fight again. The masses await you!

As long as you are imprisoned, the injury continues,  
As long as you are imprisoned, the masses remain aware of your  
condition.  
But after the day, happily, comes another day . . .

As long as you are in prison, our people remain enslaved.  
We love you deeply, and we accompany your fortunes.  
You are the flower of our race, the most pure and most brave,  
Our oldest brother, our strongest brother.

People of Brazil, its persecuted people,  
Who live without bread, who toil at work naked,  
Maintain their vigilance with a sad and watchful eye.  
The masses wait for you; you are our leader!

### III. Open Letter to Integralists

*From its founding in 1935, the most implacable enemy of the Communist Party's popular front, the ANL (National Liberation Alliance), was the fascist Integralist Party. After Stalin signed his nonaggression pact with Hitler in 1939, the communists abruptly changed their tune; they now viewed the fascists as potential allies against Vargas. This undated letter was issued after the Hitler-Stalin Pact by the Political Bureau of Brazil's Communist Party. It should be noted that, at the time, the Integralist leader, Plinio Salgado, had been permitted to find exile in fascist Portugal, while the communist leader, Luis Carlos Prestes, sat in jail in Rio de Janeiro.*

For some time, communists and Integralists have been suffering ferocious repression at the hands of the government. The infested prisons of our country are filled with men whose only crime was to have fought for the interests of our great country, Brazil, seeking to create a more humane and just society.

The nefarious Getulist Security Tribunal is ceaseless in its sinister work, hunting down and sentencing Brazilian patriots. Taken together, they have imprisoned men for combined sentences of thousands of years. And if the horrors of the existing prisons were not enough, they created the terrible penal colony on Fernando do Noronha Island, a place for political prisoners unequalled in the world for its isolation and distance from civilized society. The misery and oppression in which the Brazilian people live under the Estado Novo worsens each day. With the outbreak of war in Europe, conditions for our workers get more and more precarious. Salaries fall and living conditions worsen . . .

Without freedom of expression, of the press, and to associate, with labor unions transformed into miserable agents of the Labor Ministry bureaucracy and the police, we, communists and Integralists, sincere patriots, who love our country above all else, must form an inseparable bloc to fight for the good of Brazil, expelling the tyrant Vargas from the presidential palace.

Integralists! If we all unite, nothing will divide us.

*Down with Getúlio and his rotten Estado Novo!*

*Long live Luis Carlos Prestes and Plinio Salgado!*

*Long live the Communist Party!*

*Long live the Integralist Party!*

### IV. Open Letter to Getúlio Vargas

*This September 8, 1941, communication, authored by the Communist Party of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro, was distributed through the underground after Hitler's breaking of his pact with the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin.*

In the hour that we celebrate the anniversary of Brazil's political independence from the Portuguese yoke, the world finds itself the victim of ferocious aggression that threatens to submerge the forces of civilization in tyranny. Most of the people of Europe have fallen under the Nazi terror, suffering in need of human necessities and loving under abject moral degradation. Two great nations, however, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, are heroically resisting the furious Hitlerist wave. The Soviet Union, with its formidable Red Army, its air force, and its navy. Britain, with its Home Fleet and its Royal Air Force. Africa has been invaded; Australia and the Dutch East Indies are at war; there is blood in the China Sea, and America and Russia are threatened . . .

Meanwhile, the forces of the Nazi vanguard press are in our hemisphere through the work of Fifth Columnists, preparing the ground for the final assault on our continent, where Brazil, by virtue of its strategic position, stands as the first and most solid point of resistance against these forces.

The shots of the May 1938 Integralist "putsch," financed by the German Transatlantic Bank, still echo.

The Integralists still make propaganda through the thinly disguised "Campaign for a Strong Press," and the magazine *Rataplan*, widely distributed among soldiers under the direction of Colonel Cota, who is a member of the Integralist governing body, the "Chamber of 40. . . ." Nazi lies, agitation, and propaganda constitute a sixth arm of the Hitlerist war machine, and it is in full operation [in Brazil]. . . . The Fifth Column in Brazil is so well organized that [Minister] Francisco Campos was able to say, to friends, that whenever he wants to, Hitler can take Brazil by picking up the telephone. . . .

The moment has arrived, Mr. President, to adopt energetic measures against the Fifth Columnists, such as those carried out in the United States, in Cuba, in Mexico, and in practically all of the countries in our hemisphere. The moment has arrived to amnesty all progressive and liberal-democrat political prisoners. . . . Only this way can we build and fortify a national front against Nazism and consolidate the Brazilian Union.

## The Paulista Synagogue

### Gustavo Barroso

While Plínio Salgado played Integralist *führer* in a relatively statesmanlike manner, the movement's intellectual chieftain, Gustavo Barroso, openly admired the Nazis, and expressed contempt for Jews, liberals, and those he considered weaklings. As president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, he wore a pistol in a leather holster when he addressed that august body. Barroso dared Brazilians to stand up to his bullying, but few did. Since there were so few Jews in Brazil, he depicted his enemies—in this case, paulista bankers—as tools of an “international Jewish conspiracy.” Not many Brazilians took Barroso seriously, but his vicious attacks were never challenged by anyone speaking for the government. Over time, they had a psychological impact, making educated Brazilians less open to foreigners and especially to Jews. Newspaper editors stayed silent, as did intellectuals and academics. The following selection comes from Barroso's *The Paulista Synagogue*, one of several anti-semitic books published by him—at prestigious publishing houses—during the 1930s.

Brazil remains in the hands of a voracious colony of Jews, mysteriously aided in their fiendish business deals and moneylending by individuals in high positions nationally.

One group of São Paulo Jews, headed by the agent of international bankers Senhor Numa de Oliveira, holds great influence within circles at the federal and state level; [another is] the Jew Horácio Lafer, federal deputy from the same state, who carries out his activities in the ante-rooms of government ministries, conniving for favors . . .

What do the true *paulistas* of São Paulo say to this? On what basis [are the Jewish] parasites protected? We really have no reason to expect an answer, because we know that in such compromising cases, silence is a traditional Jewish tactic. People with scruples, decent people, provide all necessary explanations.

What took place in 1929, on the heels of the crash of coffee prices, was nothing more than the application by the Paulista Synagogue of the lessons taught by the [forged] *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. . . . The insatiable Jews of the Paulista Synagogue, momentarily finding themselves in a contrary position to the 1930 Revolution, allied themselves with the rejected and ambitious politicians from São Paulo who cowardly poisoned *paulista* public opinion against the central government and the rest of Brazil, taking the state into a civil war in 1932. They persuaded the youth of the state to believe that Getúlio Vargas was an enemy of São Paulo, applying the Jewish tactic that [Henry] Ford calls “inciting feelings of hatred against those people they want to annihilate.” Meanwhile, we Integralists know that the only enemies of São Paulo are the Jews who deceive us.

This was stirred up by an illusion created by the Jewish Satan. This demon does not employ whips or bitter potions; he offers delicious desserts, unheard of luxuries, beautiful women. All of this, meanwhile, hides the eternal abyss of everlasting pain, a ceaseless gnashing of teeth. The process employed by the International Jew is the same: to seduce and trick the Christian.

## Why the Estado Novo?

### Oliveira Vianna

*Reactionary sociologist, law professor, and historian Francisco José de Oliveira Vianna (1883–1951), a proponent of statist authoritarianism, was an instrumental member of the inner circle around Vargas that successfully pressed for a move to the right. As he believed that individuals were subordinate to the higher interest of the national state, he supported the cancellation of civil rights in the name of national security and anticommunism, and counseled Vargas on his corporatist labor legislation, aimed more at social control than at delivering benefits to workers. The letter reproduced here congratulates Antônio Figueira de Almeida, a prolific (and minor) writer of textbooks, and in 1940, the author of a tract on the Estado Novo Constitution published by Vargas's Press and Propaganda Department (DIP). The letter praises Vargas's 1937 military coup and his imposed constitution, which borrowed unapologetically from the fascist charters of Salazar's Portugal, Pilsudski's Poland, and Mussolini's Italy. It also reveals Vianna's curious fixation with the brotherhood fluminenses—persons born in his state of Rio de Janeiro—despite his usual nationalist hostility to local and regional identity.*

My Dear Figueira,

I read your book explaining the November 10th Constitution to the people. I note with pleasure that despite your many tasks as a professor and public servant, you, my dear friend, continue to uphold with dignity the name of your grandfather, the great *fluminense* Andrade Figueira, preserving in your blood his political sense, his zeal for the public interest, and civic vocation.

This political spirit and civic vocation, which you, my noble friend, have inherited, is what inspires the new Constitution. I well noted that

the tradition in your blood has not let you dedicate yourself exclusively to your teaching, to your publication of excellent geography and history books, and your social and literary criticism. You knew that you had to publish, as well, your book about our political and constitutional issues.

On this point, you, my dear friend, are not merely a dignified inheritor of your grandfather's political and civil combativeness; but, as well, you are a good *fluminense*, loyal to the old traditions. Because we, *fluminenses*, have, as a characteristic trait of our collective psyche, a sense of public spirit, love for public life, in sum, a sense of the state, especially our duty to criticize it constructively.

Was it not we, in collaboration with the *paulistas* and *mineiros* [people from Minas Gerais], who constructed the Empire and, with it, the national polity, giving it its juridical organization and legal fiber . . . that has been up to now the guarantee of our public order, and the basis for all of our prosperity and impressive progress?

Groups from other regions brought to our national political life other principles: agitation, argument, political and parliamentary liberty. To us, then, falls the vital mission to construct and evolve the principle of political organization and public authority.

I understand, then, the gesture of my dear friend, in choosing as your subject the Constitution of 1937.

That Constitution comes to restore the authority of the national power, sacrificed by the "soi-disant" liberal spirit that dominated the two previous republican constitutions [1891 and 1934], both decentralized, distorted regionally, localist, and consequently, antinational.

The principle of the sovereignty of national power, happily, has been restored in the 1937 Constitution by a man of the state who came from the far South. . . . Under liberalism, we have the motto, "The king reigns, but he does not govern." Now we have the counter motto: "The king reigns, governs, and administers," something that inspired us throughout the political life of the Empire, in affirmation of the progressive consolidation of central authority.

It is with pleasure, then, that I send my congratulations to you, a son of the *fluminense* valley . . . [speaking with] the voice within the blood, one that is conservative, beckoning one to the side of the principle of authority and antisocialist tradition, a call to the sentiment of the nation.

—Oliveira Vianna

THIS IS THE END OF ONE SECTION OF THIS ARTICLE. DUE TO THE SIZE OF THIS ITEM, IT HAD TO BE DIVIDED INTO MULTIPLE SECTIONS. PLEASE RETURN TO IRIS RESERVES FOR THE OTHER PART OR PARTS OF THIS ARTICLE.