

Ideology and Diplomacy: Italian Fascism and Brazil (1935-38)*

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I. Introduction

BRASIL was a marginal country in the international crisis of the 1930s. Poorly integrated into the international capitalist economic system, the Brazilian economy had a negligible role in world commercial exchange. At the end of the Old Republic, the country nonetheless found itself on the threshold of a new political era. The Revolution of October 1930, beginning on the periphery, but ending with control of the central power structure, inherited several problems that urgently demanded the attention of the new ruling elite. These problems varied in nature. It was necessary to find markets for exports and, at the same time, to diversify national production in order to avoid the errors of the past, like that created by the policy of revaluation of coffee. The limited demands for Brazil's agricultural exports forced it to rethink its role as a monocultural producer and to lay the groundwork for indispensable industrialization. The Armed Forces, poorly prepared and with obsolete equipment, had become ardent defenders of import substitution. What was the future of democracy? How fast should the popular element be brought into the political arena? What was to be done about international immigration, the rural exodus, and burgeoning cities? Brazil truly found itself at a crossroads: a rural and archaic country in the process of transforming itself into a modern urban nation. The Brazilian intelligentsia, meanwhile, having perceived its national roots, actively participated in debates on the nation's future, at times seemingly unaware that domestic problems had to be attended to in the context of intense international rivalries.

Some European countries, weary of what their leaders considered sterile parliamentarism and improvident liberalism turned to new and

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radical approaches to their problems. In the case of the best known rejection of the past, the state, and through it, its leader and a single party, coordinated, organized, and directed the whole of society. Other countries chose new political economies as the trend in that direction increased and took on vigor in the 1930s. This not only conditioned the life of the various nations, but also introduced disturbing elements into international relations. At the same time, liberal and democratic countries were increasingly convinced that they represented the last bastion of the free world, where individual liberties and private initiative were top priorities. On the economic plane, the confrontation between liberalism and interventionism led to a serious impasse in international relations.¹

Despite its marginality, Brazil could not avoid being directly affected by heightened international tensions. German–North American commercial rivalry in South America became patent, as historical scholarship has already demonstrated.² Even the struggle between the secret services of the different powers in Latin America and particularly in Brazil has already been examined by various researchers. Some publications exhibit the emotionalism of the prewar and war years;³ others are of more recent historiographic and perhaps less emotional nature.⁴

Despite this growing interest in the study of Brazil's ambiguous role in the international crisis of the 1930s, the relations of Fascist Italy with

1. Olivier Long, "Les Etats Unis et la Grande Bretagne devant le Troisième Reich, 1934–1939" (Ph.D. Diss., The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1943).

2. Percy W. Bidwell, "Latin America, Germany and the Hull Program," *Foreign Affairs*, 17 (Jan. 1939), 374–390; Saul Friedländer, "Le rôle du facteur américain dans la politique étrangère et militaire de l'Allemagne, septembre 1939–décembre 1941" (Ph.D. Diss., The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1963); Stanley E. Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930–1939: The Politics of Trade Rivalry* (Austin, 1969); Frank D. McCann, Jr., "La lucha por el comercio brasileño, 1935–1939," *Foro Internacional* (Mexico City), 9 (Oct. 1969), 182–193; Howard J. Trueblood, "Trade Rivalries in Latin America," *Foreign Policy Reports* (New York City), 13 (Sept. 1937), 154–164; John D. Wirth, "A German View of Brazilian Trade and Development, 1935," *HAHR*, 47 (May 1967), 225–235; John D. Wirth, *The Politics of Brazilian Development, 1930–1954* (Stanford, 1970).

3. Pierre Dehillotte, *Gestapo* (Paris, 1940); Hugo Fernández Artucio, *The Nazi Underground in South America* (New York, 1942); L. P. Motta and M. J. Barboza, *El nazismo en el Brasil* (Buenos Aires, 1938); Carleton Beals, "Totalitarian Inroads in Latin America," *Foreign Affairs*, 17 (Oct. 1938), 78–79; Melvin Hall and Walter Peck, "Wings for the Trojan Horse," *Foreign Affairs*, 16 (Jan. 1941), 347–369; Stephen Naft, "Fascism and Communism in South America," *Foreign Policy Reports*, 13 (Dec. 1937), 226–236.

4. Alton Frye, *Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, 1933–1941* (New Haven, 1967); Jürgen Hell, "Das 'Südbrasilianische Neudeutschland'. Der annexionistische Grundzund der wilheminsche und nazistischen Brasilienpolitik (1895–1938)" in *Der deutsche Faschismus in Lateinamerika, 1933–1943* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 344–366; Stanley E. Hilton, *Suástica sobre o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977); Arthur W. Magnus, "Die neue Phase der Monroe-Doktrin augesichts der Bedrohung Lateinamerikas durch die totalitären Staaten (1933–1944)" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Berlin. 1956).

Latin America and particularly with Brazil have been neglected.⁵ The most revealing aspect prompting relations between Rome and Rio de Janeiro during the prewar era was, without doubt, the question of Italian immigration.

In 1935, the number of Italians in Brazil approximated three million, of whom one-sixth retained their Italian citizenship. The initial wave of immigrants from Italy had arrived early in the nineteenth century. These people were generally rural in origin and they established themselves in the extreme south of the country, giving strength, together with immigrants of German origin, to the concept of small privately owned rural property. Later waves of Italian immigrants were made up of urban workers, who established themselves mainly in and around the city of São Paulo.⁶

The coming to power of the Fascist regime in Italy in 1922 gave rise to an attempt to increase Italy's influence on Italian colonies scattered throughout the world, including those in Brazil. In 1924, Mussolini imposed restraints on Italians leaving their homeland. Furthermore, in official Italian publications there appeared criticisms of statistical data prepared by certain host countries with reference to the number of Italians entering their territories. The greatest disparity among the data furnished by Italy and by the host countries was with respect to the nationality of the immigrants, because Italy did not generally take into consideration the change of nationality of its emigrants.⁷ The fundamental aspect of this question is not tied to numbers, but rather to the degree of integration of the immigrants in Brazil. This is difficult to evaluate because of its subjective nature. Nevertheless, it can be said that the difficulty of integration is tied not to the time, but to the space factor. Thus, it has been established that the greatest number of poorly integrated Italian immigrants of Brazilian nationality were found in old, but isolated, rural settlements in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina.⁸ In those and other colo-

5. Italy traditionally furnished munitions and military equipment to Brazil, while Brazil exported primary products, and, above all, coffee. This reciprocal trade did not exceed 2 percent of the total trade of the two countries, and Italy ranked eleventh in Brazilian exports, after Sweden and Denmark; Brazil, Ministério da Relações Exteriores, *Boletim*, (June 1939), p. 20, and (Feb. 1945), p. 204.

6. See Michael M. Hall, "The Origins of Mass Immigration in Brazil, 1871-1914" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1969), and Ercole Sori, "Emigrazione all'estero e migrazioni interne in Italia tra le due guerre," *Quaderno Storici*, 29/30 (Ancona), 579-606.

7. See Roberto Cantalupo, *Racconti Politici dell'Altra Pace* (Milan, 1940), pp. 306-307, and Italy, Ministero degli Affari Estere, *Censimento degli Italiani all'estero alla meta dell'anno 1927* (Rome, 1928).

8. In 1940, it was confirmed that of 458,093 native-born Brazilians who did not use Portuguese as their principal language in the home, 391,597 were found in these two states of

nies where the Italians retained their native tongue, there existed material and psychological conditions that made the Portuguese language dispensable. So it was that weddings, religious celebrations, and, above all, education ordinarily were carried on in Italian.⁹ This reluctance to give up Italian in favor of Portuguese did not result from a firm policy on emigration emanating from Rome. It has been established that Italy did not, as late as 1935, have a clearly defined emigration policy. In fact, Italian authorities had a very ambiguous record in dealing with emigrants already in Brazil. One day they would congratulate themselves on the integration of immigrants; the next, they would consider how better to protect them. What can be said is that Rome responded to circumstance without, however, attempting to force Italians in Brazil to adopt predetermined stances.

The undefined question of Italian colonies, along with the lack of favorable prospects for improved Italian-Brazilian commercial exchange, constituted the framework within which relations between the two countries were conducted until 1935. After that date, these very basic concerns were relegated to a secondary plane, when political and ideological problems assumed center stage, thanks as much to internal as to international reasons.¹⁰ Thus, a mere material rivalry between democracy and totalitarianism was replaced by a struggle for ideological supremacy. This proved to be a transitional phase during which domestic and foreign forces geared up for a more definitive military conflict.

II. *The Turning Point in Italian Foreign Policy*

During 1935, the Palazzo Chigi—home of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Relations—received from its embassy in Rio de Janeiro reports on a

the federation. Thus, São Paulo, the great “welcomer” of immigrants in the twentieth century, did not constitute the center of least integration. See Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Recenseamento demográfico geral* (Rio de Janeiro, 1940).

9. In a similar case, colonization of German origin had 644,255 native-born Brazilians who used German as their principal language in the home in 1940, of whom 570,696 were in the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. In this sense, the Italian-German-Brazilian question became an exclusively southern question.

10. This brief study is essentially based on diplomatic sources of Italian origin. In this sense, the research is characterized more by an Italian point of view of the problem than by an exclusively Brazilian one. Certain Brazilian authors will express their positions with an Italian “pen.” The archives of Itamarati—seat of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations—were consulted, as were the private archives of Getúlio Vargas and Oswaldo Aranha. Only documents of little relevance on the question are found in these sources, and, in the majority of cases, matters treated in the documentation of Italian origin find no echo in the Brazilian documentation. Provincial and police documents, however, even if lacking in objectivity and almost exclusively concerned with Nazism, occasionally furnish some information; see Delegacia de Ordem Política e Social de Santa Catarina, *O Punhal Nazista no Coração do Brasil* (Florianópolis, 1944), and Aurélio da Silva Py, *A 5a. Coluna no Brasil. A Conspiração Nazi no Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre, n.d.).

Brazilian political movement that possessed certain ideological similarities to Fascism. Thus began official Italian interest in Brazilian Integralist Action (Ação Integralista Brasileira—AIB).¹¹ The reports transmitted by the Italian embassy in Rio de Janeiro became, as the months went by, more and more explicit with respect to an eventual approach to the AIB and the possibility of resorting to secret Italian diplomacy in Brazil.

Roberto Cantalupo, Italian ambassador to Brazil, began by describing the prominent features of the AIB.¹² His objective was to call to the Palazzo Chigi's attention the fact that the "movimento integralista brasileiro tenda sempre maggiormente ad infeudarsi nell'hitlerismo germanico."¹³ Despite the "integralist submission" to Berlin's directives, the AIB became a large, national political party. Cantalupo's observations, however pertinent they may have been, did not, for evident reasons, convince the Italian leaders that they should approach the AIB, and there was no immediate follow-up on the embassy's reports.

The reasons for the lack of interest in the AIB manifested by Rome became evident as Italian foreign policy evolved after the mid-1930s. In 1935, Italy was confronted with the Ethiopian question as well as with the concerns of certain European countries—especially France and Great Britain—about Italian initiatives in Africa. At the beginning of that year,

11. There are two opposing analytical currents about the AIB. The first considers the Integralist movement the "Fascist type," and places it in the international ideological context of the 1930s; see Hélió C. Trindade, "L'Action Intégraliste Brésilienne: 'Un mouvement de type fasciste des années 30'" (Ph.D. Diss., Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1971), and by the same author, "Integralismo e Fascismo em Questão," *Revista IFCH/UFRGS* (1977), 223–227. See also Juan Linz, "O Integralismo e o Fascismo Internacional," *Revista IFCH/UFRGS* (1976), 136–143, and Stanley E. Hilton, "A Ação Integralista Brasileira. Fascism in Brazil, 1932–1938," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 9 (Dec. 1972). A contrary point of view is presented in the work of José Chasin, *O Integralismo de Plínio Salgado: Forma de Regressividade no Capitalismo Hiper-tardio* (São Paulo, 1978), which tries to demonstrate, in a long and scarcely convincing analysis, the singular characteristics that made Integralism a national movement. A good analysis of the state of the Integralist question in Brazilian historiography is Alistair Hennessy, "Fascism and Populism in Latin America" in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 255–294. Also see the interesting and little-known study on the Integralist movement, written at a critical moment and unpublished in Brazil, by the German-Brazilian Karlheinz Hunsche, *Der Brasilianische Integralismus. Geschichte und Wesen der Faschistischen Bewegung Brasiliens* (Stuttgart, 1938). On Integralist relations with the regions of German colonization in Rio Grande do Sul, see René E. Gertz, "Politische Auswirkungen der Deutschen Einwanderung in Südbrasilien. Die Deutschstammigen und die Faschistischen Strömungen in den 30er Jahren" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Berlin, 1980). For a comprehensive comparative analysis, see Ricardo A. Silva Seitenfus, "Le Brésil de Getúlio Vargas et la formation des blocs, 1930–1942. Le processus de l'engagement brésilien dans la seconde guerre mondiale" (Ph.D. Diss., The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1980).

12. Roberto Cantalupo was a former journalist of Fascist persuasion who entered the Italian diplomatic corps when Mussolini seized power. He headed the Italian mission in Brazil until 1937, when he was named ambassador to Spain.

13. Archivio degli Ministero degli Affari Esteri (hereinafter AMAE) (Rome), dispatch of Roberto Cantalupo to Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Busta 16, doc. n. 976/361, July 8, 1935.

Laval cleared the air somewhat when he assured Benito Mussolini that France would not interfere with his policy in Ethiopia. Great Britain gave similar assurances when the Stresa Front was in the process of being formed. The change of position by the French and British was aimed at obtaining Italian support should Germany attempt to call into question treaties meant to guarantee peace and the territorial status quo in Europe. The French and British entreaties paid off, and Italy joined the front.

It is, consequently, within the context of Italy as a member of the anti-German Stresa Front that Cantalupo's insistence on the "integralist submission" to Hitlerism, be understood, because, in fact, the AIB did not have the strong ties to Berlin reported to Rome. Although Cantalupo's information was not based on concrete evidence, it is true that anti-integralist newspapers, such as *Manhã* and *Diário Carioca*, both of Rio de Janeiro, were making assertions quite like his.¹⁴

The new Italian foreign policy

In the autumn of 1935, Great Britain turned against Italian initiatives in Ethiopia. British protests, and the indecision and failures of the League of Nations, were not sufficient to halt Italian imperialistic thrusts, and Rome went on to occupy the Negus's empire. The only important consequence of the British opposition was the Italian denunciation of the compromises established at Stresa. The rupture of the Stresa Front in late 1935 marked the change in orientation of Italian foreign policy. Expansionistic, devouring Italy relegated European questions to a secondary plane and left even the thorny Austrian question in Hitler's hands in exchange for greater liberty beyond Europe. This about-face was the most notable development in Italian foreign policy as 1936 dawned.

Until then, Italian diplomacy had resisted the fascistization that operated elsewhere in the Italian state and society. The Palazzo Chigi had proceeded along traditional diplomatic lines that denied the Fascist party a preponderant role. This independence suffered a severe setback on June 9, 1936, when Galeazzo Ciano was named chief of the Palazzo Chigi, replacing Dino Grandi. Ciano was the son of an eminent politician and military personality, Constanzo Ciano, and the husband of Mussolini's daughter, Edda.¹⁵ He thus had strong links to the sources of power. Young and ambitious, Ciano had already carved out a shining career for himself in Italian diplomatic circles. After having served in Argentina and China, he

14. Ibid.

15. See Galeazzo C. Ciano, *Diario, 1937-1943* (Milan, 1980); Edda Ciano, *La mia testimonianza* (Milan, 1975); and Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano, una vita 1903/1944* (Milan, 1979).

was named under-secretary of Foreign Relations and minister of Press and Publicity. He was the typical representative of the new generation that did not bring Fascism to power, but that was swept along by it. Assuming the directorship of Foreign Relations, Ciano initiated the "fascistization of the Palazzo Chigi."¹⁶

When the Italian chargé d'affaires in Rio de Janeiro, Enrico di Preisenthal Menzinger, stated in September 1936 that in the "administrative elections of the past year in Santa Catarina, integralism succeeded in winning in 8 of 11 municipalities," he also emphasized that all the municipalities won by integralists were very important. More interesting, he continued, "is that they are the same ones in which are found a majority of German origin."¹⁷ The chargé d'affaires sensed excellent political prospects for the AIB and for the "good of the cause"—he fixed the number registered in the movement to more than a million. This was important, because if the one-million figure were accurate, and all voted, integralism would certainly be the victor in the 1938 presidential election called for in the Brazilian constitution. As a consequence of the information forwarded by Menzinger, the Palazzo Chigi, by the fall of 1936, took an interest in the AIB. That interest was so pronounced that Ciano personally took charge of the matter.

It is apparent that once in the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Ciano had concentrated in his hands all important foreign policy decisions. The restricted circle of individuals under Ciano's orders was known as the Gabinetto and was directed by Ciano's confidant, Filippo Anfuso. One of the most important functions of the Gabinetto was to restrict the participation in policy matters of the traditional professional diplomats in favor of young Fascist newcomers.

Ciano also maintained close personal ties with Brazil. While assigned to Argentina, at the end of the 1920s, he had taken advantage of the opportunity to visit Brazil, where he established numerous friendships. Despite his interest in Brazil, there could have been no doubts in the Foreign Office as to his sentiments toward Latin America in general, since he characterized Italian immigrants in South America as "rottami dell'umanità."¹⁸

Ciano's feelings and the manner in which they were expressed are surprising. Why would a diplomatic officer of a country like Italy, great "provider" of immigrants to Latin America, exhibit so great a superficiality with respect to the immigration problem? In fact, it was neither the upper bourgeoisie nor the Italian aristocracy who felt obliged to become ex-

16. See F. Gilbert, "Ciano and his Ambassadors," in Gordon A. Craig, ed., *The Diplomats, 1919–1939*, 2 vols. (New York, 1971), II, 514.

17. AMAE, dispatch of Menzinger to Ciano, Busta 16, doc. n. 2154/691, Sept. 21, 1936.

18. Ciano, *Diario*, 1937–1943, p. 90.

patriates. It was the landless peasants from the south and from Sicily. It was the unemployed workers and artisans from the north whom the archaic social system obligated to *fare l'America*. The “child of Lady Luck”¹⁹ did not consider himself a collaborator of the immigrants. So it was that the friendships that Ciano established in Brazil²⁰ were superficial, and the interest that he would shortly manifest in the Brazilian political process was in response to his opportunism and ambition.

Brazilian integralism as seen from the Palazzo Chigi

On October 10, 1936, Ciano sent Menzinger a communication requesting information that would give him (Ciano) a better understanding of the integralist movement. Ciano’s instruction, as communicated to Menzinger, allowed Italian lack of understanding of the movement to show through, because Ciano spoke of a certain “Plínio Sandago [*sic*],²¹ leader and founder of integralism whose first ideas were formed during his stay in Italy in 1930 when he had gone to study Fascist accomplishments.”²²

Ciano enumerated seven questions to which the Italian embassy was to respond. (1) “What are the current characteristics of the movement and its ties with Nazism? (2) What are its current political capabilities in relation to the other political parties? (3) What is its influence on the masses, the middle class, the military? (4) What are its relations with government circles? (5) What are the attitudes of the Italians and Italian-Brazilians toward the integralist movement? (6) What are its links with monarchic elements; with the Bragança family? (7) In the event it is advantageous to give them aid, what means should be used?”²³

The interest that his reports aroused in Rome pleased Menzinger, and he responded immediately to Ciano’s queries. In order better to understand the mood of the Italian diplomatic officers in Brazil, it may be advantageous to give certain excerpts from the document Ciano received.

“Integralism developed so rapidly of late that it surprised the government itself. It [the movement] is encouraged by the need [for Brazil] to reestablish order, discipline, justice, to watch over the governmental staff,

19. Gilbert, “Ciano and his Ambassadors,” p. 514.

20. When the fiftieth anniversary of Italian immigration in Brazil was celebrated in 1928, Ciano moved to Porto Alegre, directing a delegation of Italian officials. On this occasion, he met João Neves da Fontoura, then vice-president of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Neves da Fontoura was impressed with this “jovem, belo e brilhante” diplomat, and a friendship was born; see João Neves de Fontoura, *Memórias*, 2 vols. (Porto Alegre, 1969), I, 356.

21. This was not solely a matter of a spelling error; rather, it showed the complete ignorance in Rome of the role of Plínio Salgado and the AIB.

22. AMAE, dispatch of Ciano to Menzinger, Busta 16, doc. n. 4483 R/229, Oct. 10, 1936.

23. *Ibid.*

and to avoid unrest. They [the integralists] spread propaganda throughout the country and count more than a million members, and their number increases constantly.”²⁴

Menzinger also touched on the movement’s strategy for achieving power and declared that “integralism was born with purely Fascist characteristics, separated from the Italian movement only by its [the movement’s] conception [of gaining power] in regional legislatures [before attaining] federal power.”

What were the integralist movement’s sources of inspiration? For Menzinger there was no doubt: all the initial acts of integralism were inspired by distinct sympathy for Fascism.

After treating the above matter, Menzinger turned to the rationale underlying AIB ideology. He emphasized that integralism’s leadership began by highlighting an anticapitalist predilection in the party’s platform and accusing foreign capitalism of having been, and being, responsible for Brazil’s economic and political disorders. The leadership had also displayed an aggressive anti-Semitism, principally through the writing of Gustavo Barroso. He went on to assert that integralism had not hidden a certain affinity with Nazism. Menzinger added, however, that “anti-Semitism did not dominate the thinking of all of the party’s leadership.” There were two currents within the movement: the weaker, directed by Gustavo Barroso, and the one that represented the firmest link between integralists and Germans; and the stronger, headed by Plínio Salgado. Menzinger emphasized that Italy would also be able to count on all important integralist leaders in addition to Plínio Salgado because “Dr. Miguel Reale is the son of Italians and he never hides his admiration for il Duce and for Fascism. He could be an excellent tool for . . . development of Fascist propaganda in the bosom of his party.”²⁵

In what he reported about the actual political force of the integralist movement vis-à-vis other political parties, Menzinger was restrictive, because, in addition to being able to count on more than a million members, integralism, “is the only truly cohesive national party. The others are only regional parties that follow the wishes of local groups.” Menzinger noted that “among the military, integralism is very widespread” and even Minister of War General Goés Monteiro, “followed the integralist movement with visible sympathy.”²⁶ About the position of Getúlio Vargas with respect to the integralist movement, Menzinger hesitated, because for him the Brazilian president “is a great operator. It is a little premature to af-

24. AMAE, dispatch of Menzinger to Ciano, Busta 16, doc. confidential n. 2286/752, Oct. 19, 1936.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

firm that he has made up his mind. But at least we can say that he is carefully considering his attitude in relation to integralism.”²⁷

In concluding his report, Menzinger stated that the rank and file of the integralist movement entertained no serious thought of monarchy as a political system and that there was nothing in Brazil or the integralist movement that would conceivably provide a link to the Bragança family. Logically, according to Menzinger, the current political climate was favorable to the integralist movement, because that movement was in essence Fascist and antisubversive. Italy should support it, he said, because it would serve to neutralize German action and safeguard Italy’s role in Brazil. The *chargé* then endorsed three methods to attain Italy’s objectives: (1) provide subsidies to the AIB and to its most eminent members; (2) implant Fascist propaganda in the heart of the AIB; (3) maintain contact with Plínio Salgado and his closest collaborators.²⁸

The Italian embassy’s enthusiasm for integralism was to a degree tempered by reports from the Italian consulates in São Paulo, Curitiba, and Porto Alegre, in which statements about the political importance and number of members in the AIB contrasted sharply with Menzinger’s conclusions.²⁹ In the final analysis, Ciano decided in favor of the thesis sustained by the embassy, and he resolved in January 1937 to send a special emissary to Brazil in the person of Pier Filippo Gomez, to carry out an in-depth investigation of the integralist movement.

The conclusions reached by the Gomez mission were explicit and in agreement with Menzinger’s. Integralism was a very important political movement and would become the kingpin of Brazilian politics. Nazi activity at the core of the movement was perceptible, and it was necessary to neutralize and overcome it.³⁰ In the ideological sphere, Gomez considered the AIB to be a “figlia autentica e legittima del fascismo,” and “its orientation neither demagogic nor reactionary. It rejected a position against both supercapitalism and Communism. The strict discipline observable in its ranks was new in the annals of Brazilian life. The movement’s organizational technique was modern and allowed for sufficient flexibility. The national chief and General Staff were honest and incorruptible.”³¹

The integralist movement, Gomez continued, was antiracist, but at

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.* See also AMAE, Busta 16, tel. n. 416, Oct. 16, 1936.

29. AMAE, from the Italian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Relations, Busta 16, unnumbered dispatch, Nov. 18, 1936.

30. AMAE, dispatch of Gomez to Emmanuele Grazzi, Busta 16, unnumbered document, Jan. 9, 1937.

31. *Ibid.*

the same time anti-Semitic, and its methods were less aggressive than those employed by Fascism. "Brazilian life," explained Gomez, "conditioned by the climate [*sic*] imposes and demands these dilutions that imply a slower pace in proselytizing" Ciano's special envoy also noted that Vargas "finds himself in a position of a silent protector of integralism. But will not today's official favors become tomorrow's most tenacious obstacles for the Green Shirts who aspire to complete power?" This prophetic and objective vision concluded with some advice for Italy. "Whatever might be the positive result originating in the efforts of integralism, this is the largest political movement in Brazil and it clearly shows the stigma of its Fascist parentage: to ignore it would be neither provident, prudent, nor historic. Integralism today counts; it carries weight; we must not let it escape."³²

The insistence with which reports from Brazil attempted to persuade Rome to restrain Nazi infiltration of the ranks of the integralist movement came exactly at the time when an effective collaboration between Rome and Berlin began. With the Berlin-Rome axis in mind, Ciano became impatient and ordered the embassy in Rio de Janeiro to abstain from giving the impression that there existed antagonism between Fascism and Nazism, above all since effective collaboration between the two was official policy.³³ Ciano continued: "The question about relations between Fascism and Nazism is of much greater scope than might appear to one viewing the two ideologies from a strictly Latin American perspective."³⁴ From that moment on, the "Nazi threat" to the integralist movement ceased to be for Italian representatives in Rio de Janeiro the primordial element of their concerns. Their actions, however, spoke larger than words as Rome and Berlin each pursued policies believed to be in their own national interests.

By early 1937, while Berlin and Rome maneuvered for advantage, clearly recognizable cracks began to appear within the AIB's leadership. For public consumption there was the motto "Hierarchy and Obedience"; but this was not so honored in party headquarters, where an internal struggle for control was being waged. For instance, Salgado was acknowledged "national chief," but his domination was fragile, to the point that he distrusted several of his closest collaborators. One of these, João Severiano da Fonseca Hermes, a member of the Câmara dos Quarenta and the radical wing of the AIB,³⁵ in January 1937, appeared in Rome as the bearer

32. *Ibid.*

33. AMAE, dispatch of Ciano to Menzinger, Busta 16, doc. n. 308 R/23, Jan. 27, 1937.

34. *Ibid.*

35. João Severiano da Fonseca Hermes held the post of "minister plenipotentiary" in Itamarati and was a personal friend of Cantalupo.

of a confidential and verbal message for il Duce.³⁶ That message, however, was not as confidential as it appeared. While in Paris, Fonseca Hermes had made contact with the Italian embassy and revealed the purpose of his mission. According to him, the integralists most of all wanted assurances of Italian support for their cause, which he identified as a “movement in reaction to Communism.”³⁷ He was also to seek “advice and support for the extension of integralism to all South American countries.”³⁸ Fonseca Hermes fixed the Italian financial contribution to the movement at the impressive sum of five million lire, that is, five thousand contos or \$US 300,000. In return, integralism, according to agent Fonseca Hermes, once in power, would be “disposed to make concessions to Italy, always, be it understood, within the limits delineated by the country’s [Brazil’s] honor.”³⁹ Despite the objectives disclosed by Fonseca Hermes in Paris, the principal goal of the mission was to bring Italy up to date on integralist activities in Brazil and to ask Italy’s support in preparing an “armed rebel movement planned to erupt simultaneously in Rio, Santa Catarina, and in the north from Amazonas south to Pernambuco.”⁴⁰

The state of São Paulo would not participate initially so as not to give the movement the separatist character that had been fatal to the Paulistas in the 1932 Revolution. And the state of Rio Grande do Sul was excluded from participation in the rebellion because the integralists did not want to form a compact with Flores da Cunha, who did not inspire confidence in the AIB leadership.⁴¹ According to Fonseca Hermes, the rebel movement was planned to erupt in September 1937, “when Vargas leaves power.”⁴²

The need for five million lire was understandable. Formerly the integralists had solicited from Italy only financial aid to carry on a legitimate campaign in the forthcoming presidential election, an election in which its “million members” would guarantee an integralist victory. Now, however, the movement was thinking in terms of a putsch. The change in tactics can be interpreted either as the leadership’s appreciation of the movement’s relative electoral weakness, or very simply, as leaders’ wanting to anticipate the action of other possible putschists, in particular of Getúlio Vargas himself. This latter possibility was very real. As early as March 1937 the German embassy in Rio de Janeiro had concluded that

36. AMAE, Busta 16, unnumbered document, Nov. 27, 1936.

37. AMAE, Francesco Lequio, Italian ambassador in Paris, to Ciano, Busta 16, secret dispatch n. 0382, Dec. 26, 1936.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

Getúlio Vargas “wants to remain in power and to this end he throws banana peels under his adversaries’ heels.”⁴³

III. Preparation of the 1937 Presidential Campaign

Strengthening Italy’s ties with integralism

In early 1937 it would have been difficult to predict the terms under which Italy might collaborate closely with the integralists. Would Rome reach the point of financially subsidizing a revolutionary movement in Brazil? If so, what then would be its attitude vis-à-vis official Brazil? Ciano recognized that such a course could be costly and thus chose to be cautious. He finally decided to provide the AIB a monthly subsidy of only fifty contos, almost fifty thousand lire, in a “riservatissima” manner.⁴⁴ His subsidy was a long way from the astronomical sum suggested by Fonseca Hermes, but it was significant; by agreeing to a monthly subsidy, Italy moved beyond a strictly ideological association with the AIB to direct involvement in Brazil’s political life.

Because he was well aware of the possible implications of his decision, Ciano made clear that the subsidy could be unilaterally suspended at any moment. As further precautions, Ciano ordered that monthly payments to the AIB be made indirectly and that the Italian embassy in Rio de Janeiro abstain from any contact of this type with the AIB. Ciano then named the Marchese Nicastro exchange house to be the intermediary charged with remitting Italian monetary contributions to the AIB.⁴⁵

In response to Ciano’s instruction, the new Italian ambassador in Brazil—Vincenzo Lojacono—⁴⁶ countered that the surest way to avert compromising the embassy would be for the Palazzo Chigi to designate an official representative of the Italian Fascist party in Brazil, charged with maintaining close and permanent contact with the AIB (the AIB should in

43. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany (ADDD), dispatch of Arthur Schmidt-Elskop, German ambassador in Rio de Janeiro, to the Ministry of Foreign Relations in Berlin, dossiê-Politische Abteilung IX, Politische Beziehungen Braziliens zu ver Sr. U. Amerika, n. 22, Band 1, doc. n. Pol IX 222, Mar. 4, 1937.

44. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, secret doc. n. 10, Jan. 13, 1937; doc. n. 16, Jan. 15, 1937; and doc. n. 202439, Jan. 24, 1937.

45. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, secret dispatch n. 202439, Jan. 24, 1937, and Ciano, *Diario, 1937–1943*, pp. 54–55.

46. Vincenzo Lojacono was a career diplomat, but contrary to the majority of members of the “old school” of Italian diplomacy, who resisted the fascistization of foreign policy, he was decidedly sympathetic to Fascism. Furthermore, he was trusted by Mussolini, who made him responsible for Croatian and Albanian matters during the 1920s. His appointment to Brazil represented an increased interest in the matters under discussion, and particularly in relations with the AIB; see Raffaele Guariglia, *Ricordi 1922–1946* (Naples, 1950), pp. 54–74.

turn designate one of its confidants to represent it in Rome). The embassy proposed Pier Filippo Gomez as the Fascist representative in Brazil. Ciano disapproved because Gomez, contrary to his instructions, had entered into close relations with the principal integralist leaders.⁴⁷ In August 1937, Ciano finally decided to nominate Amadore di Giacomo, former Italian consul of the city of Juiz de Fora, as official Fascist representative in Brazil.⁴⁸

The nomination of the representative of the Fascist party in Brazil was facilitated by the hierarchical organization of that party. The same, however, did not occur within the AIB. The hesitations of a divided leadership heightened the opportunism of some members, like Jorge Latour and Luiz Sparano, affiliated with the radical wing of the AIB, who presented themselves to Ciano as the legitimate representatives of the AIB in Rome.⁴⁹ Lojacono informed Salgado of the initiatives taken by Latour and Sparano and told Salgado that he disapproved of them.⁵⁰ Thus, the confusion within the AIB was evident, and more serious, Salgado's authority was increasingly being contested in Italy. In Brazil, meanwhile, he ran the risk of losing to the radical wing, under the leadership of Gustavo Barroso.

Confronted with this threatening situation, Salgado decided to place under his personal direction all AIB relations with Italy, whether in Rio de Janeiro or Rome. The possibility of naming an AIB representative in Rome was dropped and instructions went out that henceforth contacts should be made directly through Salgado, be it with di Giacomo or Lojacono. Salgado clearly had decided that a single false step could "destroy the integralist movement, [by] describing it as having sold out to foreigners."⁵¹ Salgado declared to Lojacono that only he (Salgado) or the ambassador met the guarantee of reciprocal security.⁵² His logic ran as fol-

47. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, dispatch n. 308 R/23, Jan. 27, 1937.

48. Emmanuele Grazi advised Ciano to appoint Di Giacomo to the post of representative of the Fascist party in Brazil "per sua riservatezza e per conoscenza codesti ambienti"; AMAE, Busta 16, secret doc. n. 13325/153, Aug. 31, 1937.

49. While Jorge Latour was a member of the Brazilian diplomatic corps, Luiz Sparano was a businessman, connected with Itamarati, living in Rome. He was a personal friend of Getúlio Vargas. He sent a letter to Ciano, dated June 26, 1937, in which, in the name of the AIB, he made some proposals, to be put into effect when the AIB was in power. Among these, Sparano made evident the analytical unity and coordination between "[O] Integralismo e o Fascismo na luta contra o Comunismo, Anarquismo, Trotsquismo e todas as outras correntes subversivas e extremistas," as well as the study of some kind "de cooperação econômica em larga escala entre os dois países quando chegar ao poder o Regime Corporativo no Brasil. Tal cooperação podera implicar em um pacto corporativo Brasil-Italia"; AMAE, Busta 16, unnumbered document, June 26, 1937.

50. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, dispatch n. 3697, July 10, 1937.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

lows. In the event that it was revealed that the movement received funds from the ambassador, he (Salgado) would be forever condemned and the ambassador's mission would be destroyed. Lojacono for his part considered Salgado's observation convincing, but nonetheless accepted the role proposed by Salgado on "the condition that Plínio Salgado provide a receipt for funds turned over to him." This Salgado refused to do since it would constitute material proof of his secretive links with Italy.⁵³

In February 1937, on the commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the march on Rome, Plínio Salgado sent a message to Mussolini congratulating il Duce on having created a movement that "began in Rome and spread over the world," and that was admired by Brazilian integralists, who considered the movement a step toward an international "New Civilization."⁵⁴

One of the most delicate aspects of Italian-integralist relations involved nationalism. Rome disapproved of integralista nationalism because it represented a threat to the liberties enjoyed by the Italian colony established in Brazil. Salgado, conscious of the problem, emphasized that the integralistas were "building a fatherland, creating a nation, developing a public consciousness, carrying out a cultural labor, envisioning a future of universal accord; [that would follow a] period of nationalist subjectivism which would be succeeded, once authority was reestablished in every state, by a phase of ethical internationalist objectivism . . . , that would eliminate, according to Plínio Salgado, any vestige of minorities in the different countries."⁵⁵ This message was "vivamente apprezzata" by Mussolini.⁵⁶

Despite Salgado's ideological pronouncements made for Italian consumption, the principal integralist concerns went far beyond simple declarations of solidarity and of sympathy with Italian Fascism. The movement's dominant concern was how to prepare for the presidential elections set for January 1938. The integralist position was ambiguous because certain of the movement's most influential members, notably Gustavo Barroso and Miguel Reale, wanted, according to Lojacono,⁵⁷ to organize a putsch; the wing led by Salgado, meanwhile, thought the party could take power by means of the ballot box. This latter possibility would have been a viable one had the AIB actually had a million members in addition to sympathizers and potential electors because the total Brazilian electorate for the forthcoming election totaled only three million voters.

53. *Ibid.*

54. AMAE, Salgado to Mussolini, Busta 16, unnumbered letter, Feb. 25, 1937.

55. *Ibid.*

56. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, dispatch n. 628 R/52, Mar. 30, 1937.

57. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, dispatch n. 2745/767, Oct. 29, 1937, p. 2.

Constitutionally the provisions for the presidential election were quite clear: Vargas could not be a candidate. While informed individuals questioned that an intelligent and ambitious Vargas would leave power without a fight, they nonetheless accepted his eventual departure when, in 1937, the regime announced that its “official” candidate would be José Américo de Almeida.⁵⁸ The campaign then settled into a four-way race. The other contenders were Plínio Salgado, Armando Salles de Oliveira, former governor of the state of São Paulo and antiadministration candidate, and Luiz Carlos Prestes, nominee of the Brazilian Communist party.

Italy begins to have doubts

In his analysis of the presidential campaign as it got under way, Ambassador Lojaco was unable to convince himself of Vargas’s sincerity. Thus, on June 4, 1937, the ambassador communicated to Rome that “now everyone is asking what Sr. Getúlio Vargas will do” after having allowed events to enter “constitutional terrain.” Was Vargas seriously thinking of leaving? Able, very honest, and practically unassailable, a good judge of men (“he moves them like puppets”), could he accept the idea of being replaced?⁵⁹

Lojaco’s doubts and questions arose naturally from the Brazilian political imbroglio. It was, in fact, very difficult to accept the idea of Vargas leaving office without resisting. A “state of war” gave him powers to take any measures he considered necessary to remain in power. The knowledgeable also recalled that when the Fundamental Law was adopted in 1934, Vargas had declared that he would be the first to modify it.⁶⁰

All these circumstances led Lojaco to declare that one of the dangers that integralism faced in the campaign was the need for anyone in Brazilian public life to burn at least a little incense before the statute of liberty, and integralism did not dare to violate the code. “Thus, there still

58. Getúlio Vargas chose José Américo de Almeida, a native of the state of Paraíba, as his successor and was quite surprised when José Américo no longer followed directives coming from the Guanabara [presidential] Palace and invested his electoral campaign with a populist tone. Almeida announced at a rally in Belo Horizonte, the country’s financial center, that he knew where to find the money to realize his governmental program. Even Oswaldo Aranha declared himself shocked by José Américo’s declarations. The federal government then began to deflate José Américo’s candidacy; see Arquivo Getúlio Vargas (Rio de Janeiro) (hereinafter AGV) CPDOC, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, letter n. 1937.08.24.XXVII–20, Aug. 24, 1937. See also José Américo de Almeida, *A Palavra e o Tempo: 1937–1945–1950* (Rio de Janeiro, 1965).

59. AMAE, Lojaco to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 1272/378, June 4, 1937.

60. Paul Frischauer, *Getúlio Vargas, Un Portrait sans Retouche* (Rio de Janeiro, 1944), p. 311.

are many democratic formalities in the integralist method of operation that others take advantage of to generate confusion.”⁶¹

According to Lojacono, those democratic vestiges compromised the integralist movement. For the first time an official Italian representative clearly indicated a preference for an integralist coup d'état. But, were the integralists disposed to use force, as Fonseca Hermes had indicated in Rome? According to Lojacono, the answer to this question was that, barring unforeseen developments, neither Salgado nor any member of his party appeared disposed to face a coup d'état.⁶²

This timidity and the hesitation on the part of the integralist leadership displeased Lojacono, who speculated that “if the integralists do not cast the die, could not President Vargas do so himself . . . ?” Lojacono continued: “If this questioning is unjustified, it is not to be doubted that an eventual rupture of the Constitutional Front would lead Vargas to take advantage of the integralists and the integralists to take advantage of Vargas.”⁶³

The possibility that Vargas would “lift the constitutional siege” that he himself had proclaimed was what Lojacono feared most, especially after the AIB chose Salgado by plebiscite as its candidate for the presidency. Historically the votes cast in elections had never exceeded a million. Therefore, in an honest balloting, the AIB with its popular following, stood to achieve victory.⁶⁴ After his nomination, Salgado left for Italy since he needed substantial financial contributions if he were to carry on. His trip bore fruit. In August 1937, Ciano decided to grant Salgado a special subsidy of 579 contos, to be taken from the coffers of the Italian consulate in São Paulo.⁶⁵

The Italian-integralist collaboration increased as the election neared. Ciano himself declared that he was disposed to grant further financial aid and that it could be “abbastanza larga.”⁶⁶

Italy commends an integralist coup d'état

Despite the favorable electoral prospects and the ever-increasing financial and programmatic aid from Italy, the principal leaders of the AIB found themselves in a dilemma during the second half of 1937. They suffered from indecision. Integralist calculations of between 800,000 and a million members were strictly propaganda. The facts were that the inte-

61. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 1272/378, June 4, 1937.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 1434/416, June 21, 1937.

65. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, letter n. 1373/134, Aug. 4, 1937.

66. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, secret letter n. 17795.192, Nov. 11, 1937.

gralists could count on a maximum of 300,000 sympathizers. In this sense, the primary elections in which Salgado won the nomination as a presidential candidate were organized and controlled exclusively by the AIB, and it artificially inflated the number of votes cast. Lojacono, despite not directly expressing it, suspected integralist electoral fraud and that the integralistas were not as strong as claimed. It was this calculation that led him to opt for a coup d'état, the only way for the AIB to gain power. He was consequently driven to near despair when integralism confirmed his fears by insisting on compromising with legalism and constantly repeating the same refrain: "Liberty-Democracy."⁶⁷ Lojacono's suspicion of the integralist movement became increasingly evident as the campaign progressed. He recognized a "certain increase in membership, owing to the beginning of martyrdom and fascination that bloodthirsty sacrifice exercised over Latin peoples." Unfortunately, these first victims fell by chance because integralism was not yet capable of finding a truly heroic content. "[Integralism] lives, as a doctrine, in the shadows of its great primogenitor, Italian Fascism, and of its victims."⁶⁸ Lojacono asked himself: "Is Fascism without heroic content and above all without a viable hero? Salgado, deep thinker, . . . does not have the physique of a Condottiere. When I say, 'physical' I mean 'physical courage.' Salgado might not have the passive heroism of those who allow themselves to be killed in the trenches, but neither does he possess the active heroism to leap from the trench to the attack. Great causes need a large number of the first type of hero . . . and at least one of the second." For this reason, Lojacono continued, "when one observes the apex of the integralist pyramid, one sees a curious phenomenon of optic superimposition, the figure of Getúlio Vargas in Plínio Salgado's place."⁶⁹

Finally, the ambassador allowed his admiration for Vargas to show. Not that the caudillo was "the ideal figure of a hero. But when he occupies a position like his with his ample prestige, and does not wish to leave it and when the cannons of the Armed Forces are at hand one could, by necessity, become a hero, above all in South America."⁷⁰

The integralism that "felt the lack of its historic sense to be its Achilles' heel,"⁷¹ also suffered from the absence of what Lojacono called a "stato di necessità."⁷² Lojacono explained that,

the liberal thinkers in this country are able to pay homage to the intervention of Fascism in Italy and in Europe, based on the crite-

67. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 2270/641, Sept. 10, 1937.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

tion that Italy, poor in territory and raw materials, very rich in population, traditions, and spiritual forces . . . faced a life-or-death alternative between salvation in the shadow of Fascio or the shipwreck of Montecitorio Plaza. The Italian people should fight to win and to found the Fascist empire. Now, in order to fight, authority is necessary. But in Brazil, what are those premises? Immense territory, little population, abundance of raw materials . . . everything here is the opposite of the Old World. And why should we renounce our liberty—say the liberals—when this would cause the loss of our territorial paradise . . . ? Thus one could say in the face of this civil ideal that a crusader's shield, our splendid flag of blood and glory are barbarous manifestations: these are the Latin American democracies.⁷³

This above quote aptly demonstrates the mood of the Fascist diplomatic corps in Brazil. The lack of both a heroic spirit and a hero in the AIB is explained more by the structure of Brazilian society than by the ideology of the integralist movement. In this case, it remained solely to integralism “to combat the absence of the State, by necessity agitating the Communist threat, the only dab of red on our horizon *di bel sereno adorno*.”⁷⁴ Lojaco completed his analysis of the Brazilian political situation as it affected integralist prospects by asking himself: “Is the fact that integralism considers itself a party compatible with the constitution good or bad?” For Lojaco: “It is bad, because by acting as it does, integralism ceases to be a revolutionary party.” For Salgado, on the other hand, it appeared to be good.⁷⁵

What was the true and deep-seated Italian interest in seeing integralism come to power in Brazil? Could it have been ideological? No, said Lojaco; the integralist movement was characterized by its “weakness and by the misinterpretation of it by Italian Fascism.”⁷⁶

In respect to better protection of the Italian colony established in Brazil were the integralists to rise to power, the Italian political officers themselves asked: “Is it completely certain that we make our play supporting integralism?” After all, it was very common to find “specialists within the country, some of whom are good Fascists, who speak of integralism as being the tomb of the Italianità in Brazil.” Lojaco agreed with political officers when they contended that integralism represented a rampant and totalitarian nationalism that would not admit a Brazilian who was not an integralist, and who had not severed all ties with his native country. As a

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. AMAE, Lojaco to Ciano, Busta 16, secret letter n. 11 RRR, Sept. 27, 1937.

consequence, Lojacono “did not have much hope for the destiny of the original nationalist, neither in the integralist regime nor in the democratic regime.”⁷⁷

This situation did not particularly concern Lojacono. According to him, liberal democracy by means of dual citizenship and the judicial concepts of “*jus sanguinis*” and “*jus loci*” already had caused the Italian immigrants to lose their ties with their native country. Could integralism worsen the colony’s situation? “I don’t believe so,” Lojacono responded; “what could occur is the explicit end of a situation that the Liberals present in a most hypocritical way. Therefore, with integralism’s rise to power, we will lose only what we were condemned to lose and what, despite everything, we should fight to defend.”⁷⁸

The true Fascist interest in the possibility of the integralist rise to power in Brazil was on another plane. It was evident that a Fascist state in the New World could not avoid being a “*brutta copia, debole e sbiadita*” of the Italian Fascist state; but it would represent at the same time, and this was fundamental in Rome’s eyes, a “rupture of the democratic front that reigns from Alaska to Patagonia.” For Lojacono it was revolting to think that, “in case of extreme emergency, in a life-or-death situation in which Italy committed itself, it would find doors and souls on all America inexorably closed only because of the false democracies, plutocrats, and masons who do not tolerate the light of Fascism.”⁷⁹

Lojacono then turned to strategic and economic matters. What was fundamental for Italy was the need “to break this democratic front [that existed] in the majority of the South American countries and to create an ambience favorable to Fascism.” Lojacono called to Rome’s attention the importance of Brazilian resources and the complementarity of the two economies. Given these conditions, the integralist movement should be “seen and accepted for what it is and not for what it should be. It should be supported because this New World will be the world of the neutrals, the world of the judges, and the world of the providers.”⁸⁰

To Lojacono’s thinking, the integralist movement suffered from two acute weaknesses, the lack of a hero and heroism and the unrealistic concern of the leadership for the legal process. The latter was abandoned by the AIB, to Lojacono’s satisfaction, when on October 14, 1937, in a secret document, the Italian ambassador communicated to Rome that the integralist directors insistently solicited the granting, gratis, of a thousand small arms of foreign manufacture (“preferably Belgian or Czechoslo-

77. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

vakian").⁸¹ These arms were to be transported by Commandant Fernando Cochrane, fervent integralist sympathizer and personal friend of Salgado, who was to go to Brazil with three submarines entrusted by the Brazilian navy to the naval shipyard at La Spezia. Cochrane was to carry the arms in packing cases, labelled "artistic statuettes," and to hand them over to the integralists in Rio de Janeiro.⁸²

The AIB option of carrying out a coup d'état instead of awaiting a possible electoral triumph was a victory for the radical element in the movement (in particular for Gustavo Barroso) and a defeat for Salgado and legalism. Meanwhile, continued differences among the leaders of the movement again were evident. Information arriving in Rome from Lojacono and the integralista's "special confidential envoys"—Luiz Sparano and João Severiano da Fonseca Hermes—was contradictory and did not clarify the limits of agreement concerning the current orientation of the movement. At any rate, the acceptance of the idea of a coup by part of the integralist movement, in a sense, constituted a victory for the policy recommended by Lojacono, who aimed at carrying the AIB to an openly revolutionary attitude. Here was found one of the principal contradictions of Italian foreign policy with respect to Brazil during the confused period between the wars. While he aided the integralist movement to arm itself, Lojacono analyzed the Brazilian political situation and declared that "the general impression is that Vargas surely is headed toward a personal regime, which everyone desires but which no one has the courage to promote."⁸³ Lojacono's opinion was simplistic and extreme, because even though an attempt at a putsch by Vargas would probably have been well received by the military and by the right, such a reception would not have been extended by all sections of the political spectrum or by Brazilian society in general.

What would be the attitude of the integralist movement faced with a Vargas coup? Despite the fact that Salgado as the integralist candidate for presidency of the republic could count on "more than a million voters," he would prefer to support rather than to combat Vargas. "He prefers to see Vargas in power irrespective of the constitution (in this case it would be a revolution)," said Lojacono.⁸⁴ Lojacono's explanation for the integralist attitude suggests near delirium on the ambassador's part, and he began to retreat from Rome's official position. He pointed out that although the integralists had scrupulously preserved a legalistic character by respecting the rules of the game of democratic elections, the movement had,

81. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, dispatch n. 182, Oct. 14, 1937.

82. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, unnumbered dispatch, Sept. 1937.

83. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 11, letter n. 2745/767, Oct. 29, 1937, p. 2.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

overnight, become deeply revolutionary. It had gone to the extreme of renouncing a legal victory in the presidential elections, to permitting Vargas to remain in power—solely to satisfy its own revolutionary aspirations. We agree that the image of the spirit of sacrifice and of passive heroism that characterized the integralist movement would have been greatly reinforced by this shift in attitude. Lojacono realized as much but tried to conceal it from Ciano.

The reality was that the AIB did not have the votes to win a presidential election. Furthermore, it was impossible for the AIB to win the elections because of the ability of the incumbent to engage in electoral fraud to whatever extent was considered necessary. Convinced then of the impossibility of winning the presidential elections, the radical wing of the integralist leadership turned to its only means to achieve victory: an armed uprising. It was after that decision had been reached that Gustavo Barroso solicited Italy's support through Lojacono for the "costituzione di una milizia, sul tipo della Milizia Fascista." Barroso based his appeal on the grounds that an armed integralist organization was indispensable as much to "conquistare il potere bensì si esercitare il potere."⁸⁵

Barroso's request reached Ciano and the latter realized, for the first time, that he was becoming dangerously involved in Brazilian internal politics and that this could lead to lasting differences between the two countries. With that in mind, Ciano reviewed the situation. He noted the opportunism (including the ideological) of the integralist movement and the internal fighting at its directory level, its electoral weakness, the contradictory information furnished by integralist special envoys in Rome (who claimed to be official spokesmen of the party), and the suspicion of Salgado in relation to his closest collaborators when the national chief of the AIB decided personally to conserve the monopoly of relations with Italy. To all these data was added the suspicion on the part of Ciano, later confirmed, that his ambassador in Rio de Janeiro did not tell the whole truth and did not follow to the letter instructions received from Rome. The confusion known to exist in Brazil and doubts about the confidence he should place in Lojacono were enough to cause Ciano to back off and to decide to deny Barroso's request.⁸⁶

Despite Ciano's decision, it can be legitimately reasoned that his diplomatic representative in Rio de Janeiro, without informing Rome, maintained direct contact with the integralist leadership with a view to assisting it in preparing for the putsch. The absence of documents in Italian archives would seem to support the suspicion that there were in Brazil relations between Italian agents and the integralists that were hidden

85. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

86. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, secret dispatch n. 17780/189, Nov. 10, 1937.

even from Ciano. At any rate, Lojacono's reaction after the attempted integralist coup of May 1938 was very significant. The half-turns and hesitations of his ambassador in Rio de Janeiro caused Ciano not to become overly involved in the Brazilian imbroglio. Thus, the arms request by Barroso's integralists was denied. This did not stop Ciano from continuing to offer financial support to the AIB for electoral campaign purposes. Substantial financial aid from Italy, however, arrived very late and served no useful purpose; Getúlio Vargas brought a halt to all putschist and democratic feints of the different parties by suspending Congress and proclaiming a new constitution, which permitted him to remain in office for seven additional years.

IV. *The New Brazilian Political Situation and the Strengthening of Vargas*

The Estado Novo

The principal objective of Vargas's putsch, carried out on November 10, 1937, was to preserve his presidential mandate. During his "Proclamation to the Nation," he assumed the title of "Savior" and spoke at length of the motives that had led him to abort the electoral campaign and to suspend the constitution. For Vargas, Brazil was living in exceptional times characterized by the "poverty and disorganization" of the political life; he cited as an example the presidential succession, which had become a "scornful competition of groups, obliged to operate by bribes and by demagogic promises, and without concern for . . . the vital forces of the nation."⁸⁷ In these circumstances, universal suffrage became an instrument of the more audacious and a mask to hide voracious personal appetites. He went on to observe that both traditional and new political parties were without ideological content and in the service of opportunistic groups.⁸⁸ Vargas's statements were pregnant with portent. Shortly, all political parties were dissolved.

Vargas then had proclaimed a new constitution that instituted "a strong regime of peace, justice, and work."⁸⁹ The new constitution, which would dominate the Estado Novo, was drafted by Francisco Campos and copied the organization of the Portuguese, Polish, and Italian Constitutions as well as the Italian *Carta del Lavoro*. It was, above all, Italian in what it said with respect to the organization of syndicates and to the idea

87. Getúlio Vargas, *A Nova Política do Brasil, O Estado Novo*, 5 vols. in 4 (Rio de Janeiro, 1938), V, 21.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 20. See Edgard Carone, *O Estado Novo (1937-1945)* (Rio de Janeiro, 1976), and Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil under Vargas* (New York, 1942), pp. 121-148.

89. Getúlio Vargas, *A Nova Política do Brasil*, I, 28.

of the “Protector State.” According to the Italian ambassador, “All legislation of the Brazilian Estado Novo—though it tried hard to conceal the fact—was inspired by Fascist legislation. The most recent social laws about employees, about schools, about the role of the family, etc., were based on material furnished by the Embassy, which had solicited it, from time to time, from the Kingdom.”⁹⁰

The establishment of a corporatist state, centralized and highly interventionist in capital-labor relations and in a general way in the country’s economy, constituted a new phenomenon in the New World. Washington and Oswaldo Aranha—then Brazilian ambassador to the United States—were concerned, with good reason, that the Estado Novo was inspired by European Fascism. They missed the essence of the putsch, however; namely, the retention of the old bureaucracy, which ultimately gave governmental agencies their conservative character.

The Italian-integralist crisis

The interpretations of Italian diplomats with respect to the new Brazilian political situation is of interest. Still, Lojacono noted that for the moment “integralism had triumphed even though the integralists had not triumphed.”⁹¹

The November 10 coup was a debacle for the integralists, who appeared not to have participated. Two days later, Salgado declared that “as a party, integralism no longer exists.”

Lojacono did not despair. He tried to salvage whatever possible, and he sought an immediate interview with Salgado. The primary preoccupation of the ambassador was the dangerous situation of “*ambiguità, de equivoco e di duplicazione de autorità*”⁹² provoked by integralist demonstrations hostile to Vargas. During the interview, Salgado explained that the goal of the integralists was the raising of Brazil’s shield against Washington, of the Latin soul against the Anglo-Saxon soul. He then went on to say that he suspected that Vargas would make concessions to Washington and for that reason “before supporting Vargas, it would be necessary to control him.”⁹³ Lojacono countered that the best way to control the course of a ship was to be at the helm, not watching it from the shore, and that a revolution by the Latin soul against the Anglo-Saxon soul must be prepared by molding the youth. With the youth in mind, he informed Salgado that the “Ministry of Education is the best place for maneuvering

90. AMAE, Umberto Grazi to the Ministry of Popular Culture, Busta 24, dispatch n. 0032, Jan. 3, 1940.

91. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 2897-797, Nov. 17, 1937.

92. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 3092/832, Dec. 7, 1937.

93. Ibid.

in the creation of a new Brazilian soul.”⁹⁴ Lojaco’s reasoning did not change Salgado’s mind.

Lojaco also thought that Salgado’s passive heroism gave him the appearance of an apostle of lost causes. That image once and for all put an end to the Italian political officers’ illusions. They convinced themselves that the integralist movement did not possess a historic sense because it lacked the essential ingredient: combat spirit. With this analysis in hand, Ciano questioned Lojaco on January 8, 1938, as to whether it was desirable to “suspendere nostra sovvenzione” to the integralist movement.⁹⁵ Lojaco confirmed that it was preferable to suspend the sending of financial aid, and on the following day the Cabinet decided on that course of action.⁹⁶ A chapter of intense and tumultuous cooperation between Italy and the AIB was closed in an unfortunate way for both parties.

Italy and Vargas

For Italy, it was now important to move closer to official Brazil, that is, to Getúlio Vargas. With that object in mind, Ciano called the Brazilian ambassador in Rome, Adalberto Guerra Duval, and communicated to him his “simpatia per l’azione di Vargas; gli ho promesso l’appoggio degli Italiani.”⁹⁷

There is no evidence known to me that Rome participated directly in Vargas’s November 1937 putsch. There is evidence that both Rome and Berlin looked favorably upon his reaffirmation of power. Certain of Lojaco’s correspondence suggests as much, and when Italy joined the anti-Comintern Pact on November 6 (four days before the putsch), Ciano considered inviting Brazil to join. He saw Brazil playing the role of shaking the entire South American democratic system.⁹⁸ Hitler’s Germany entertained the same view.

Both Rome and Berlin had reason to believe that Vargas would be amenable to signing the Pact, primarily because it was known that certain ideologically inclined elements in the Armed Forces would view an alliance of militarily weak Brazil with two great powers as lending prestige to the Estado Novo. As events unfolded, before formal proposals could be made to Rio de Janeiro, Washington made known its disapproval of Brazil’s joining the Pact, and Oswaldo Aranha, Brazil’s highly regarded ambassador in Washington, made clear that he would resign his post if Vargas formally associated himself with the Axis. Pressured by Washington and

94. *Ibid.*

95. AMAE, Ciano to Lojaco, Busta 16, secret dispatch n. 287 PR/4, Jan. 8, 1938.

96. AMAE, Ciano to Lojaco, Busta 16, secret dispatch n. 226 PR/2, Jan. 9, 1938.

97. Ciano, *Diario, 1937–1943*, p. 56.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

by figures close to his official household, Vargas decided to back away from the Axis powers.

At least one other major consideration influenced Vargas's decision. It arose out of nationalist Decree-Law No. 383 of April 18, 1938, affecting education.⁹⁹ Germany reacted violently when the law was decreed, going so far as to declare that it ended friendly relations between the two countries. Thereafter differences between the countries escalated and culminated in the declaration of *persona non grata* status for the two ambassadors. Those decisions were of twofold importance. They proved that the economic preoccupations of the two countries were not enough to overcome their political and ideological concerns. And they contradicted, or at least raised serious doubts about, the accuracy of the traditional version of Germany's policies being dictated by economics.

Italy's relations with postcoup Brazil

The question naturally arises: did the storm that rocked German-Brazilian relations have any significant influence on the Brazilian policy toward Italy? Did Rome join with its Nazi ally or did it follow an independent course in Brazil?

It is startling when one consults the German diplomatic archive, to discover the enormous quantity of material existing on the Brazilian national question compared to the holdings found in the Palazzo Chigi and the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture. In the final analysis, the different foreign measures taken by Brazil were not indiscriminatory, and, given the importance of Italian immigration in Brazil, Rome had reason to be as concerned about the destiny of Italians and of their descendants in Brazil, as had Berlin about its expatriates. But, with the exception of an audience granted the Brazilian ambassador in Rome immediately after the adoption of Decree-Law No. 383, Ciano never expressed a level of concern similar to that expressed by Berlin.

The reasons for Italian relative indifference were multiple. First, Italy decided in December 1937 to support the Vargas government and to abandon the integralists. Consequently, Italian passivity in relation to the nationalistic policy of Rio de Janeiro resulted from a tactical option in Brazil itself. Ciano did not want to compromise existing integralist relations with Vargas. Second, the measures by Brazil were, while in theory non-

99. Decree Law N. 383 prohibited any activity whatsoever of a political-ideological nature by foreigners in Brazil. All organizations with foreign links, through either the nationality of their members or their funding, were dissolved. Foreigners could only assemble to celebrate their national holidays. Admission of native-born or naturalized Brazilians to cultural or relief organizations established by foreigners was forbidden. See the complete text in *Diário Oficial* (Rio de Janeiro), Apr. 19, 1938, pp. 7357-7359.

discriminatory, favorable to Italians, as the Brazilian ambassador in Rome, Guerra Duval, emphasized.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the Brazilian police and military authorities enforcing nationalistic measures designed to regulate the activities of foreigners in the extreme south were implacable in dealing with the Germans, while leaving the Italians basically unaffected.

Finally, and of no small consequence, we can perceive a certain disapproval on Italy's part and in particular, on Ciano's, of the conduct of Nazi agents in Brazil. Ciano declared in April 1938, that

these Germans exaggerate and not only in Europe. Today, I had a meeting with the Brazilian ambassador to make recommendations to him about our colonial institutions. In fact, in Rio de Janeiro, they prepared an Anti-Foreigner Law that was followed by the expulsion of the German community from Santa Catarina. I had, in what he says regarding this, ample guarantees. But do the Teutonics have the physical need to exasperate all of human beings to the point of their coalescing against them? If they are not careful, it could happen again, and this time the sanctions would be much more serious than those taken in 1919.¹⁰¹

The fact that Italians were better treated than Germans in Brazil did not dissuade Karl Ritter from proposing joint German-Italian actions in other areas. It was he who recommended to Wilhelmstrasse, headquarters of the German Ministry of Foreign Relations, that in cooperation with Ciano a plan be agreed upon calling for German and Italian embassies in Latin America in general, but particularly in Brazil, to work together to curb United States influence in the area. Ritter was certain that if such a plan were formalized, it would have indisputable advantages for Nazi Germany. Wilhelmstrasse followed Ritter's suggestion. During the trip that Hitler and his retinue made to Rome in May 1938, Ministers Gottfried Aschmann and Ernst von Weizsäcker¹⁰² maintained contact with individuals in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the indispensability of calling to the attention of the Brazilian government the price of mistreating German and Italian nationals in Brazil.

In turn, high Italian government officials informed Aschmann that Italy had secretly reached agreements with the Brazilian government on that issue. Weizsäcker, meanwhile, regretfully acknowledged that he did not find the Italians favorable to joint action against Brazil. The ministerial director, Gino Buti,¹⁰³ had in fact informed him that the Fascist or-

100. Ciano, *Diario*, 1937-1943, p. 127.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Gottfried Aschmann was Wilhelmstrasse's director of the Ministry of the Press, while Ernst von Weizsäcker was the secretary of state.

103. Gino Buti was the director of the Department of European and Mediterranean Affairs in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Relations.

ganizations in Brazil were perfectly neutral in respect to Brazil's democratic policies and nonpolitical in character.¹⁰⁴

The Rome-Berlin axis, consequently appeared to have divided over the delicate Brazilian situation. While Germany found itself in a position weakened in relation to Rio de Janeiro, Italy maintained a certain distance from Berlin in respect to expatriates and thus enjoyed somewhat friendlier ties with the Vargas regime than did Germany. Italian-Brazilian relations nonetheless entered a crisis period.

The integralist putsch attempt

The AIB, excluded from national political life in December 1937, did not resign itself to its situation. After months, characterized by multiple expedients designed to convince Vargas that he should reconsider the prohibition he had imposed on the AIB,¹⁰⁵ its leadership, restless for action, unleashed an attack on the night of May 10–11, 1938, against Guanabara Palace, the president's residence.

The integralists' attack proved a disaster. The coup was organized by the AIB, and the chief of operations in the field was Severo Fournier,¹⁰⁶ former captain in the Brazilian army. The operation was an unmitigated fiasco, and a witch hunt began as soon as the last echoes of gunfire were heard.

The most important consequence of the integralist failure was the decline of the movement because its principal leaders and sympathizers were either imprisoned or driven into exile. Even Salgado chose voluntary exile in Portugal.

The attempted coup, on the other hand, increased Vargas's stature both domestically and internationally as various civilian elements, including the liberals, the labor unions, and even imprisoned Communists, rallied to his cause. Vargas took advantage of public euphoria to make a triumphal trip through the country, during which he enjoyed a succession of public demonstrations and parades in his honor. He returned to Rio de Janeiro thoroughly convinced for the first time that his domination of the country was uncontested.

104. Les Archives Secrètes de la Wilhemstrasse, l'Amérique Latine, (Paris), dispatch n. 448, o. 64. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Latin America* (Washington, D.C.), pp. 832, 852, and 854.

105. On January 28, 1938, for example, Plínio Salgado sent a long letter to Getúlio Vargas, in which he complained of the treatment accorded the AIB and asked for an end to those measures; see AGV, letter of Plínio Salgado to Getúlio Vargas, n. 1938.01.28/8 XXIX.

106. The involvement of the military in the attempted Integralista coup, which Alzira Vargas do Amaral Peixoto left implicit in *Getúlio Vargas, Meu Pai* (Porto Alegre, 1960), is substantiated in most recent research work, particularly that done by Peter S. Smith, José Murilo de Carvalho, and Frank McCann, Jr.

The administration's standing abroad was also enhanced. In the United States, neither the State Department nor the press hid its satisfaction with the jettisoning of integralism. Even the *Estado Novo*, vehemently denounced when first installed, found an improved reception in the North American press. Its portrayal as a corporative Fascist-type regime gave way to the image of yet another authoritarian regime in the American subcontinent. Only in Germany, among the world's powers, was the failure of the integralist attempt considered a misfortune, especially so because it quickly became known that certain German elements, linked to the embassy, and particularly to Ritter, had participated directly in planning the putsch. Now, with the AIB failure, the German situation became increasingly delicate as Brazil retaliated by stepping up its nationalist campaign.

In his report to Rome on the events of May 11, the Italian ambassador in Rio de Janeiro pointed out that Vargas, in whom Italy since December 1937 had entrusted its hopes, had escaped assassination by a miracle. But Lojacono, instead of applauding the outcome, permitted a deep bitterness to show through. Restrained in his earlier analysis of the Brazilian situation, he now revealed his true and deep aspirations. The sense that one derives from reading his long report, sprinkled alternatively with despair and jubilation, is his hope in the future of the Fascist ideal in Brazil.

The ambassador's view of this was in sharp contrast to that of Ciano, who had staked Italy's future in Brazil on Vargas. Despite his faith in the ultimate triumph of Fascism in Brazil, Lojacono was disappointed that those who led the attack on Guanabara Palace were not more than "a group of fifty individuals, unfortunately recruited from among the Black community and others of questionable standing." Lojacono, optimist that he was, also found reason to be jubilant. He declared that "integralism, in defeat, had been reborn." Its death had come from inaction. "The movement, its strength sapped by desertions and denunciations, found life in the paralysis of the *Estado Forte*." Plínio's hesitation was overcome by Getúlio's inertia. The reborn party found itself in a very different situation from that in which it had found itself before the Vargas coup. At that time the integralists had not reacted forcefully. Now the movement would awaken from its lethargy and would openly oppose Vargas. Salgado now had the chance to come back and win against Vargas. Salgado's lack of a heroic sense (an irreparable sin, according to Lojacono) found forgiveness in the integralist attack on the palace because it gave the movement "its victims, that is, its heroes." "A great spark arises from the tombs and the jails. This spark will create the state of incandescence that we believed impossible in our earlier reports."¹⁰⁷

107. AMAE, Lojacono to Ciano, Busta 16, letter n. 1263:331, May 16, 1938, p. 7.

Lojacono's dreams were not to be realized. The national political scene that, according to Lojacono's scenario, should have become an inferno proved to be a scarred jungle in which individual integralists wandered aimlessly and over which a revitalized Vargas would dictate. Once again it remained for the Italian embassy to salvage what could still be salvaged. This time it was the integralist leadership and sympathizers seeking refuge and protection on the embassy's premises. Vargas was magnanimous in victory and granted the safe-conduct passes necessary for the refugees to leave the country. But, when Severo Fournier, the commander of the attack on Guanabara Palace was given asylum in the Italian embassy, Vargas and Oswaldo Aranha, now foreign minister, demanded his surrender on the grounds that Fournier was not sought for political crimes, but for his participation in the "criminal attack aimed at the assassination of the chief of state and his family."¹⁰⁸ Many weeks of discussions and tensions between the Italian embassy and Itamarati followed and not until July 1938, and then only after having received categorical and irrefutable orders from Ciano, did Lojacono hand over Severo Fournier to the military police.

The principal consequence of the Fournier case for Italian-Brazilian relations was that it made of Ambassador Lojacono an unwelcome guest, and Itamarati, with Vargas's approval, determined to end his mission in Brazil. Rome was sensitive to the "friendly step" of Rio de Janeiro and, in November 1938, recalled Lojacono, thereby avoiding a deeper crisis. The Fournier case closed a stormy chapter in Italian-Brazilian relations. It perhaps ended as it did because the Italian position in Brazil, like that of its German counterpart, was uncertain. As Europe moved toward World War II, graceful retreat was in order.

V. Conclusion

As much in bilateral relations as in the whole of Brazilian activities on the international scene, the period analyzed marks a rupture in traditional Brazilian foreign relations. The country was transformed into one of the stakes in a much larger dispute between democracy and totalitarianism. Historiography has already demonstrated that the provocations born of the two positions manifested themselves on the economic plane. The present investigation shows that the rivalries were also carried to ideological levels. In this sense, Brazil grew in importance in the eyes of Rome and Berlin, and among other things, resulted in the evolution of a secret and parallel Axis diplomacy.

Until now, Brazilian Integralist Action has been viewed as a national

108. AMAE, Ciano to Lojacono, Busta 16, dispatch n. 159, June 17, 1938.

and nationalistic movement. Nevertheless, there are many signs that point to a commonality between integralism and European totalitarian doctrines, in particular, Italian Fascism. Space permitting, it could be established that integralism's antic cosmopolitanism, its corporatist character, the presence of an infallible supreme chief, its hierarchical paramilitary organization, its outward manifestations, its fondness for parades, and its guerrillalike cries of greeting made the AIB almost a tropical, although somewhat pale, facsimile of Italian Fascism.

The contacts maintained by the principal leaders of the AIB and Italy were yet another aspect, almost entirely unknown to Brazilian historiography. Even though it might be necessary to delve more deeply into this (in the event that one day the missing integralist archives become accessible), the current historic understanding is sufficient to clear up some apparent contradictions, like that surrounding the political and physical elimination of integralism from the national political scene by Vargas's corporatist state.

Unlike Germany and the United States, Italy did not have a well-defined objective in its relations with Brazil. The economic cooperation between two complementary economies, which should have been one of the principal leitmotifs, did not occupy a prominent place on Italy's list of priorities. No serious plan of economic cooperation was developed, and commercial and financial exchange remained at very low levels. In relation to the Italian colonies established in Brazil, Rome's attitude withered because of ambiguity and the lack of a coherent philosophy. The ideological questions, however, remained, and these played an important role in determining Italian activities in Brazil. The contradictions, hesitations, and about-faces of the Palazzo Chigi, however, were many. Thus, following Germany's example, Rome was in a constant dilemma between an approach to Getúlio Vargas—considered by Italian diplomats a "heroic chief"—and the AIB—"authentic and legitimate son of Fascism." Italy attempted a double play: it tried, on the one hand, to maintain good relations with Vargas, and, on the other, to make a genuine effort to approach Salgado.

Italian diplomacy differed from the German in its methods. Italy's was characterized by malleability, personal relations, and opportunism. Even in crises—for example, the Fournier case—the Palazzo Chigi tended more toward conciliation than confrontation. In this aspect, the main weakness of Italian diplomacy in relation to Brazil during the period was the minimal control exercised by Ciano over his ambassadors, Lojacono in particular. One cannot miss the fact that Lojacono became a little dictator in the Italian embassy in Rio de Janeiro, while Chargé d'affaires Menzinger, the initiator of the parallel diplomacy in Brazil, lost standing.

Brazil, for its part, did not fare well. Its foreign policies were little more than delayed reactions to external developments. With the exception of the Ritter question, the period was sown with examples of Brazilian determination to mediate and to compromise. When Brazil is no longer but a dream and a country of the future, will this tendency to compromise continue, as now, to dominate the philosophy of its foreign relations, or, on the contrary, will Brazilian nationalism demand truly Brazilian foreign policies of an inevitably less pacific character?