

# **THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE BRAZILIAN ARMY DURING THE FIRST VARGAS GOVERNMENT (1930-1945)**

## **1 - INTRODUCTION**

The reasons that led Getúlio Vargas to become president in 1930 are varied. One may, on one hand, state that the Revolution of 1930 was a consequence of the friction between antagonistic social structures, which destabilized the republican framework established in 1889 and that in the end collapsed, providing the opportunity for Vargas to become President. On the other hand, one may consider that Getúlio Vargas was a canny political leader, who took advantage from the vacuum formed by the friction between various political groups. His rise to the presidency can be understood as the result of an opportune and charismatic action.

One cannot fully explain a historical fact without considering both social structure and individual action. Indeed, Vargas seized the opportunity to assume power in 1930. However, it was the collapse of the economic and social structure, materialized by the 1929 crisis and the exhaustion of the country's existing political model, that allowed him to act.

The period between 1930, the year of the revolution, and 1945, the year of Vargas' resignation, it is characterized by an active role of the military. Vargas' 15-year rule was supported by various sectors of the armed forces, especially the army. Any analysis of the period, whether focused on structures or individuals, is incomplete if the political role of the Brazilian Army is not considered.

Understanding the political role of the Army military during the first Vargas administration is the main objective of this article. To make this work clearer, the 15 years period was divided in 4 parts: emergence of tenentismo and the Revolution (1930), Provisional Government (1930-34), Constitutional Government (1934-37) and the Estado Novo (1937-1945).

## **2 - EMERGENCE OF TENENTISM AND REVOLUTION**

The election of Artur Bernardes in the early 1920's had an impact over the military. Boris Fausto (2008, p. 306) states that "it was in the course of the electoral dispute that the dissatisfaction of the military came to the surface". Within the army, there were officers who thought that Artur Bernardes was an anti-military politician. To make matters worse, in October 1921 two letters were published, supposedly written by Bernardes, in which the President insulted Brazil's former President Hermes da Fonseca. The letters were later proved to be false, but it didn't prevent the army's military from opposing Bernardes' government, precipitating the outbreak of the tenentista movement.

Between 1922 and 1927 the young lieutenants were a source of immense instability for the government, beginning with the revolt of Forte de Copacabana (July 5,

1922), followed by the Paulista Revolution (July 1924) and the Rio Grande do Sul Revolution (October 1924), culminating with the formation of the Prestes Column in the same year, which lasted until 1927. Arthur Bernardes spent practically the whole time of his presidency under exceptional security measures.

It is not simple to define the ideology of the Tenentismo. There were many divergences among them, though it can be stated that it was a movement against the political establishment. In a certain way, it was the authentic manifestation of young people who admired the modernity - both technological and political - that emerged in the main capitalist centers but was taking too long to arrive in Brazil.

To understand how the Tenentes thought, it is necessary to examine the environment within the Army during that time. The Military School of Praia Vermelha was closed in 1904, and only in 1911, with the creation of the Military School of Realengo, the graduation of the army officers returned to Rio de Janeiro. José Murilo de Carvalho (2007, p.75) states that the purpose of the Military School of Praia Vermelha was to "graduate citizen-soldiers", under the influence of the positivist doctrine.

The school was the focus of many revolts, which made it to be closed in 1904. During the government of Hermes da Fonseca, under the recommendation of the Baron of Rio Branco, Brazil's foreign minister, attempts were made to change the profile of army officers, emphasizing the "professional-soldier" in lieu of the "citizen-soldier".

Between 1906 and 1910, three classes of officers graduated in Germany. They became known as the Young Turks. In 1911, the Military School of Realengo was created, which purpose was to train not the citizen-soldier, partly military and partly civilian, but the professional-soldier, under the influence of the teachings acquired by the Young Turks in Germany. The consequence of this professionalization of the military cadres was that they became more unaware of the national politics, and more inflexible and intolerant to the abuses that occurred in the various federal states, especially regarding to the power of the regional oligarchies. Notwithstanding, dissatisfaction did not impel the Young Turks to act decisively in politics.

In the 1920's, a new generation of officers, later called the Tenentes, thought differently from their antecessors – the Young Turks - and began to effectively act against the political class. The Tenentes' action became more and more threatening for the national government, during the presidency of Artur Bernardes. The approach of the Tenentes was criticized by senior officers, who were influenced by the more conservative professional-soldier tradition of the Young Turks.

The Tenentes didn't have a clear proposal. They probably wanted a reformist intervention, on authoritarian grounds, so that the country could develop rapidly, without the slow and inefficient political process to get in the way. They were against authentic, European-style liberalism, they were didn't support direct elections or universal suffrage. They planned to strengthen the central power with a strong President and educate the people, in a kind of positivist ideology of the early 1900's but adapted to a much more

complex and multifaceted context, since the country had already been permeated by various political ideologies, including socialism and anarcho-syndicalism.

In the 1929 elections, President Washington Luiz elected his successor, also from São Paulo, Júlio Prestes. During the campaign, the opposition main political group, labeled "Liberal Alliance" didn't accept the result. Leaders from Minas Gerais - in theory the ones who should have succeeded Washington Luiz - and Rio Grande do Sul were resentful and some young radicals, such as Oswaldo Aranha and Lindolfo Collor sought to unite with more conservative leaders of the Aliança Liberal, with the intention of provoking a revolution.

To make things worse, Paraíba's political leader João Pessoa was killed. Although the context of his death had apparently nothing to do with national politics, the young Tenentes tried to take advantage of episode.

Moreover, the gauchos no longer accepted the secondary role they had in national politics, and some of them rallied around Getulio Vargas, who, in a shrewd manner, managed to seize more power by occupying the vacuum generated by the cracks in the oligarchic system. The foundations for the 1930 revolution had been laid.

### **The Response of Senior Military Leaders**

The Liberal Alliance, headed by gauchos and the "Tenentes civis" (civil lieutenants), Lindolfo Collor, Oswaldo Aranha and others, received support from the Tenentes and some political leaders from Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. According to Skidmore (2007, p.38) "[the Alliance] would have posed a serious but not mortal threat to the incumbent government" since the President relied on the support of the Army's guns to stay in power.

One of the main reasons for the fall of the Oligarchic Republic was the perception of the military high-ups that the Army shouldn't take up arms against the movement that marched towards the capital. One must bear in mind that the Tenentes were already part of that revolutionary group. About a possible support of the Army for the government of Washington Luiz, General Tasso Fragoso affirmed that "nobody would wish that their son put on a uniform and die in the front line for a man so frankly divorced from collective interests".

A few weeks after the rebels began their march towards Rio de Janeiro, a group of senior military officers, headed by Mena Barreto and Tasso Fragoso, went to the Catete Palace to oust President Washington Luiz who, after a personal intervention of Cardinal Leme, decided to resign. The military junta ruled for 10 days and on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Getúlio took charge. Skidmore (2007, p.39) states that "in 1930, the commanders of the Army and Navy found themselves in a position that would become increasingly familiar in Brazil's subsequent history: the role of arbiter of national politics".

### **3 - PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT (1930-34)**

In the Army, part of the military did not join the revolution immediately, and when they did, it was because there were no longer conditions to act against it. José Murilo de Carvalho states that “the consolidation of military power and the definition of the content of its political action would still demand a long effort, due to the clash between antagonistic points of view both inside and outside the organization. This happened due to several reasons. The first one was because the revolution was not the result of a consensus within the Armed Forces” (Carvalho, 2005, p.62).

The idea that there was unanimity within the institution when the 1930 revolution took place is mistaken. The high-ranked officers opposed to sharp changes in the political regime and only acted for the revolution when they realized that they were at the brink of a bloodshed between the members of the Army.

According to Carvalho (2005, pp. 63), "the Army that emerged from the revolution was a fragmented organization and had a difficult time to survive in the chaotic environment that followed". Both the President and the military knew that it was necessary to recover the unity of command in the Armed Forces.

To whom should Vargas entrust the mission of commanding the armed forces, with the aim of achieving the indispensable unity of command? The answer was not simple. On the one hand, the older military, colonels and generals, were viewed with suspicion by the younger generation, as they were considered part of the old Oligarchic Republic.

On the other hand, it would be hard to find a tenente that could be trusted with the mission. The lieutenants had no clear ideology or single leadership. Furthermore, the eventual choice of a low-ranking officer to command the Armed Forces would harm the hierarchy and military rules, which would be unacceptable. The solution found was to choose a middle-ranking officer who could dialogue with both the lieutenants and the high-ranked, while being loyal to Vargas. Gois Monteiro and Eurico Gaspar Dutra were the ones Vargas was looking for.

#### **The Tenentes reach the government**

One of Vargas' main concerns from 1930 onwards was to control regional political forces in the states, so that he could implement his project of national development. There were two important sectors of civil society that opposed Vargas' strategy for seizing power. The first was formed by a small but growing class whose economic base was in the city. At that time, their main goal was the promulgation of a new constitution that would give the country an authentic political representation, elected by a clear and periodic process and capable of implementing efficient economic policies. The losers of the revolution formed the second group. Members of the outdated political system that gave support for Oligarchic Republic were part of this group. They feared

that Vargas would promote a major political rupture with his attempt to centralizing power.

The concentration of power engendered by Vargas distinct from the decentralized federalist model of the Oligarchic Republic fostered disagreements and constant clashes between old and new political forces. Vargas realized that he needed the states to be governed by his allies. For this, he relied on the lieutenants' support, who soon became the main Interventores.

### **Tenentes Interventores: the height of influence**

Several political groups disputed over the appointment of the Interventores, who would be chosen by Vargas to replace the former state presidents toppled by the revolution. The disputes for governing northern and north-eastern states had become increasingly violent, which led the Federal Government to appoint Juarez Távora, a tenente, as military delegate for the whole region. His action zone stretched from Acre to Bahia. The Interventores of all these states should report to him.

The action of the Tenentes was also significant in São Paulo, a state whose political class had been defeated by the 1930 Revolution and for this reason opposed to every Vargas' initiatives. The first Interventor for São Paulo was the tenente João Alberto, who, besides not being natural from São Paulo, was authoritarian and had a poor capacity of dialogue. He was then rejected by regional political sectors. It is worth remembering that Vargas adopted a mistaken strategy for São Paulo, as he could have appointed a more moderate Interventor, especially one from the Democratic Party (PD), a small political party from São Paulo that supported the 1930 Revolution and expected to be rewarded for this. With João Alberto's appointment, Vargas displeased both the PD and the former members of the PRP. Vargas believed that João Alberto at the head of the São Paulo government, would disarticulate the opposition and strengthen the central government. But just the opposite happened, and Vargas' relationship with the Paulistas became increasingly conflictual. While the paulistas demanded a new constitution, Vargas wanted to beef up his political power both nationally and regionally.

### **The Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932**

The flawed relationship between paulistas and the central government led them to an armed conflict. In July 1932, political groups started the Constitutionalist Revolution. Despite the considerable adherence of the citizens of São Paulo to the revolution, without the military support of the other states the rebels knew that they could only do so much. Old dissident forces in Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul attempted to start an armed revolt against the central government. These forces were led by two former patriarchs of the Old Republic: Arthur Bernardes, from Minas Gerais, and Borges de Medeiros, from Rio Grande do Sul. However, the Interventores did not join the revolt (Olegário Maciel and Benedito Valladares in Minas Gerais and Flores da Cunha in Rio Grande do Sul).

Skidmore (2007, p.50) affirms that "Vargas had been careful in gathering support for the fight with São Paulo. He had befriended the leaders of Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul, arguing that the Paulista conspiracy could not benefit them".

The 1932 revolution was the first post-revolutionary moment in which Vargas needed the army's support. As Skidmore (2007, p. 51) puts it, "most importantly, Vargas had secured the support of the military, which remained firm, except for a few commanders from distant places such as Mato Grosso. Gois Monteiro's unconditional support for Vargas in such a delicate moment gave him enormous political influence with the central government".

### **Consequences of the 1932 revolution**

Despite having a military victory, Vargas had to extend his hand to the "defeated" and had to start the constituent process. The President was dealing with a very precarious balance of forces that, up to that moment, had worked in his favor, but there were no guarantees of that in the future. The support of the military was fundamental to Vargas' victory in the conflict with the Paulistas but in the federal states the constitutionalist movement was growing rapidly, reaching the point of uniting rival political forces, such as the old oligarchs with the new urban classes. The President knew that it was only a matter of time before another destabilizing movement popped up. According to Fausto (2008, p.350) "the São Paulo war had a side facing to the past and another facing the future. The need for a new constitution embraced both those who hoped returning to the old oligarchic forms of power and those who hoped establishing a liberal democracy in the country" (2008, p.350).

In the course of 1933, the tenentismo started to lose traction. On the one hand, it did not achieve a solid political base within the states it governed; on the other, it lost strength within the Army, where it threatened (hampered, jeopardized) hierarchy and discipline. Thus, at the end of 1933, the group of the Tenentes was mostly disarticulated. A part of them joined Vargas and the regional political forces. The other part sided with radical parties, either to the right or the left. In effect, "the 1933 elections, which would lead to the 1934 Constitution, marked the exhaustion of a movement of young officers that had shaken the foundations of the First Republic, played a decisive role in the Revolution of 1930 and had seized power in the first years of the Vargas era. Tenentismo became weak because it proved incapable of building a solid political base, necessary for the implementation of its project of changing the country's structures". (CPDOC, 2012).

One cannot, however, minimize the Tenentes legacy to the direction taken by the country. The 1934 Constitution fulfilled to a great extent many of their desires. It provided for the nationalization of mines and waterfalls, deemed essential to the country's economic and military defense. It also established free primary education with compulsory attendance. For the first time the subject of National Security appeared, with the creation of a National Security High Council, presided by the President and integrated by ministers and the chiefs of staff of the Army and the Navy. Military service remained

compulsory. There was also an interesting constitutional provision that should be highlighted. McCann states that the "1934 Constitution declared that the Armed Forces were permanent national institutions and, within the law, essentially obedient to their superiors. (...) As Alfred Stepan observed, the "within the law" clause in practice authorized the military to obey the president only if they thought it right, since obedience depended on whether they considered the presidential order legal. (...) politicians wished to constitutionally impose an interventionist or moderating role to the armed forces, to which they could appeal during disputes between the Executive and Congress. (...) this was a blow against the centralizing tendency of the 1930 Revolution and against the hope of isolating the military from politics." (McCann, 2004, p. 427).

On July 15, 1934, by indirect vote of the National Constituent Assembly, Getúlio Vargas was elected Brazil's President for a four-years term, until 1938. Direct elections for president should be made thereafter.

#### **4 - CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT (1934-37)**

In 1922, Mussolini assumed power in Italy and Stalin became the First Secretary of the Comintern. The Nazi Party won the parliamentary elections in Germany in 1933 and Hitler became führer in 1934. As a background for all these events are the consequences of the economic crisis of 1929 and a growing disbelief of many Europeans in democracy, in the market economy and in liberal values.

In Brazil, from 1934 onwards, a growing polarization of ideas began to take shape, which stemmed from the Soviet socialism and the nazi-fascism. A growing instability contrasted with the public enthusiasm due to promulgation of the new Constitution.

#### **Polarization to the right: Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB)**

The Ação Integralista Brasileira (Brazilian Integralist Action) was a political organization of national scope - something rarely seen in the country until then, since the political parties of the Oligarchic Republic operated only regionally - created in October 1932, after the Constitutionalist Revolution, by Plínio Salgado and other intellectuals.

The AIB can be seen as practical consequence of a nationalist branch of the Modernist Movement of the 1920s called Verde-amarelismo (Green-yellowism), which advocated that Brazilian art should be pure, without European influences. As time passed, the verde-amarelistas became more and more nationalistic, as their motto attested: "originality or death!"

Plinio Salgado, journalist and writer, a name strongly linked to Verde-amarelismo, travelled to Italy in 1930, where he met Benito Mussolini. Plinio Salgado was impressed by the fascist ideology, linked to order, progress and an exacerbated nationalist spirit. Back to Brazil, he then tried to create a movement to give substance to the verde-amarelo

movement, which made it capable of interfering in the national political scene. This is how AIB came into being.

The guiding principles of AIB can be found in its Integralist Manifesto, which defended a rigid organization of the State and society through Corporativism. They were against most of the liberal values, rejected both the multi-party system and socialism. AIB was organized in a hierarchical structure, just like fascism in Europe, with a paramilitary aspect. They had uniforms and adopted a set of symbols and rituals under Plínio Salgado's leadership. In 1937 AIB launched Plínio Salgado as a candidate for the presidential election, scheduled for January 1938.

### **Polarisation to the left: Aliança Nacional Libertadora (ANL)**

In 1935, communist militants and some left-wing lieutenants, allied with other smaller groups, launched the Aliança Nacional Libertadora (ANL), in Rio de Janeiro, on March 30<sup>th</sup>. The President of honor of the ANL, chosen by acclamation, was Luis Carlos Prestes, who was in the USSR at that time and would soon return to Brazil.

In Skidmore's (2007, p. 53) words, "the legalist part of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) organized a popular movement called ANL". Thus, the ideology of the ANL was closely aligned with communism, coordinating its actions with those of the PCB. The ANL's platform defended the cancellation of "imperialist debts", the nationalization of foreign companies and the extinction of latifundia.

### **The Communist Intentona (1935)**

Luis Carlos Prestes, leader of the PCB, attended the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Comintern tried to get closer to the ANL when he returned to Brazil. The ANL widened its scope and included the urban middle class that sympathized with Prestes and many lower and middle-ranking military. In a few months, the ANL achieved great projection, with approximately 70 to 100 thousand members.

As the political tension in the country increased, with the hardening of positions on the right and left, and with frequent street conflicts, the ANL promoted, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, demonstrations to commemorate the anniversary of the tenentist uprisings of 1922 and 1924. On the occasion, Prestes wrote a manifesto proposing the overthrow of the Vargas government and demanding "all power to the ANL". Vargas used the National Security Law, promulgated in April of that year, to close the ANL.

Once it was illegal, the ANL was no longer able to hold large demonstrations which made her to become distant from the popular masses that sympathized with its ideology. The idea of an armed uprising to overthrow the government gained momentum, and on November 23<sup>rd</sup> members of ANL started a series of uprisings inside military units, initially in Rio Grande do Norte. Other uprisings followed in Recife and in Rio de Janeiro. During the execution of those movements, there was armed conflict between rebels and



legalist forces, until the rebels surrendered. The uprising had consequences diametrically opposed to those desired by the insurgents. It facilitated the adoption of an anti-communist position by Vargas and the military leaders and jeopardized the future of the ANL, which was definitively extinguished in 1935, after its complete disbanding. In the words of Boris Fausto (2008, p.161), "in itself, the 1935 uprising - reminiscent of the tenentist revolts of the 1920s - was a failure".

### **The internal political process**

In the period between 1934-37, it can be said that both the ANL and the AIB held the two dominant political positions: left and right. According to Skidmore, "the components (...) of the 1930 revolution had been local political groupings united only by the common desire to overthrow the ruling elite of the Old Republic. They had now been eclipsed by more ambitious, better disciplined, broader-based and more radical national movements."

There was a growing fear - mainly from the conservative and liberal classes - that the country would become a South American version of Nazi Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union. The sectors interested in the conservative modernization project did not believe that the existing democratic institutions were able to preserve the established order, so the authoritarian current began to get stronger and to interfere in the national politics. This current was integrated mainly by the army's top brass.

It was at this moment that the interests of the military high command met Vargas' interests and, from 1934 onwards, Vargas' rapprochement with the Army leadership grew stronger, reaching its apogee from 1937 onwards and remaining so until his resignation in 1945.

To safeguard the country's governability under an unstable scenario, the President took authoritarian measures that made it easier for him to keep antagonists forces at bay, while pleased military sectors at the same time. Following the workers' strikes of 1934, there was a series of strikes in many cities across the country, culminating with a violent clash between anti-fascists and integralists in São Paulo in October 1934. In response, the federal government passed the National Security Law in 1935, under protests from the lower ranks of the Army and Navy. That law defined that strikes, the incitement of the military for violence and subversive propaganda were crimes.

### **The Strengthening of the Brazilian Army**

Vargas acted upon the Army in two distinct moments, aiming to make allies for his project, since role of the military was fundamental for the country's governability. First, the President tried to unify the thinking of the military leadership, through a rapid process of depuration, unleashed after the Paulista Revolution of 1932, a moment in which there was freedom of action for this. According to Boris Fausto, "by the end of

1933, 36 of the 40 active generals had been promoted to the post by the new government [of Vargas]. A group loyal to Getúlio Vargas was consolidated, and two figures stood out: Gois Monteiro and Eurico Gaspar Dutra. Gois Monteiro formulated the Army policy and Dutra executed it. The two switched places in the top military positions after 1937: Gois was Chief of Staff from 1937-43; Dutra was Minister of War from 1937-1945, when he stepped aside to run for president, being replaced by Gois Monteiro. Monteiro was also at the head of the Ministry of War between 1934 and 1935. In this regard, “the loyalty of the new group in charge of the Army to the Vargas government, despite having been dented by some episodes, did not break until 1945”. (FAUSTO, 2008, p. 358).

After reforming the Army’s top brass, Vargas initiated a second change, operationalized by Gois Monteiro and Dutra. He increased the Army’s manpower and re-equipped it. Table 01 quantifies this change:

Personnel	1930	1932	1934	1936	1940	1944
Officers	4185	5037	6103	6585	6429	10087
Sergeants	43812	57358	74079	74284	-	161213
Total	47997	62395	80182	80869	93000	171300

Source: CARVALHO, 2007, p.87.

The constant increase in the Army 's numbers was observed, which allowed the Army to double in size within a decade (1930-1940). The most significant increase, without considering 1944, was in the 1932-34 biennium, when the number increased by 30%. The Army was strengthened thereafter since it would become an indispensable element for the political stability in the period. Table 02 shows the total military expenditure as a percentage of the total expenditure dedicated to the other ministries:

1929	12,5
1930	12,3
1931	13,3
1932	25,0
1933	17,6
1934	19,6
1935	18,1
1936	17,6
1937	19,9
1938	19,2
1939	18,1
1940	19,0
1941	19,3
1942	23,5
1943	17,4

1944	18,4
Source: Carvalho, 2007, p. 77	

In 1932, the Army's budget almost doubled because of the Paulista Revolution. In the following years, however, investment levels did not return to those before 1932, but remained on an average 6% higher than in previous periods. According to Frank McCann, "Góis and Dutra wanted an Army with modern weapons and equipment. The combination was clear: they would give Vargas peace and internal security, and he would give them modern arms and industries that would sustain the Armed Forces' continued development (McCann, 2004, p. 528). It can be stated that there was from Vargas a clear intention to strengthen the Army and give it more prestige after 1932, in a process that would reach its peak after 1937, during the Estado Novo.

## **5 – ESTADO NOVO (1937-45)**

The New State was implemented on November 10, 1937, when the military police surrounded the National Congress and impeded the congressmen from entering. A few hours, in the same day, Getúlio announced a new political phase, with the entry into force of a new Constitution, with an authoritarian bias, inspired by the Polish Charter.

To break with the democratic order, the President should count on a great support from the conservative forces, particularly the Army, without which he would certainly not have been able to carry out the coup. The Estado Novo was implemented without major upheavals and, to a certain extent, with the complacency of the opposition sectors. Boris Fausto reinforces this idea, stating that "the Estado Novo was implemented by an authoritarian hand and without major turmoil. The popular movement and the communists had been neutralized and could not react; the ruling class accepted the coup as inevitable and even beneficial. The Congress was emasculated to the point that eighty of its members brought solidarity to Getúlio on November 13, while many of their colleagues were imprisoned". (FAUSTO, 2008, p.365). The main reason for the coup to be supported was the delicate political situation of the country. This certainly made the many sectors of society believe that the country was on the verge of collapse. This belief can be explained by three phenomena.

### **The international scene**

The phenomenon was the international scenario. Regarding to this, McCann (2004, p. 527), affirms that "the world scenario in 1937 was exceptionally frightening. The Spanish Civil War indicated that in 1932 Brazil was lucky not to have attracted foreign intervention, but that luck was unlikely to be repeated. The USSR's involvement in the 1935 fiasco aroused fears that the Soviets would try again if they had the chance, and Nazi Germany had already shown too much attention to the conditions of Germanic communities in Southern Brazil. Old fears of losing the natural resources [...] provoked nightmares in Brazilian officials and well-informed politicians." According to conservative leaders, the

moment demanded maximum caution, with no room for alignments with fascist, nazi, or communist movements. To avoid such oscillations, power had to be centralized to its maximum extent.

While Vargas' power strengthened, the military exerted greater political influence on him. An example of the support given to the military to actively participate in the national political directions can be seen in the letter from Oswaldo Aranha - influential politician and diplomat - to Gois Monteiro, at the time when Aranha was ambassador in the United States:

Our main concern is providing military organization to the military class, in order to safeguard the authority, maintain the unity and to defend the integrity of the country. As for the rest [...] on must educate the people and give freedom to Brazil. [...] Russia, Germany, Italy are in perpetual economic convulsions, stuck in the instability of a situation that will throw these peoples into war or anarchy. We must not drag Brazil down these paths. I must confess that it seemed to me that a regime of force would be useful to us. [...] the military organization in Brazil is a necessity both internationally and domestically. [...] The world is becoming more complicated, and our continent is starting to get nervous". (Oswaldo Aranha to Gois Monteiro, Washington, Mar 9<sup>th</sup>, 1935. CPDOC, 2015).

The words of an influential politician like Oswaldo Aranha shows the public concern with the direction the country had been taking. According to some, the military would have the duty to maintain the political and institutional order, even if the democratic order had to be sacrificed to do so. There was a clear impression that a great catastrophe was brewing on the international scene.

### **The 1938 elections and the Cohen Plan**

The Constitution of 1934 foresaw direct scrutiny for president every 4 years. Vargas was elected in 1934 by indirect vote, but that would be an exception. Thus, during 1936 and on the first months of 1937, the candidacies for presidential succession were defined. General elections had been scheduled for January 1938. It is important to notice that, in accordance with the agreement made in 1934, Vargas could not run for a re-election.

On one side, the Constitutionalist Party, composed of the PD and some other smaller parties, launched the name of Armando Salles de Oliveira, who would be the opposition candidate to the government. On the other side, Vargas' official candidate to succession was José Américo de Almeida, a former minister of Vargas from the state of Paraíba. Almeida was supported by political leaders from Minas Gerais and the Northeast, by Vargas' loyal forces in São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Besides these two candidacies, Plínio Salgado, would also take part in the elections, representing the Integralists.

The process of political candidacies and propaganda, which would culminate in the holding of elections in early 1938, was a factor of great instability. That contributed to the elaboration of the Cohen Plan and the consequent democratic rupture in 1937.

With a few months to go before the 1938 elections, the military did not want Vargas to be succeeded. To this end, they tried to exploit the political radicalism of the period, especially that of the communists. In September 1937, the Cohen Plan was revealed, supposedly discovered by the Army's General Staff. The Cohen Plan consisted in triggering an armed revolution in Brazil, led by USSR's Communist International.

The revealing of the Cohen Plan by the military was all Vargas needed to break electoral process that would take place in 1938. By majority vote, the Congress approved exceptional security measures and suspended constitutional guarantees for 90 days.

One may consider, from a strategic point of view, that the Cohen Plan achieved the objectives of Vargas and the military. Skidmore says that Gois Monteiro played a leading role, because "in September 1937, Vargas' military commanders managed to isolate the opposition in the main states. Plans for a coup awaited some drastic action in Rio de Janeiro. Impatient due to Vargas' maneuvers, Gois Monteiro resorted to a familiar ploy: the Army's General Staff suddenly "discovered" a document that would be the battle plan for a communist revolution. The document was taken to Dutra and Getulio, who approved its use to prepare the coup. On September 30, Dutra denounced the communist plot from the "Cohen Plan", and on the following day, October 1, Congress approved the suspension of the constitutional rights" (SKIDMORE, 2007, p. 59).

The document containing the Cohen Plan was initially forged by integralists and delivered to Gois by Captain Olímpio Mourão Filho, who was an integralist. Mourão Filho, at that time, considered that the integralists could, after the establishment of a dictatorship, occupy important positions in the new government. In fact, there were points of intersection between the Integralist ideology and what the Army wanted for the country. However, the Army's military did not make room for the Integralists in the structure set up under the Estado Novo, and completely excluded them from power. In the end, AIB felt "betrayed" and tried to unleash a putsch in 1938, attempting to assassinate Vargas, which failed. They were extinguished as a political party and quickly lost the political weight thereafter.

### **The Brazilian Army and the Estado Novo**

José Murilo de Carvalho (1999, p. 56) states that in the period 1930-45, the relationship between Vargas and the military underwent three phases: courtship (1930-37), honeymoon (1937-45) and divorce (after 1945). In Carvalho's view, the "honeymoon" phase coincides with the Estado Novo period. In effect, the years 1937-45 were years of great closeness between Vargas and the military. That only changed in the final years of his government. During that period, it is important to notice that the Army was led mostly by Dutra and Gois Monteiro. Table 03 shows who led Army during the Vargas' years:

<b>Table 03 – Ministries of War and Army's Chiefs of Staff (1930-45)</b>									
	1930	1931	1932-33	1934	1935	1936	1937-43	1944	1945

Min. War	L.Castro		E.Cardoso	<b>Gois</b>	J.Gomes		<b>Dutra</b>		<b>Gois</b>
Ch. Staff	Malan	Tasso	A. Neves	Silveira	Pantaleão	Andrade	<b>Gois</b>	Cardoso	Barcelos
Source: CARVALHO (1999, p. 60).									

Based on Table 3, it can be noticed that in the years 1937-45, Dutra and Gois were the Army's main commanders, practically without alternation in their functions, with Dutra at the head of the General Staff and Gois at the head of the Ministry of War. This key to understanding the Army's political role in the period.

In a General's meeting on 27 September 1937, it was stated that "We want nothing. We only wish to work for the Army and for the salvation of the homeland" (McCann, 2004, p. 508). Dutra, in a speech on the day of the Estado Novo coup, declared that "the homeland and the regime will rest under our guard [...] in defense of internal order, of political integrity, of national sovereignty. This is our mission" (McCann, 2004, p. 508).

Dutra and Gois' greatest concerns were first to curb the revolutionary forces that threatened the stability of Getúlio Vargas' government, achieved by the Estado Novo. Second, with the situation stabilized, the time had come to increase the national military power and develop infrastructure and technology.

The military paid special attention to the geopolitical issues of the period. At that time Brazil was starting its industrialization process in an accelerated way and the acquisition of a steel mill was crucial for that process. Steel was one of the most important resources for industrialization, both for the implementation of the infrastructure and for the manufacturing of capital goods. Steel was expensive and the course of industrialization certainly could not be afforded by massive imports, since Brazil lacked foreign currency reserves. The military, as well as Vargas, believed in the importance of a steel mill and so Brazil started negotiating with the United States for the construction of a steel mill in the country.

"In June 1939, during a visit to the United States by the Brazilian Army's Chief of Staff, General Gois Monteiro, the American government manifested its willingness to cooperate with the Brazilian economic and military re-equipment, in exchange for our collaboration in the continental defense plans outlined by Washington. At the time, a group of technicians from United States Steel was sent to Brazil and, because of the favorable conclusions of their studies, the Preparatory Commission of the Steel Plan was installed" (CPDOC, 2015).

The location and the way of implementation of the Volta Redonda Plant were defined. In July 1940, with a part financed by the US government, another financed by the US Exim Bank and third part financed by Brazil. There was, however, an internal disagreement on how the plant would be managed. It was not defined whether it would be multinational or totally national. Private groups and Vargas himself leaned towards an association with foreigners, whilst the military were against this. The builder of the Volta Redonda Steel Mill would be United States Steel (USS), but a few months later, it gave up due to uncertainties about the safety since the mill could be targeted by the Axis countries.

It is unknown whether there is a direct causal relationship between USS' withdrawal and the approval of the Code of Mines, months earlier. The fact is that the Mining Code prohibited the participation of foreigners in mining and metallurgy activities. At this point, one can consider that the military position was the one that prevailed. The negotiations were resumed in 1941, when Vargas took a diplomatic offensive. He realized that the US would need Brazil's support for its war effort against the Axis countries. After months of negotiation the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN) was created in 1941, whose plant started operating in 1946. Boris Fausto (2008, p.368) highlights the role exerted by the military in the creation of CSN, when he states that "the Armed Forces were responsible for the installation of a state-owned steel industry, although not all the recommendations of their representatives were accepted".

The military also influenced the management of the oil issue. During the Second World War and after, oil gained great economic importance. Thus, in 1938 the government launched a decree that nationalized oil refining, whether extracted in Brazil or abroad, and created the National Petroleum Council (CNP), which was run by the Army until 1943. In the 1950s, Horta Barbosa's ideas helped the government decide to create Petrobras.

Other policies engendered by the Estado Novo and of clear national-developmental orientation were the Water Code of 1937, nationalizing mines, and waterfalls. The same was done with industries considered essential to the country's military defense: they could be nationalized if necessary, by a deadline set by law. The Economic Mobilization Coordination Office was also created in 1938, headed by former tenente João Alberto, whose function was to create and implement a policy of substitution of imports.

Also notable in the period was the creation of the National Security Council, which attempted to associate questions related to the country's security and economic issues, further broadening the scope of the military's actions. Finally, the government approved the purchase of military material, especially Krupp cannons, warships from Great Britain and Italy, rifles from Czechoslovakia and aircraft from the United States. The outbreak of the Second War, however, altered these purchases.

### **The Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB), domestic politics and Vargas' resignation**

From 1942, with the entry of the United States in the War, it became clear that Brazil could take part in the conflict. On 31 August 1942, Brazil declared war on the Axis, and later sent the FEB to Italy, in 1944. From that moment on, the international scenario started to act against the dictatorship of the Estado Novo. After all, Vargas sent 25,000 troops to Europe, to fight for democratic values. There was a contradiction in that act since the Vargas government itself was clearly anti-democratic. The first major manifestation on the subject occurred on October 24, 1943, when some influential politicians, such as Afonso Arinos and Artur Bernardes published the Mineiros' Manifesto.

Fearing an exacerbation of tempers and after several other demonstrations, Vargas issued the "additional act to the Charter of 1937" on 28 February 1945, setting a period of ninety days for the scheduling of new general elections. Subsequently, a new Electoral Code was issued, and a date had been set for the election of a Constituent Assembly, who would pass a new Constitution in 1946.

Another factor that contributed to Vargas' downfall was the trade unionism. Vargas was supported by the workers' unions, which made many think that he could stay in power sustained by a unionist government, something like Peron was doing in Argentina. The subsequent creation of the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) and the "queremista" movement increased suspicions.

The military viewed this with great apprehension. In 1945, Gois Monteiro returned from a mission in Montevideo and assumed the Ministry of War, this time not to support Vargas but to prepare his succession. Gradually, the military leadership distanced itself from Vargas. José Murilo de Carvalho (2005, p. 112) states that "alongside Vargas remained a few generals and some officers who were former members of the FEB in Italy, such as [...] Odilio Denys and Estillac Leal [...]". The author continues "military were pressed to end the dictatorship which they themselves had helped to establish. The widespread pressures and the fear that Vargas would try to remain in power sustained by popular support, frustrating the electoral process already underway, led to his deposition by the Armed Forces in October 1945".

Vargas was finally forced by the Army command to resign on 29 October 1945, retreating to São Borja, publicly declaring that he agreed with the resignation. The honeymoon between the military and Vargas ended, after the influence of external and internal factors. The FEB was a numerous expeditionary force and manifested the great contradiction between totalitarianism and democracy. In the end, democratic forces collapsed the pillars of the dictatorship of the Estado Novo. The military followed the process closely, acting as a conservative force and avoiding the predominance of any radical positions.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In the first chapter, we attempted to explain the revolutionary process based on two fundamental structural factors: the emergence of the tenentismo and the rise of Rio Grande do Sul as a national political force, in opposition to São Paulo. To the two structural factors, a third could be added, which was the timely action of Getúlio Vargas who, in 1928, became the most prominent political leader from Rio Grande do Sul. Two years later he marched triumphantly towards the Catete Palace, taking advantage of a rupture in the established order, commanded by the military.

Thus, it can be concluded that the troubled political scenario and Vargas' ability were the predominant factors for revolution to succeed. However, none of this would have been enough hadn't the Army's military supported the movement, first with the Tenentes



and finally with the generals, who preferred to intervene to avoid a bloodbath among their compatriots, leaving Washington Luiz with no other option but to resign.

After assuming the presidency of the Provisional Government in 1930, Vargas had to deal with a complex interplay of forces that caused great instability. Vargas' relationship with the Tenentes had two distinct moments: one up to the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932 - the height of the Tenentes' influence - and the other after the Revolution, which characterized the fall of the Tenentismo. Defeated militarily, the São Paulo revolutionaries of 1932 wouldn't allow Vargas to continue governing in an authoritarian way, appointing Interventores or keeping Congress closed. Thus, the President was obliged to undertake a series of liberalizing measures to meet various interests. The Constitutionalist Revolution in São Paulo was militarily defeated, but politically victorious. Because of the policy of rapprochement with liberal sectors of civil society, the relationship with the Tenentes began to waken.

The military commanders, however, were already aligned with the new President. At that moment, two officers were ready to lead the Army in accordance with the national-development plans: Eurico Gaspar Dutra and Gois Monteiro. The Tenentes, from then on, had only two options: become allies of the government or radicalize in the other direction. Many opted for radicalization, especially when international scenario became polarized, with Hitler's rise to power in 1934 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. In Brazil, the political parties that to a certain extent mimicked the European political scene after 1934 were the Aliança Nacional Libertadora (ANL) - on the left - and the Ação Integralista Nacional (AIN) - on the right.

During the Provisional Government, Vargas knew how, at the right time, to ally or oppose himself to the various civilian and military forces, to preserve his hold on power and be able to implement his national-developmental policy. He managed, at the same time, to greatly weaken the tenentista movement and have the army as his ally. But the counterpart that the Army demanded for this unrestricted support was clear, it would have to follow a clearly national-developmental policy.

During the period of his constitutional government (1934-37), which was one of great instability, Vargas approached the Army to remain in power and to continue his national-developmental project, aiming to insert Brazil into the industrial era. The unrestricted support of the Army, in Vargas' view, was indispensable.

The growing radicalization of the movements helped Vargas. He took advantage of the violent clash in 1934 between integralists and communists in São Paulo to approve repressive laws; he also took advantage of the 1935 Communist Intentona to definitively banish the ANL (the PCB had already been extinguished years before); and he took advantage (again) of the 1937 integralist putsch and banished the AIB. In this way, by 1937 Vargas neutralized the main opposition political forces. In addition to this, Vargas had the army as an ally, with whom he celebrated a tacit agreement, receiving guarantees so that he could govern and offering in exchange the certainty that the national-

developmentalist agenda, which included various projects of interest to the military, would be maintained and prioritized. The Cohen Plan, in 1937, inaugurated a new phase.

The final part of this paper explores the close collaboration between President Vargas and the military leadership, whose interests often coincided, especially when the military occupied direct public administration positions in charge of the country's strategic management. In 1945, the year of the Pracinhas' return from the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) campaign, the paradox between the exaltation of democratic values in the international sphere and the existence of a dictatorship in the domestic sphere heightened the spirits of discontented sectors, prompting a democratic mobilization that began in Minas Gerais and soon reached São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This was combined with fears that Vargas might remain in power, supported by working class. In Argentina, something similar was occurring, and proof of this was the election of Domingo Peron as President in 1946, strongly supported by the mass of workers.

The Movimento Queremista and pressure from conservative sectors ended up further destabilizing the government of Getulio Vargas. The Army's leaders tried to find a solution so that order shouldn't be broken. Motivated by the blood of Brazilian soldiers killed in Italy, the generals of the Brazilian Army did not allow Vargas to remain in power. The military, led by General Gois Monteiro, advised Vargas to resign, which he did on 30 October 1945.

Shortly afterwards, general elections were called and held in December of the same year, with the election of Eurico Gaspar Dutra. In the following year, a new Constitution was promulgated, and the country finally concluded its process of democratization. The military of the Army had a key role in solving political crises and establishing democratic institutions, something they had been doing since the advent of the Republic.

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