
BRAZIL

BY BRYAN GREEN

INTERNATIONAL PAMPHLETS NO. 51 • 5c

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BRAZIL

BY BRYAN GREEN

In Brazil today people are starving to death while fully employed. This is the conclusion of a scientist, Josué de Castro, who recently conducted a survey of workers' families in Recife, the principal city and seaport of Pernambuco, in the northeastern part of the country. Although these people spent over 70% of the family income on food (compared with the 35% which is characteristic of the American workers), they were always hungry. De Castro concludes:

There is only one way in which a man could feed himself more miserably than this, and that is to eat nothing at all. These people do not speak of eating; they speak of "cheating hunger." Unfortunately it is not possible to cheat hunger. . . . Much more terrible than an epidemic or the periodic drought that decimates at a blow hundreds of thousands of lives is this permanent undernourishment which is destroying insensibly and continuously an entire population.

A majority of the working-class families in Recife live on the mud-flats; they pay rent for the land but not for the huts, called "mocambos," which they build themselves out of mud thatched with straw. Says a report made recently by the Organization Commission of the Youth Congress of Brazil:

When the rising water floods the huts, the hungry children burrow in the mud to hunt the small animals [crayfish] which are carried into the huts by the water.

Although the average family wage of 35 cents a day condemns the workers in Recife to a life of appalling misery, the life of the rural workers is even worse. Wages of agricultural laborers in Brazil are ten cents a day; of women in the rural districts, about half that. "You can buy them for a dime," boasted an American capitalist who had gone to Brazil to grow cotton.

The best-paid worker on the ranches of the northeast is the cow-

herd (*vaqueiro*), whose wife and children aid him in his arduous labors. All year they not only care for the cattle but make fences, clean the pens, dig pits for water, and perform other duties. The yearly wage is less than a hundred dollars for the family; but this sum is not paid in money; it is paid in cattle—the cowherd's share, say 25 out of the natural increase of 100 of the herd during the year. Since he is unable to feed and care for the animals until maturity he must sell them—to the landlord.

Within this vast and majestic country, Brazil, the power was exercised until the twentieth century by a small group of landowners and Portuguese conquerors who held the masses in slavery or virtual slavery on the big coffee and other plantations and feudal estates. Then after the abolition of slavery in 1888 a condition of peonage almost as bad as slavery obtained. In the old sugar zone of Pernambuco, in the cocoa district of Bahía, and in general wherever access is difficult to populous centers and means of transportation, the peasants, renters, and rural wage-earners are in a condition of abject dependence on the large-landowning class. Even in the most "modern" Brazilian state, São Paulo, peonage is common. The landowners are afraid to educate "their" peons. These remain illiterate and until very recently were without organization of any kind and almost without hope. Their diet is badly balanced; deficiency diseases, leprosy, trachoma, malaria, and venereal diseases are prevalent. Wages are paid, if at all, mostly in kind, at the will of the owner. During the economic crisis when money crops were selling at disastrous prices on the world market, hundreds if not thousands of rural families were completely dispossessed and driven from the land, even from land which they themselves had cleared and were occupying as squatters. Their security is thus less than was that of the medieval serf.

When a natural disaster overtakes this poverty-stricken population, as in one of the droughts which periodically devastate the northeastern state of Ceará, the weak and corrupt central government does little to aid them. The people have to trek out, over the mountains and down to the seacoast, seeking water and food. In this very year 1936, dust storms more severe than those which have

swept Kansas have wiped out whole towns in Ceará, and have been followed in four northeastern states of Brazil by torrential rains and floods. The people have starved, died of epidemic diseases, or emigrated by the thousands.

The misery of the Brazilians is not due primarily to natural causes. Neither is it due primarily, as capitalist apologists like to pretend, to the low productivity of their labor. It is due to the native and foreign parasites who rule Brazil, and hold back its full development. Brazil's workers suffer want not only because they are exploited by capitalists of their own nationality, but also, and perhaps especially, because the product of their labor goes to pay interest and dividends to foreign capitalists. Some of these foreign capitalists started as adventurers, without capital; by sundry and often devious means they obtained concessions, then, when the workers whom they hired produced profits for them, these adventurers reinvested the profits and thus grew rich. Other foreign capitalists have bought rich resources or lucrative concessions for a song from hard-pressed scamps in government positions, and have then sucked monopoly profits from the Brazilian people over long periods of time. Still others are being paid (principal and interest) for money loaned to government grafters and promptly dissipated. Thus the wealth of this semi-colonial country is drained to pay for benefits not received; and the parasitic government acts as collecting agency for the foreigners, jumping when the Rothschilds and the National City Bank crack the whip.

Getulio Vargas, who is now "President" of Brazil, is the creature of an unpopular clique. In an open election, Vargas would be defeated. The man who would be elected in his place now sits in a prison cell, his life in immediate danger. His name is Luiz Carlos Prestes.

Vargas is having Luiz Carlos Prestes tried as a "deserter" because Prestes led an (unsuccessful) uprising against oppression in 1924. Yet Vargas himself made war against the national government as late as October, 1930. Before this coup, he had offered Prestes complete amnesty and even a high post in the government which he planned to set up, if Prestes would support Vargas and his group.

Prestes indignantly refused and thus won Vargas's hatred. But Prestes' real crime in the eyes of the Vargas clique is that he personifies the aspirations of the Brazilian masses for genuine national independence, for freedom from the rule of foreign imperialists.

The Relations of Production in Economic Life: Agriculture

In point of numbers engaged, agriculture far overshadows all other industries put together in Brazil. A rough idea of the importance of agriculture may be had from the Census of 1920, the last full count of Brazil's population. By that census, 70.8% of the gainfully occupied men 21 years of age and over were engaged in agriculture, 2.2% in herding and 0.8% in hunting and fishing. Manufacturing has taken a bound forward since, but the proportion of agricultural and pastoral workers in the total cannot be far from 70% at the present writing. There are thus not less than 7 to 8 million peasants and rural male workers (including young men under 21) and a total agricultural population of 33 to 34 million, out of a total population which is estimated officially at 48,000,000. These millions on the land are now in motion, impelled by their desperate economic need. The position they take up may well determine the immediate future of Brazil.

Some writers have attempted to divide country-dwellers into classes according to the number of workers they employ, or according to the type of work they do, and have even attempted to estimate the number of persons in each such class. Such efforts are nothing but guesses, and too schematic and broad to be of much value. Only by a detailed analysis of the situation in each particular district can conclusions of any worth be drawn about the agricultural population. A market gardener in the environs of a big city in the south who employs up to 20 workers at picking-time is not in the same social class with the employer of 20 workers in the sparsely populated range country of the northeast. Only the owner of an imposing tract of land could employ so many in the latter section. A formal statement of type of land tenure or of wage status is not conclusive; a "renter," for example, may be an enterpriser of considerable means

or a miserable peon. The agricultural wage-earners are not distinct, as a class, from the "semi-wage-earners," who cultivate a small plot of land and also work outside; and neither of these important groups is sharply separated from the share croppers.

For the purpose of the national liberation movement, a point of cardinal importance is the psychology of this rural population. Very many semi-wage-workers, peasant small-owners ground down by usury, high taxes, semi-feudal dues, and arbitrary regulations, and by the difficulties of buying and selling in markets dominated by imperialist middlemen and urban capitalists, and also very many of the rural wage-workers, are possessed by the idea of owning land free of encumbrances. A move to break up the latifundia thus always corresponds to a deeply-felt need of the vast majority of the dwellers on the land. The bulk of the rural population is a potential revolutionary force. The Census of 1920 said (and the situation is no different today):

The regime of large landed property prevails in Brazil. The land is more or less split up only in the coastal region of the south, thanks to foreign colonization. Not even a tenth part of the total area covered by the census belongs to small proprietors, even considering as small all the properties of less than 100 hectares [250 acres]. (Vol. III, Part I, p. lxxxv; Rio de Janeiro, 1923.)

Nine-tenths of the land included in the census—400,000,000 acres—was divided among only 184,274 large properties, of 250 acres or more each.

Whole districts are given over to ranches, employing few workers but huge in extent, and to plantations completely dominated by a single exportable product. Foreign imperialism supports and extends this plantation system, on which semi-feudal conditions still exist; Ford in Pará, Lord Lovat in São Paulo, British Banana on the southern littoral, Paraná Plantations in Paraná, are examples of this imperialist investment perpetuating peonage in Brazil. Those "students" who see in the influx of foreign capital a "progressive force" for countries which, like Brazil, are still dominated by semi-feudal agriculture, should study the conditions on these plantations during the period of low prices since 1929, when the burden of the crisis has been

thrown directly on the backs of the exploited peons and starvation has been common. Especially in such periods does the true character of this type of "development" emerge clearly. Imperialism does not develop, it deforms the economy.

Between commercial and manufacturing capitalists in the towns on the one hand, and the owners of the latifundia on the other, occasionally arise important conflicts of interest. But both alike are members of the ruling class. They make a common front against the working masses. The capitalists in the towns seek a reservoir of labor power for their expanding industries; the manufacturing and trading capitalists of Brazil and of the imperialist countries seek cheap raw materials such as are produced by the mercilessly exploited peons. Where the old patriarchal relations of the semi-feudal latifundia give way to a more modern, industrialized, wage-labor system in agriculture, they do so without fundamentally affecting the class relationships on the land. The old semi-feudal forms and the new capitalist forms are interlaced with each other (as Lenin once wrote in describing the conditions in pre-war Russia) so that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. The latifundia survive not primarily because they are efficient, but primarily because they serve the class interests of the landowners, and of the urban and trading capitalists whose interests are connected with those of the landowners. Actually, the latifundia are conducted for the most part inefficiently according even to capitalist standards, by an exploitative technique which exhausts the soil and degrades labor. They furnish an interesting parallel to the plantation system which has ruined whole areas in the old cotton region of the United States.

During the crisis years since 1929, spontaneous revolts of different groups of land-workers have become more frequent. On the coffee plantations of Albuquerque Lins (São Paulo) a strike of the *colonos* in 1931 was bitterly contested; it was followed soon after by a strike on a sugar plantation owned by French capitalists in the township of Piracicaba, also in São Paulo. The rural wage-earners in the state of Rio de Janeiro have taken arms to maintain their right of organizing in defense of their own interests. In the back country of the northeastern states, outlaw bands have become

more numerous, supported in secret by the peasant population as an inchoate protest against an intolerable social system. "No-rent" leagues of peasants were formed in Parahyba. Certain tribes of Indians, who were being gradually forced off their hereditary lands, renewed in Bahía and Pará their struggle against the encroaching conquerors. These manifestations of rural unrest, it must be emphasized, were characteristically spontaneous, not directed from any central point and not in the name of any political party or group. All the more do they testify to the dissatisfaction and militancy of the masses of the rural population.

Industry in the Cities

The lead in the struggle against oppression in Brazil is being taken primarily by the city workers.

The rising proletariat of the Brazilian towns is still small, but three-quarters of it is concentrated in three populous states of the central south, where the workers form an energetic and determined nucleus. The number of workers (men, women, and children) in textiles in 1934 is given by the government as 210,000; in construction and general housebuilding, 200,000; transportation, 365,000; metallurgy, 160,000; lumber, 100,000; clothing and the manufacture of personal articles, 100,000. There are 900,000 other workers listed in various urban industries. These figures include the white-collar workers, who in Brazil organize trade unions of their own and frequently throw in their lot with the wage-workers. (The statistics are based, it should be added, not on actual count but on a more or less informed guess by the government.)

Industry has now come to Brazil, and while most of it is still "light" industry, conducted on a comparatively small scale, there is definitely more of it with every passing year. This growth has been especially rapid since the war. Since 1929, the capitalist world has been racked by the most severe economic crisis in its history, so that the markets in capitalist countries for coffee, nuts, sugar, rubber, fruit, and other Brazilian exports have failed to develop or have actually fallen off. A falling off in exports necessarily leads to a

curtailing of imports. Domestic manufactures in Brazil have been stimulated by the increasing difficulty of importing manufactured goods from abroad; a high protective tariff has facilitated the growth of industry. The following summary of the recent strides of industrialization in Brazil is taken from a British consular report:

[Brazil] is self-supporting in textile production, linens excepted; indeed it has actually exported some cotton piece goods. There are not less than 338 cotton mills in the country, having 2,531,762 spindles and 81,164 looms. Of woolen, artificial silk and jute mills no complete figures are available, but except for those of the finest quality, woolen and worsted suitings are no longer imported. In building and construction materials [Brazil's] dependence upon imports has been greatly reduced . . . by the rapid growth of the cement industry, and by the increased production of reinforcing steel rods.

The metal industries are extending rapidly in every direction, including the manufacture of machinery, tools, cutlery, weighing machines, hollow-ware, etc. The production of all classes of rubber articles, comprising a wide range of covered cable, wire, and other articles such as bakelite for the electric industries, is far advanced. Even Brazilian motor tires and inner tubes are beginning to enter the market and a Pará firm sold 54,000 of the latter to the South in six months. Electric lamps, motors, and transformers, and wireless sets and batteries are all manufactured. Glassware, sanitary ware, pottery and earthenware factories are increasing their production, whilst the paper industry has made serious inroads on imported supplies of all types except newsprint. The ink and paint, perfumery, drug, chemical and explosive, match, and footwear industries are every year extending the range of their products and gaining increasing shares of the market.

American Interests in Brazil

What this report does not fully indicate, is that much of the manufacturing in Brazil is done by branches of foreign, especially American, firms. Native manufacturers who are taking an increasing share in national politics find themselves in alliance with certain foreign, especially American, manufacturing and trading interests; with the General Electric Co., which makes electric light bulbs and many other products in Rio de Janeiro; with the Pullman Company, which through a subsidiary runs a factory in Rio de Janeiro for the

assembly of railroad equipment; with the international Tubize-Chatillon-DuPont rayon trust; and with a number of other important American firms in the pharmaceutical, construction, food products, and automobile industries. The capital invested by 19 American firms in their branch plant operations in Brazil now totals over \$50,000,000 and is increasing rapidly as balances which cannot be sent home because of exchange difficulties are reinvested in Brazil. The total American investment in Brazil is over half a billion dollars by the official estimate of the U. S. Department of Commerce.

The American imperialist concerns which have entered Brazil to extract profit are among the bitterest enemies of labor in the United States.

First in the list of companies to establish branch plants in Brazil were the United Shoe Machinery Corporation (1905) and the Singer Sewing Machine Co. (1906). The former especially is well known to American trade unionists; it has bitterly fought the unions (in its plant at Beverly, Mass.); with its financial ally the First National Bank of Boston, it controls a great Boston newspaper corporation (the *Herald-Traveler*) and has dominated the economic life of New England for a generation. It is linked by interlocking directorates with the Sentinels of the Republic, would-be Fascist group.

The great meat packing companies, Wilson, Swift, and Armour, had come to Argentina to get a source of supply for their European outlets. They went to Brazil shortly before the Great War and have continued there. They have entered not only the packing field, but also ranching and transportation. They operate chiefly in Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo, and work closely with the leading politicians in the former state, who since 1930 have been running the national government as well. The state of Rio Grande do Sul floated a big loan in New York in the spring of 1930, and staged a successful military revolt against the national government in the fall of the same year.

Henry Ford occupies a special position in Brazil. He is the only American automobile manufacturer who kept an assembly plant operating in Brazil throughout the years of crisis and depression. But furthermore, he is the largest concessionaire in the State of Pará,

where he went in search of rubber. On the Tapajoz River, 130 miles from the nearest town and 700 miles from the sea, he leased 3,700,000 acres and spent \$7,000,000 equipping his plantation, which is built to house 4,000 workers. By the terms of his concession, Ford received wide powers of government.

At first, comparatively high wages were offered, as wages go in Pará; but after some 3,000 workers had been attracted, the local managers apparently got word to cut down expenses. Wages began to drop, and are still dropping.

As early as December, 1930, rumblings of discontent came out of the closely guarded private empire of Mr. Ford. Troops were rushed in to put down an incipient strike. What happened then has never been fully investigated, but an official document of the British government has stated that the 3,000 workers were reduced, after a series of disturbances, to 1,500. This same document attributes the "difficulties" squarely to the Ford management—a highly significant admission, coming from such a source. In spite of Ford, whose spy system in his Detroit factories is world-famous, the workers have established on the Bõa Vista plantation the Fordlandia Toilers Union, and its demands are vigorously supported by the council of trade unions of Pará. So strong has the union grown that it was able to force a visit by the government inspector, and on June 18, 1936, the Ford company was ordered to pay to workers dismissal allowances totalling 22 contos of reis (about \$1,350) and in addition, for not having paid these sums at the time they were due, the company was ordered to pay to the government a fine of 500 milreis. This fine represents, of course, a trifling sum, but is significant as indicating that Ford's word is not quite the only law in Fordlandia. The workers will challenge his extra-territorial rights even if the subservient government does not.

What is the most powerful anti-union force in the United States? The United States Steel Corporation! This company is another of those which are currently extracting profits from Brazil. In 1920 it bought for \$4,413,285 the Morra de Mina manganese ore properties in Minas Geraes, 290 miles from Rio de Janeiro, where it continues to mine manganese through its subsidiary the Companhia Meridional

de Mineração. Brazil and the Soviet Union are the two principal sources of manganese for the American steel industry.

The International Cement Corp. is another American firm which operates branch plants in Brazil. It has an ideally located factory near Rio de Janeiro, and was recently reported to be establishing two others in other states. The principal American oil companies, led by Standard of New Jersey, do a profitable retail trade in Brazil and follow with great interest the results of government borings for oil; however, to date nothing more than traces of oil have been discovered in Brazil.

The largest American imperialist enterprise in Brazil is that of the power trust, headed by the Morgan-controlled Electric Bond & Share Co. A subsidiary, the American & Foreign Power Co., controls Brazilian companies which supply electric power and light to 274 communities in Brazil. Dr. Max Winkler stated in 1929 that Electric Bond & Share also controlled the Brazilian Traction, Light & Power Co., Inc., and if that is still true, Americans control the largest imperialist enterprise in Brazil, with assets, according to its 1934 balance sheet, of \$416,000,000.

This company, which is known as the "Light," generates and sells over a billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually. On its street railways and bus lines, it carried 782,000,000 passengers in 1934. Its customers for gas number 89,000. It also owns telephone systems with 134,886 telephones, in cities having a population of 9½ millions. Eighteen thousand-odd people in the city of Santos get their water from the Light. Its manufacturing plant, where it makes new equipment and extra parts, employs no less than 1,200 workers; this plant is one of the largest foreign-owned manufacturing plants in South America. No wonder the company writes in one of its advertisements: "*The Associated Companies, as a result of their long experience of conditions in Brazil, offer unrivalled facilities to firms which are considering the establishment of industrial or commercial enterprises in this great Republic.*" (Emphasis not in original.) The company's long experience of conditions in Brazil enables it to handle politicians with the greatest success. Changes of (bourgeois) government affect it no more than a change from a Democratic

to a Republican administration affects the power trust in the United States, for the power trust knows how to contribute to the funds of both big parties.

The history of the "Light" is a pretty object-lesson in imperialism. The bulk of the \$416,000,000 which are now owned by American, Canadian, and British speculators was not accumulated by thrifty capitalists abroad and then invested in Brazil; they were accumulated in Brazil for the account of foreigners, by the reinvestment of surplus. The Light is incorporated in Toronto, Canada, not that Toronto capitalists had anything to do with it, but because, as Brazilians believe, "companies can incorporate in Toronto without limitation as to capital, and the 'Light' never had any capital"!! (*Jornal do Povo*, Rio de Janeiro, October 14, 1934.) The present company was formed in 1912 as a fusion of the principal utility companies of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; it purchased in 1929 the utilities of Santos, the third largest city in Brazil. The São Paulo utility company which preceded the Light was incorporated in Toronto as far back as 1899, presumably "without limitation as to capital." In Rio de Janeiro, in the same year 1899, an English machine salesman secured a concession to furnish electric power in the capital city, and by skilful manipulation was able to remain in control of the company he formed without apparently putting up any capital himself. The newspaper *Manhã* (Rio) says that the stock of the "Light" has been issued to the extent of 50.1% against accumulated earnings, the owners keeping the stock in their own pockets, so that the dividends of 4% or 5% per year do not at all represent the real rate that is being paid on the real investment. The position of the Light is secured by franchises and concessions until 1990! Thus the Brazilians have not only been building up fabulous fortunes for foreigners—they have guaranteed these same imperialist robbers in the continuous enjoyment of their filched riches until their grandchildren shall have died!

The American-owned utilities operating in Brazil go to great lengths to secure the bondholders against loss. If the Brazilian exchange shows a tendency to fall in relation to the dollar—and owing to the policy of looting the treasury which has been followed by

successive governments, the exchange usually has had that tendency—the utilities' contract with their respective municipalities provided that they might raise their rates to compensate for the fall in the exchange. For example, the contract of the American & Foreign Power Co. subsidiary with the municipality of Curitiba contained the following provision:

All prices established in the present contract are on the basis of 8300 (eight milreis 300 reis) for one dollar, United States currency. One half of each bill will be subject to adjustment [i.e. increase] in accordance with the variations of the rate.

But the Brazilian populace has not been willing to see the American bondholders prosper while they themselves, who supplied the money, were plunged in poverty. Consumers' strikes were organized and blacklists were circulated. In Bahia public sentiment reached such a pitch that streetcars were burned on the streets of the city. Finally on November 27, 1933, the corrupt Vargas government was forced to abolish the exchange adjustment clause from all the public utility operating contracts. Even then, sentiment in Bahia had been so much aroused that the city refused to accept the company's proposed compromise rates and held out for better terms after all the other cities had settled.

The American & Foreign Power Co. was able by its manipulation of the Brazilian exchanges to accumulate in a few years the sum of over a million dollars, and this sum was credited to surplus and paid out as dividends at the end of 1934. Successful dealing on the exchanges almost requires a "friend at court" under Brazilian conditions. Paul V. McKee, president of the chief Brazilian subsidiary of the American & Foreign Power Co., is very friendly with the unscrupulous dictator Getulio Vargas.

The American workers and farmers pay their gas and electric light bills to the same gang of highbinders who have been picking the pockets of the Brazilians for a generation. The utilities in the United States subsidize newspapers, circulate "boiler-plate" editorials, buy newspaper opinion by expensive advertisements, influence the selection of school text-books on civics, pay for "impartial" research

which shows the "evil" of public ownership, and pull political wires in the United States so regularly and so ineffably that it is not at all difficult for informed Americans to visualize the processes by which their brothers in Bahía are mulcted and oppressed. Especially when it is remembered that the public utilities in the United States have waged some of the longest and bloodiest battles in labor history against the unionization of their workers.

The munitions makers, who learned in the United States how to lobby for bigger armaments, have in recent years been plying their trade in Brazil, where officials of the government received "Christmas presents" after they had got juicy contracts for American firms. The American navy has been used in the sales demonstrations of these high-power salesmen. Says William T. Stone of the Foreign Policy Association:

Brazil [read: "The Vargas government"—B. G.] adopted a huge naval program in 1933 calling for the construction of practically a whole navy, including all kinds of ships. This program was passed by the Brazilian congress [controlled by Vargas—B. G.] at a time when virtually all outstanding bonds of the Brazilian government were in default. New York Shipbuilding Corporation of Camden, New Jersey, Vickers of England, and other companies were vitally interested in this program. . . . (From *Foreign Policy Reports*, Vol. X, No. 20, p. 259.)

This New York Shipbuilding Corp. is the same which recently adopted such a high-handed attitude toward its striking workers at Camden that it won a rebuke from the (capitalist) government of Roosevelt.

Both the power trust and the munitions makers operate internationally; it is impossible to say whether the Brazilian, Traction, Light & Power Co. is American, Canadian, or British, while the understanding between the Electric Boat Co. of Norwich, Conn., and Vickers, Ltd. (England), leading makers of small war craft, is so explicit that it has been reduced to writing.

In the struggles between different factions of the Brazilian ruling class, different American imperialist interests sometimes back different sides, and the same is true of imperialists of other nations such as England. Thus in the São Paulo revolt of 1932 against the Vargas

government, the Anglo-American firm of Byington & Co. acted as paymaster in New York for the São Paulo faction. The Curtiss-Wright airplane company (U. S.) had dealings with both sides.

The American embassy in Rio de Janeiro intervenes openly in Brazilian internal affairs when it is a question of protecting the person or property of an imperialist. But Americans who throw in their lot with the Brazilian workers cannot expect the same protection. The American youth Victor Allan Barron was done to death while in the custody of the Brazilian police early in 1936, and the American ambassador Hugh Gibson accepted the police story that Barron had committed suicide by jumping from the jail window, though the doctor who performed the autopsy reported bruises that could not have resulted from a single fall and were quite evidently the outcome of continued severe beatings and torture. A representative of the American embassy even cooperated with the Brazilian police in attempting to extract information from Barron before he was murdered. But further, although the youth's papers were in order and he had registered with the consulate on arriving in Brazil, his mother was visited in the United States, nominally by representatives of the Post Office Department (!), and questions were asked about the reasons for Barron's being in Brazil.

American imperialists and Brazilian police work together against the workers' movement in Brazil. Workers and intellectuals in Brazil still honor the memory of Dr. Mario Couto, a victim of American imperialist greed. In January, 1935, a strike broke out in three textile plants of Porto Alegre, principal city of Rio Grande do Sul. Seven metal-working shops struck in sympathy, and the workers of the huge Globe Press had voted to join the movement in five days' time, when the word was circulated in employers' circles to "get" one of the secret leaders of the strike, the young doctor Mario Couto. The word was issued by Egon Renner, textile manufacturer who, with the other German capitalists Von Hartt and Hasenclever, has been among the principal backers of the Brazilian Fascists. It was also issued by Mr. Millinder, superintendent of the Carris Company and of the Rio Grande Electric Power Co., Electric Bond & Share subsidiary. Dr. Couto was apprehended by the private police

of Mr. Millinder and turned over to the police of Porto Alegre. These picked a fight with him in the auto on the way to jail and riddled his body with bullets.

Clashes between the imperialists of different countries have been common in Brazil's checkered history. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the British influence was much the strongest; indeed as late of 1927 it was reliably estimated that the British investment in Brazil was as great as that of the nationals of all other countries combined. But struggles for lucrative concessions in railroads, plantations, public utilities and docks and factories took place throughout this period, with French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Belgian, and Canadian capitalists all engaging in the game. Since the war the United States capitalists have greatly extended their speculative activities in Brazil, and have challenged some favorite British monopolies, notably the rail transport monopoly in São Paulo. In 1930 American financial houses aided in setting up the Bank of Rio Grande do Sul, thus bringing together two bourgeois factions in that important state where the American packing houses of Swift, Armour, and Wilson were already firmly established. The coup of 1930, which put Getulio Vargas in the presidential chair, was made possible (as is generally believed) by the American capital which was poured in—part when the Bank of Rio Grande do Sul was established, and part at about the same time, through Paul V. McKee, president of the *Empresas Electricas Brasileiras*, a subsidiary of the Morgan-controlled Electric Bond & Share.

Still more recently Japan has maneuvered to break the control held by the Anglo-Saxon nations over cotton, a raw material which finds tremendous use in the factories of Japan. Most of Japan's cotton has come heretofore from the United States and from British possessions such as Egypt and India. Arriving in Brazil to look over the possibilities, the Japanese found cotton production there too in the hands of British and American planters, taking advantage of the crop-destruction and crop-limitation plans in the United States. The attempts of the Japanese to obtain a foothold in Brazilian cotton production have been checked, first by a restrictive immigration law which narrowed down a growing stream of Japanese immigrants,

then by the annulment in 1936, through action of the national Congress, of a huge concession of territory to Japanese in the State of Amazonas. The checking of the Japanese has indirectly benefited the British and American interests, which still remain the most powerful in the country though by no means at peace with each other.

American capitalists who seek to make investments, or obtain raw materials, or carry on business in Brazil are in a position to obtain diplomatic aid which is peculiarly effective. Forty percent of all Brazil's exports find a market in the United States. Over half of the coffee produced in Brazil is sold in the United States, and coffee constitutes two-thirds of all Brazil's exports besides furnishing the bulk of the currently available export bills of exchange. The mere threat that the United States would lay a small duty on coffee imports enabled the greedy "good neighbor" to obtain sweeping tariff concessions from Brazil in March, 1935; Brazil was even obliged to denounce all commercial treaties concluded prior to that date, so that no other country should be automatically accorded the same concessions.

Getulio Vargas has been driven by circumstances to depend now on the British, now on the American financial interests. Because of the economic dependence of his country and especially because of the fact that his group constitutes itself the willing servitor of foreign interests, Vargas has not sought to play off one foreign group against the other. Instead he has made bad bargains with each in succession, handing over to them progressively the resources of his country.

There are two reasons why we cannot go into full detail about European and Japanese imperialism in Brazil within the present pamphlet. First, space permits the treatment of one country's interests only. Second, although European imperialists frequently find themselves in business competition with American imperialists, they make common cause with them when their joint interests are threatened, just as two American clothing manufacturers who steal each other's business whenever they can and use spies to discover each other's secrets, will chip into a common fund to hire thugs and labor spies when they are confronted with a strong union movement.

The rising Brazilian native bourgeoisie is conscious of its power and desires to gain control of the industrial development which it sees ahead. It lacks capital and experience, and so is obliged to leave to foreign interests some of the most lucrative fields of operation. But the Brazilian business men are an active group, with no intention of acting merely as middlemen for foreign firms. They seek industrial opportunities for themselves.

The Growth of Anti-Imperialist Sentiment

The economic and political development of the other two great countries of the "ABC group" is enough like that of Brazil so that events in any one have repercussions in all. The imperialists have been as busy in Chile and the Argentine Republic as they have been in Brazil. Quite recently, a widespread anti-imperialist movement has checked their activities in some slight degree and threatens to check them still further. Let us glance for a moment at these happenings beyond the Brazilian border.

The great British concern known as the "Anglo" has been accustomed to consider itself above the law in the Argentine Republic. After a nation-wide campaign led by Dr. Lisandro Latorre of the Democratic Progressist Party, a law was spread on the books providing for the regulation of the meat-packing industry, and in the enforcement of this law a congressional commission demanded to inspect the books of the "Anglo." The company attempted to send its records to England in boxes labelled Corn Beef, but was caught in the act.

In Chile the subsidiary of the American power trust was accused of transmitting several hundred thousand dollars to the United States nominally in settlement of intercorporate indebtedness but actually to be used in the payment of dividends, in violation of the Chilean government's exchange regulations. When this action became known, there was a tremendous popular outcry, which was not stilled when Mr. Calder of the parent company arrived in Chile and patched up an agreement with the Finance Minister (in August, 1936).

If for the moment imperialism is in the saddle in Brazil and the

people find their civil rights seriously curtailed and the outstanding popular leaders in prison, this situation constitutes only a temporary check in the movement, already firmly initiated, for the economic and national independence of Brazil. The bulk of the intellectual and lower middle class elements are now consciously anti-imperialist and are prepared to ally themselves with revolutionary workers and peasants behind a broad anti-imperialist program of peace, land, and freedom. Workers who were schooled in the tremendous strikes of the period 1934-35, and have enjoyed the first fruits of organized effort, are resolute.

An attempt to rally all the forces of progress was made in January, 1935. The National Liberation Alliance was formed, with Prestes as honorary president. The Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Laborite Party, and progressives and workers generally rallied to its banners. Within two months it had an organization in every state in Brazil and was growing at a tremendous rate. Its program was announced by Prestes, in an appeal "To the whole Brazilian people" on July 5, 1935, as follows:

1. No payment or recognition of foreign debts.
2. Denunciation of the anti-national agreements made with the imperialists.
3. Brazilian control of the most important public utilities, and of those undertakings under foreign control which do not submit to the laws of the People's Government.
4. Eight-hour day as maximum, social insurance (pensions, etc.), higher wages, equal pay for equal work, guaranteed minimum wages, fulfilment of the other demands of the proletariat.
5. Fight against feudal and slave conditions of work.
6. Allocation of land to poor workers and peasants, and expropriation without compensation of the land held by the reactionary large landowners and the reactionary elements of the church (those who oppose the emancipation of Brazil and of the people).
7. Return of the land taken from the Indians by force.
8. Complete freedom of the people, liquidation of all legal differences between races and nationalities, complete religious liberty, separation of church from state.

9. Against all imperialist war. Promotion of close collaboration with such organizations as the National Liberation Alliance in other Latin American countries and with all oppressed classes and peoples.

In presenting this program, Prestes called on all sections of the population, not only workers but also middle-class lovers of freedom and even the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church to endorse it. The response was tremendous. Supporters of the Alliance declared themselves from all strata of the population—from the army and navy, including officers up to the rank of captain in the army; from teachers and the liberal professions; from the ranks of the journalists, lawyers, politicians, and government servants; and in great numbers from among the workers of city and country and from the lower middle class.

Several priests of the Roman Catholic Church, as, for example, Manoel Nascimento de Oliveira, endorsed the program and joined the Alliance. This action was especially significant because the constitution adopted under the auspices of the Vargas clique in 1934, had made religious teaching in the schools compulsory and had thereby rejoiced the hierarchy of the Roman church. Since this church is one of the vested interests in Brazil (though it is not officially established), the great majority of its clergy of course oppose popular reform movements. One reactionary priest, Father Felix Barreto, fought the National Liberation Alliance with especial bitterness and has since been rewarded by being made President of the Pernambuco legislature.

So rapidly did the Alliance grow that President Vargas could easily foresee the defeat of his whole clique in the coming elections unless something should be done to check the rising wave. He declared the National Liberation Alliance to be a subversive movement and therefore illegal. A great federation of trade unions had been built up by the workers themselves, the first such federation in the history of Brazil, with a membership of hundreds of thousands. The government dissolved this federation. The National Liberation Alliance was followed on the political field by the Popular Alliance for Bread, Land, and Freedom, but this also was declared illegal; then a final attempt was made with the Electoral Front for Bread, Land, and

Freedom, and this also was suppressed by the Vargas government. At the same time, reaction was taking the offensive, weeding out of the government service all those who were known to have taken an active part in the national liberation movement.

By repeated provocations, the government was finally able to bring about, in November, 1935, a military and popular uprising, born of the desire for national liberation and of the necessity to check the fascist movement. This uprising grew out of a bitterly fought strike on the British-owned Great Western Railroad, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. It affected two northeastern states and part of the garrison at Rio de Janeiro, but though the insurgents fought valiantly, the odds against them were too heavy and the movement never developed its full strength. The uprising failed, only a small band of insurgents escaping into the interior of the northeastern states. But although it was unsuccessful, the movement embodied the real aspirations of the people and prepared the way for new struggles against reaction.

The Vargas government has ruled ever since in an entirely illegal, dictatorial manner. At the time of the uprising, Vargas declared a state of siege. During the state of siege, the constitution was illegally amended to permit the declaration of a state of war. Making use of this power, the government turned the state of siege into a "state of war" (though there was no war) and has since prolonged the state of war by decree.

Under the conditions that have prevailed since December, 1935, anyone suspected of having had connections with the National Liberation Alliance may be denounced to the police and arrested. Anonymous telephone calls to the police are sufficient. In the police headquarters, victims are tortured to secure information which they often do not possess. Foreigners are not immune. Arthur Ernst Ewert, former member of the German Reichstag in Brazil on a visit, was arrested with his wife and in prison, as part of numerous inhuman tortures inflicted on the couple, Mrs. Ewert's breasts were twisted until she fainted from the pain.

A system of house-to-house searches has been devised. A special department of the police has been created for the purpose of making

such searches. In the middle of the night these police surround a whole block and search thoroughly all the houses in it. An old copy of *A Manhã*, a daily which appeared legally for several months prior to the November, 1935, revolt, is considered sufficient evidence for a charge of having had a hand in the revolt.

In the Brazilian upper house Senator Abel Chermont of Pará protested against police tortures, giving names and dates. He demanded an investigation. At the same time Deputy Octavio da Silveira of Paraná telegraphed the President about the torturing of Clovis Araujo Lima and Adalberto Fernandes, two leaders of the Alliance held by the police; and three other deputies—Abugar Bastos, Domingos Velasco and João Mangabeira—rose to protest against police brutalities. Senator Chermont and the four deputies were all arrested and held for trial. In the presentment against them the chief evidence consisted of attempts to prove that they had had relations with leaders of the national liberation movement.

Taking advantage of the suppression of the National Liberation Alliance, the Catholic church has intensified its work among the masses of the population. The Catholic Action was founded in 1935 as a lay association, and early in 1936 Pope Pius XI in a special letter addressed to the rich clergy of Brazil recommended broadening the base of the Catholic Action to include workers, peasants, students, intellectuals and others. The Church, as noted above, has already obtained signal favors from Vargas and will undoubtedly use what influence it can obtain through the Catholic Action, to support Vargas's group.

Also behind the government in its nefarious campaign to stifle the popular liberties is the Integralist Action, the Brazilian Fascist group. This organization derives its inspiration from Hitler and Mussolini; it is financed largely by immigrant German and Italian capitalists such as Count Matarazzo, who owns a chain of 85 manufacturing enterprises, banks, etc., and is believed to be the strongest single figure financially in Brazil.

In the early days of the organization it was unable to rally many supporters. Few sincere persons joined the ranks of the Fascists, who were able to recruit only some riffraff, a few careerists, some

misguided Italian and German immigrants who had no direct experience of Fascism in their own countries, and not many people altogether. Their claim of 100,000 members in the middle of 1935 was labelled as an exaggeration by so conservative a paper as the *New York Times*. The broken-down novelist-politician Plinio Salgado who had been chosen to head the Integralist Action was in a fair way to become a laughing-stock. The Brazilian workers are more class conscious than the workers of the United States and are familiar with the history of Fascism in Italy; they have looked on the Fascists from the start with loathing, so that an Integralist parade in a city with a considerable working-class population was a direct invitation to a riot. Twice the workers called general strikes in cities where the Integralists had planned to hold a Congress, and much blood was spilled as Integralists and workers strove for possession of the streets. Finally in November, 1935, the Brazilian Congress, yielding to the rising pressure of working-class and middle-class sentiment, banned the insignia of the Integralists and called on President Vargas to dissolve the organization.

Vargas did not heed this demand. Although too clever a politician to ally himself openly with the Integralists at this stage, Vargas has much secret sympathy with them. They have consistently supported his hand, only urging him to rule more ruthlessly. In the November popular uprising, Plinio Salgado offered Getulio the services of 100,000 men (?!), "not armed, but trained to bear arms." Vargas replied thanking him for his "spontaneous and patriotic" manifestation of solidarity with the government, and added:

We have received your noble offer to cooperate in the national defense as comforting testimony to the civic vitality which shows that the nation can count at any hour on the energy and the wholehearted support of all good Brazilians.

A number of high officials of the federal and some state governments and many army officers, including the chief of staff, are known as Integralists. The federal government does not interfere with this fascist organization. Its weekly newspaper in Rio has become a daily and the Integralists have their own radio broadcasting station

from which they disseminate anti-Jewish as well as anti-Marxist propaganda. The influence of Integralism is clearly seen in the recent removal by Getulio Vargas of Pedro Ernesto, popular mayor of Rio de Janeiro, and his replacement by a man who is, if not an Integralist, at least a close sympathizer.

The Integralists have learned how to use nationalist propaganda. As a direct result, they have made some headway recently with certain honest individuals who are seeking a solution for Brazil's troubles and who do not understand the fundamental demagoguery of all Fascist movements. Italian and German capitalists, who know how little Fascist propaganda means, are likely to profit in proportion as the Integralists gain in power.

The reception accorded the Brazilian Fascists by state and local governments has been different in the various states. In Pará, a state administration decreed in April, 1936, that all the official publications of the Integralists and all publications dealing with the open or secret activities of the Integralists should be published only after having been submitted to the political censor. On one day, in this same month of April, an Integralist was elected to office in a town in Ceará, strongest center of Integralism, and the police in Curitiba, in the State of Paraná, "cracked down" on the Integralists and declared them illegal, closing their offices. In Santa Catharina, the "German state," "Integralists" control the administration of several towns, but this situation reflects the power of the Hitler-controlled German press, broadcasting misinformation about the homeland, rather than any great influence on the part of Plinio Salgado.

Vargas's policies are quite acceptable to the Fascists. He has put out a barrage of propaganda blaming all of Brazil's troubles on Moscow, significantly without attempting to offer any proof. He has even gone to the length of forcing Uruguay, Brazil's little neighbor, to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, on the pretext that Uruguay was the center of international communist plots directed against the Vargas government. He has systematically destroyed the trade unions and denied democratic rights.

Vargas has also followed the policy of trying to build up "loyal"

groups of adherents in the working class. Yellow "non-political" unions have been set up under the watchful eye of the government inspector and they now have the monopoly of trade-union organization; other unions have no rights and may be closed up at any time. Members of the yellow unions receive certain privileges, since certain of the laws in Brazil's rudimentary social legislation apply only to them. Pension funds have been established for certain trades and industries which are of strategic importance to the government. Few workers are fooled by the "Greeks bearing gifts," but the yellow unions, like the company unions in the United States, have been of some use to their sponsors, and Vargas continues to push them actively.

As a result of the mortgaging activities of Vargas and his predecessors, the budget figures for 1937 recently presented, appropriate 34% of the federal funds for that year, to the Treasury Department, to make possible the continuance of payments on debts due to foreigners. At the same time it is proposed that expenditures on the armed forces and on police (mainly for the suppression of popular movements) shall be increased by 20%. It is evident why the first plank in the platform of the National Liberation Alliance, "No payment nor recognition of foreign debts," exerted and must continue to exert a powerful influence on the minds of the tax-ridden Brazilian people.

The continued failure of the Vargas government to solve the economic and social problems of the country makes more new converts to the program of the National Liberation Alliance than could years of skillful left-wing propaganda. The attempt of the coffee planters, with government support, to maintain an artificially high price for coffee, has broken down completely, in spite of the fact that the government has burned 35,000,000 bags of coffee since 1930. Coffee export bills are the traditional means of making payments abroad, and since the profligate Vargas government has not built up any alternative means, commerce has been disrupted while the government waited for the price of coffee to rise.

The value of Brazil's exports had averaged £95 million per year

in the period 1925 through 1929. In 1931, the first full year of Vargas's administration, the sum was under £50 million; the following year it dropped below £37 million, and was a little less in each of the next two years. The excess of merchandise exports over imports, which amounted to nearly £21 million in 1931, according to government calculations, has since dropped below £10 million. Coffee which recently formed from 60 to 75% of the total exports has now dropped to 50%. The value of coffee exports in 1935 was less than half the value in 1931.

The government has not balanced the budget in any year since Vargas came to power. It has stuck to the traditional Brazilian system of making the poor pay, through a system of indirect taxes, for the government which oppresses them, and taxing the rich lightly. The continuance of deficit financing coupled with the inability to make payments abroad has inevitably caused a depreciation of the Brazilian milreis on the foreign exchanges and a rise in internal prices. In the midst of the general rise, certain staple articles of diet have taken a tremendous bound; the price of rice rose 90% from April to June, 1936. Wage and salary workers are becoming loud in their protests in spite of press censorship.

Every week, sometimes two or three times a week, the police uncover some "communist" propaganda cell. Not all of the cells so uncovered are units of the Communist Party; the conservative deputy J. J. Seabra has pointed out in the federal Chamber of Deputies that political opponents of the government are being persecuted on the pretext that they are Communists. But the continued arrests, and dismissals from the government service, testify to a wide and continuing unrest. From private sources we learn that there is a large underground radical press by means of which the workers at least in the larger centers are enabled to keep in touch with each other and to build up their organization.

Vargas's political prisoners numbered 17,000 just after the November uprising, and the number probably still is in the thousands; the federal government admits that it alone still holds more than six hundred. By their sufferings under inhuman prison conditions,

these men and women are earning the title of heroes of the world-wide struggle against oppression. Although the Vargas government had prepared its provocation of November 1935 with care, it had not spent much money preparing prison accommodations. Prisoners, who come from all ranks of society—workers, peasants, soldiers, intellectuals—are sent to fever-infested islands or confined in rotting hulks in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro or in overcrowded jails. Their health has been undermined by the unsanitary conditions and the wretched food.

In the jails of Rio de Janeiro are hundreds who have been held more than a year without trial. One prisoner, Eneide Costa, was attacked by a dangerous disease and her fellow-prisoners became aware that she needed hospital care. They demanded that she be moved, but in vain. Finally, in June (1936) at an agreed signal, the prisoners forced open the cell doors and poured into the corridors. They overpowered the guards and locked them up. Outside the prison a huge crowd of sympathizers collected. The prison management was finally forced to remove Eneide Costa to the hospital, and when it attempted reprisals against the leaders of the strike, a hunger strike of the others forced the authorities to abandon their intention.

Luiz Carlos Prestes was arrested in March 1936, and his wife, who was born in Germany, was seized about the same time. Mrs. Prestes was then pregnant. One day in the fall of the year, when the time of her delivery was already approaching, the police appeared at the jail "to take her to the hospital." The other political prisoners, suspecting foul play, insisted that she be accompanied by two of their own number, one of them a doctor. However, once outside the jail, the police were easily able to send back these two under threat of being shot. Regarding the birth of the child, no official statement has appeared. It seems to have been born in Rio de Janeiro. It is certain that Mrs. Prestes, together with Mrs. Ewert was deported a few days later to Germany, where both were immediately placed in a concentration camp.

The cynical inhumanity of a government which can tear a mother from her child of a few days and send the mother 4,000 miles across the ocean needs no comment. The Vargas government has even

refused to the baby's near relatives any information concerning it.

In November 1936 special tribunals, illegal and not bound by regular judicial procedure, were set up to try the political prisoners, who have no illusions about the fate in store for them. In the midst of indescribably wretched conditions, they await their turn.

At the Bastille of Frei Caneca, the political prisoners receive two "meals" a day which they eat with their fingers; no spoons or mugs are furnished. They are always hungry. For beds they have the cold cement, for pillows their own shoes. In the early days after the revolt, this bastille was so full that the prisoners had to sleep sitting up for lack of room to lie down.

Friends of freedom and progress in the rest of the world have not forgotten these prisoners. More especially in England, France, and the United States, the countries to which goes most of the imperialist tribute, a broad protest must be organized to demand their freedom.

The demands for freedom for Prestes, the Ewerts, and all political prisoners have effect because of their numbers; however, one such protest must be singled out for mention because of its peculiar effectiveness. Sixty deputies of the Spanish People's Front, including Largo Caballero and Dolores Ibarruri ("La Pasionaria"), sent a cable to Vargas demanding that Prestes be given a public trial, and that Prestes and all other political prisoners be released; and this cable was printed in practically every newspaper in Brazil.

In the United States, the campaign on behalf of the imprisoned heroes of the Brazilian liberation movement is being conducted by the Joint Committee for the Defense of the Brazilian People, Room 530, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City. It urges readers of this pamphlet to send letters to the Brazilian Embassy, Washington, D. C., and cables to Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, demanding restoration of civil liberties, freedom of organization, and the liberation of Prestes and all political prisoners.

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