

Among Brazil's objectives in becoming an active belligerent in World War II were "an improved position in world politics; consolidation of its preeminence in South America; a more confident and intimate solidarity with the United States."¹ As planning for the United Nations organization went forward, Brazilian leaders desired a permanent seat on the Security Council.² Discussions, exchanges and commitments beginning in 1938 had by 1942 given the United States strategic air and naval bases in Brazil and had directed trade in key minerals away from the Axis toward American war production. In 1943 Brazil offered to raise an expeditionary force (FEB) that the United States could employ anywhere it thought useful. One of the objectives of this offer was to insure that Washington fulfilled its promises to provide arms. In August 1944 Brazilian troops disembarked in Italy and fought the Germany army continuously until its surrender in May 1945. At the point the Brazilians had some 5,000 troops who were veterans of fourteen months of combat and they had another 10,000 who had completed advanced training in Italy but had not engaged the enemy. The Brazilian authorities had decided even before the fighting stopped to return their troops rapidly and to disband the expeditionary force.

This latter decision was contrary to the spirit of the military alliance with the United States, signed in May 1942. The American officers involved in training the Brazilians thought that they were preparing the nucleus of an enlarged, modernized army. They were keenly aware that what the FEB troops had learned in combat could not be reduced to a series of principles organized in a training manual. Questions that arise from this situation are: (1) Why was the FEB disbanded so precipitously over strenuous American objections? (2) Why were the FEBianos not used as training cadre upon their

return? (3) Given its war aims why did the Brazilian government decline to participate in the allied occupation of Axis territories?

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This question is much more difficult and likely my answer will not be completely satisfactory. With its personnel on active duty likely Washington could have been pressured to provide more military aid, possibly a peace-time version of Lend-Lease. What is startling is that the decision to demobilize was not taken in the euphoria after the collapse of Germany, but fully a month or more before. On April 6, 1945, a directive from the American Army chief of staff said “The War Department considers that it would be most unfortunate for the units of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force to be broken up and demobilized immediately upon their return to Brazil. Since this force is the only completely United States trained unit in the Brazilian Army it is considered of great value as a nucleus for the training of other elements of the Brazilian Army and as a potentially valuable contribution by Brazil to hemisphere defense.”

Because Minister of War Eurico Dutra had given the somewhat lame excuse that his army lacked suitable housing for an entire division, the Americans suggested that the FEBs value could be retained “by breaking it down to units no smaller than regimental combat teams for dispersal throughout the various Brazilian military regions.” Such teams could then be the standard for the divisions of which they were apart. “It is, therefore, desired that every opportunity be taken to impress upon the Brazilian Minister of War, the War Department’s feeling that much of the benefit accruing to Brazil and to the hemisphere defense effort would be vitiated if the force is demobilized on its return to Brazil.”³ Words could not move Dutra, or presumably President Getúlio Vargas.

Officers and troops received demobilization or new assignment orders while still in Italy. Oddly even as the Brazilian general staff was formulating the demobilization, Dutra was pressing the Americans to return the FEB not only fully armed, but with new weapons. He even went so far to say that he would “prefer the FEB to return to Brazil empty handed, unless the personnel could bring with it “new” (and here he repeated “new” several times) arms.” He went even further by telling Brigadier General Hayes Kroner, the senior American officer in Brazil, that in considering the final terms of the financial settlement between their countries that “Brazil should have the same consideration as Great Britain.”⁴

¹ Oswaldo Aranha to Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Jan. 25, 1943, Aranha archive, CPDOC-Rio.

² Edward Stettinius, Memo of Conversation with Ambassador Carlos Martins (at Nelson Rockefeller’s house), Washington, Sept. 27, 1944, 832.00/9-2744, National Archives, Washington DC (NA). Dumbarton Oaks conference was Aug. 21 to Oct. 4, 1944. Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Roosevelt favored a seat for Brazil and proposed it at the conference, but that “both the British and the Russians emphatically opposed our view.” See Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (NY, 1948), II, 1678. Aranha’s successor as foreign minister, Pedro Leão Velloso Neto, commented in Jan. 1945 that “We did not enter this war in order to exact rewards.... But our allies will be the first to realize that such action presupposes the admission of Brazil among the powers....”: *A Noite*, Rio de Janeiro, Jan. 4, 1945. Example of Brazilian diplomatic position see *Foreign relations of the United States : diplomatic papers, 1945. General : the United Nations*, Volume I (1945). pp. 42-43 “Record of Informal Meeting with Diplomatic Representatives of Certain American Republics, [all except Argentina & El Salvador] Held at Washington, Jan. 31, 1945, 3 p.m.” RSC Lot 60-D Box 54:ISO Doc 243: Ambassador Martins speaking: “The continued cooperation of Latin America [my comment: read Brazil] in peace as well as in war requires that it be given a permanent seat on the council.”

³ Col. F.W. Edwards (Deputy Chief, Pan American Group, OPD –WD GS) Memo, April 6, 1945, OPD 336.2 Brazil, Section V, Cases 85 --, RG 165, Box 967, Modern Military Branch (MMB), NA.

⁴ BG Hayes Kroner,