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Brazil Emerges From War Second Power in Americas

A NEWSWEEK correspondent in Rio de Janeiro sent the following story last week on recent naval and military developments in Brazil.



They Both Speak Spanish: A common language is a help to these Puerto Rican soldiers in introducing the music and dances of their island home to a maid of Manila.

The recent visit to Brazil of Admiral Jonas Howard Ingram, commander-in-chief of the United States Atlantic Fleet, had important political implications which were largely overlooked by the United States press. His ostensible purpose was to bid farewell to the Brazilian authorities, now that war in the South Atlantic is over, and to attend to certain legal formalities in connection with the closing out of the United States Navy's naval and air combat units in Brazil. But Brazilians were most impressed by some of the admiral's public statements.

He said flatly in an open press conference: "Brazil has placed itself alongside the United States as one of the two foremost powers of this hemisphere . . . I do not believe the Brazilian people realize how far Brazil has advanced itself internationally." Later he said: "I have no doubt that after the war the United States will do much for the Brazilian Navy . . . Details will have to wait until we know how much surplus material we have after Japan is beaten . . . To be strong, to be great, to advance, Brazil must and will have a great navy."

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Brazil '45

Washington-Rio Axis: As a matter of fact, Brazil right now is armed to the teeth with matériel sent to its army, navy, and air forces by the United States. The Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul is one huge airfield.

All this definitely proves one thing: The balance of power in this hemisphere now rests on an axis between Washington and Rio de Janeiro. Definitely though not irretrievably, Argentina has lost its leadership in the political and military fields, and it is within Brazil's power to take the financial, commercial, and economic lead on the continent. It remains to be seen whether Brazil will be astute enough to grasp its opportunity or whether Argentina can retrieve its former political and military leadership and maintain its economic position.

But Brazil has problems, too. One of these is the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, just returned from action in Italy. A reliable Brazilian civilian told this correspondent that he had encountered two wounded Brazilian officers in the Catete Palace (the Presidential offices). They said they were trying to see President Getulio Vargas "for the fifth time to complain about the lack of decent hospital facilities for us in Brazil. It's a crying shame—and from a government accountable to no one for the past eight years, too. If we don't see Vargas this time [they didn't], we're going to see the general." "The general?" the civilian asked, "Dutra, I suppose?" (Eurico Gaspar Dutra who resigned last week as War Minister in order to run for President.) "Dutra, nothing," one officer replied, "Mascarenhas de Moraes [commander of the BEF]. Don't you know there are two armies in Brazil now: that of the Minister of War, which has never fired a shot for Brazil, and Mascarenhas's, blooded in Italy?"

The civilian may not have known this, but the government does. It is trying to prevent the BEF from remaining under arms as a combative force by dispersing officers and men to all parts of Brazil, returning some to civilian life, assigning others to new units, etc. The government has its eyes open.