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Emerging Cold War Ideologies During the Populist Era in Latin America and the US Media Response

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EMERGING COLD WAR IDEOLOGIES DURING THE POPULIST ERA IN
LATIN AMERICA THE US MEDIA RESPONSE

By

Katherine Prince

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillments
of the requirements of the degree of
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Colin Snider, Ph.D., Committee Chair
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The University of Texas at Tyler
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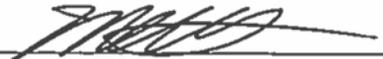
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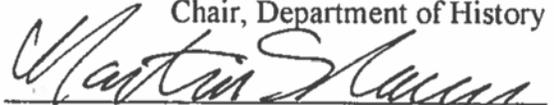
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Abstract

EMERGING COLD WAR IDEOLOGIES DURING THE POPULIST ERA IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE US MEDIA RESPONSE

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Thesis Chair: Colin Snider, Ph.D. The
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This thesis aims to identify the characteristics of populism and how those characteristics directly affected the politics and helped set the stage for later military dictatorships in Latin America. This text aims to look at how military regimes in Latin America placed blame on populist leaders and used their inefficiencies as a justification for taking power and establishing military rule. In many instances in Latin America, populist leader's time in office was characterized by inflation and concern over foreign investment.

The concern over foreign investment and possible foreign takeover of local industries provides the background for another concern, that of outside (mainly communist) influence being introduced into the country. One question this paper looks at is why the Cuban Revolution is seen as the turning point for communism in Latin America when there were anti-communist policies during the Populist era.

This paper attempts to look at how the Cuban Revolution was seen as the turning point for Latin American countries in their fight against communists. This paper looks at how

the US media responded to populist leaders anti-communist statements and how pre-Cold War ideologies are found in populist era rhetoric.

This paper hopes to bridge the threat of communism from the so called populist era, to the Cuban Revolution, and through into the military dictatorships.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Cold War and the perceived threats of Communism are traditionally viewed from the standpoint of how United States and Soviet Union relations created tension; however, the Cold War affected other areas around the world, even while anticommunism predated the Cold War throughout the Americas. The United States was concerned that communism would fill the political void left by fascism at the end of World War II. The US saw communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a threat to democracy if it were to spread. Be it in the Red Scare following World War I or the Cold world period, the US wanted to avoid the spread of Communism to the Western hemisphere at all costs. Yet the US was not isolated in these goals. The threat of communism was an important issue in Latin America both before and during the Cold War. Classical populist leaders in Latin America like Juan Perón and Getulio Vargas were concerned with communism spreading to their countries.

In the decades preceding the Cold War, during the 1930s and 1940s, many countries in Latin America had populist leaders as presidents. These leaders, like Juan Perón and Getulio Vargas, focused on ending the traditional oligarchy's monopoly on power and wanted to provide more rights for all members of society. Both Vargas and Perón sought to make the distribution of wealth more equal between all members of society. Not everyone agreed with these ideas, but the majority of people, especially the working class, supported them. Perón and Vargas also wanted to enact social reforms that would provide the lower classes with access to medical care, higher wages, and better living conditions while extending their political voice.

Scholarship on communism in Latin America tends to focus on the Cuban

Revolution and its effects or the fight against communism by later military dictatorships. Scholars do not ignore that populist leaders talked about or dealt with communism; however, they tend to mention communism as if it were a small nuisance that showed up to distract people from the more important issues. Scholarship does not go into much detail about how populist leaders deal with communism. The years immediately following Perón and Vargas tend to overlook any mention of communism by the two.

This work aims to look at the policies and legislation made by populist leaders and how it was viewed by detractors, most notably in US media, as being communistic in what the leaders were trying to achieve. This thesis also aims to look at what measures, if any; populist leaders took in order to stop the threat of communism. I argue that the age of Populism in Brazil and Argentina predate and overlapped with emerging Cold War ideologies. I also look at how foreign policy with the United States affected populist leaders and how the United States responded to the populists' policies through the US media during their time in office. The US media saw anybody who suggested social reforms as "communist" despite the quite clear evidence that neither Juan Perón nor Getulio Vargas were remotely sympathetic to communism. It is important to note that the suggested use of social reforms as a way to combat communism was the same approach that was taken by the US and Europe.

Much of the work that focuses on anticommunism in Latin America hinges on the military dictatorships of the 1960s. I argue that the age of Populism in Brazil and Argentina predated and overlapped with emerging Cold War ideologies. This research aims to look at how populist leaders in the 1930s and 1940s dealt with communism and how the US media portrayed the populists and their policies regarding communism. This

research is important because it reveals that the Cuban Revolution, which is usually seen as the starting point of communism in Latin America, was not the first instance of communism or anticommunism in Latin America. This research explores how communism was seen as a threat in Latin America before the start of the Cold War.

Chapter one of this text begins by situating the Populist Era and the Cold War era in history. It examines how these two time periods are often seen as taking place one right after the other. However, this chapter explores how the two eras oftentimes overlap, especially in the area of Cold War rhetoric. This chapter also explores the different definitions of what populism is and how it is defined by different scholars. The difficulties that populist leaders dealt with during the 1930s through the 1940s, such as the Great Depression and the issues regarding diplomatic relations with the United States, are discussed next. Lastly, this chapter explores the brief histories of the Communist Parties in both Argentina and Brazil, which leads to how anti-communism was presented in the immediate post-World War II context in the US.

Chapter two turns to Argentina, the first case study, exploring politics during the years before Perón gained political power and how problems with the political system of the 1920s and 1930s provided a niche for Perón to fill. This chapter then moves on to explore Perón's beginnings in politics and what problems he wanted to correct in Argentina. It describes how the US and Argentina attempted to build a mutually beneficial relationship with each other. Finally this chapter explores US media reactions to Perón's suggested plans at stopping communism in Argentina.

Chapter three turns to the Brazilian case. It starts with the history of Brazil's First Republic and how the use of the patronage system created large divisions between the

social classes. Next the fall of the First Republic is explored and how its end provided Vargas with the opportunity to gain power in politics. Vargas's political beginnings are then explored to situate what his ideas were for modernizing Brazil. Next Vargas's policies towards communism during the Estado Novo are explored through the use of *New York Times* articles. Lastly, Vargas's politics on communism are explored during the beginnings of the Cold War until his suicide in 1954.

The largest source of information used within this thesis comes from articles printed in the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* is illustrative of the overwhelming influence the United States had in hemispheric politics. These articles provided information on how populists, in their own words, explicitly described their policies towards communism, even as they implicitly illuminate how the US media interpreted or misinterpreted what the populists had outlined. Using the newspaper articles, I outline the emergence of Cold War rhetoric in Latin America and the response in US media, how this rhetoric changed in both Latin American and US media, and how attitudes towards populist leaders changed throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Using the *New York Times* as my main primary source, I argue that the US media reported on Perón and Vargas frequently and in interesting ways established its anticommunist discourses before and during the early Cold War. This paper reveals that emerging Cold War ideologies did not begin at the start of the Cold War, but instead in the 1930s.

The secondary sources used within this work provided the background information on what was taking place politically in Argentina and Brazil during these years. The secondary sources also helped explain the changes taking place inside the Communist Parties in Latin America at the time. The most beneficial text to this work

was *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948*. In their introductory chapter, Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough outline the diplomatic relations between the US, Argentina, and Brazil, and how these relations influenced policies in the two Latin American countries. Bethell and Roxborough effectively set the scene for how the relationships change with the introduction of a more politically active Communist Party in Argentina and Brazil. The text is broken into sections that each concentrate on a different country during this time period. Bethell pens the section on Brazil and is successful in thoroughly explaining the goals of both Vargas and the Communists. Bethell takes the time to briefly explain the origins of the communist party in Brazil and its relationship with Luis Carlos Prestes. Over all Bethell's section on Brazil provided a succinct explanation of politics and communism in Brazil during the pre-Cold War era. In this same text, Michael Rapoport pens the section on Argentina. Rapoport attempts to delve into the complicated narrative of Argentinean politics from 1916 through the late 1930s. Rapoport does mention the major points of this period, the elections of Yrigoyen and the infamous decade, but does not really bridge the narrative between the two. The same issue arose throughout the rest of the section as Rapoport begins to explore the Argentine Communist Party's politics and the rise of Perón. Both Bethell's and Rapoport's sections provided this work with extensive information on the workings of the Communist Parties in each country and how their politics did or did not fit into the politics of each populist leader.

Michael Conniff's *Populism in Latin America*, is a collection of essays that explore populism throughout Latin America. Conniff's text compiles information on widely known populists, such as Perón and Vargas, and explores why each are considered

populists. Conniff argues that Vargas is a populist because of his political appeal towards workers, making this a classic component of populism. Conniff argues that Vargas's attempts to influence and gain the support of the working class was the backbone of Vargas's political platform. This is an important observation for this work, because Vargas had a close relationship with workers, as did the Communist Party of Brazil. Conniff also provided important information for this project with his article "The Tenentes in Power: A New Perspective on the Brazilian Revolution of 1930." Conniff argues that the *tenente* movement was a prominent movement in the creation of modern Brazil, because it set a precedent for disenfranchised groups of people to agitate for the changes they wanted. Conniff's text, in conjunction with his book provided this project with a look at how Brazilian politics changed from the traditional oligarchy into the Brazil of Vargas. While both of Conniff's works were focused on Vargas's early politics, the two works could have mentioned, at least in passing, what role the communists played in Brazilian politics.

Thomas Skidmore's *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* provided extensive information on politics in Brazil from the 1920s through the 1950s. Skidmore argues that the unrest in São Paulo and the demands for a more inclusive political system led to the military coup that brought Vargas to power. Skidmore provides extensive details on how actions of previous political leaders influenced Vargas to create his political platform. Skidmore argues that breaking apart the traditional patronage system allowed for a place in politics for the working class, where Vargas found his largest support. Skidmore's book is one of only a few secondary sources on Brazil that provide a small amount of detail on why populist leaders were blamed for allowing

communism to infiltrate the country. Skidmore contends that Vargas's and later populist's desire to be more inclusive as to who had voting rights led some to see populism as fitting into communist ideology.

Skidmore's text was also beneficial to this work because of his outlining how the Communist Party of Brazil interacted with the Vargas government. Skidmore did not treat the communists as a secondary story that happened outside of Vargas's time, but instead traced how the two sometimes had overlapping ideas on what was best for Brazil. Skidmore's text provided the information necessary to create an outline of Brazil's political history from the 1920s-1950s. Skidmore's work condensed political maneuverings and changes into an easily understandable text. One area in which Skidmore's text is lacking is his description of politics immediately following Vargas's suicide. While Skidmore does an adequate job of condensing and thoroughly explaining the confusing time period of constantly changing presidents, he leaves Vargas out of the discussion. Vargas's suicide had far reaching effects on the politics of Brazil, especially in the immediate years after. After Vargas' suicide, the US media and his detractors in Brazil, paint Vargas as sympathetic towards Communism. Skidmore tends to quickly leave Vargas and his legacy behind to focus on the new presidents to come. Skidmore also leaves room for the study of US-Brazil relations in the Vargas Era.

Ernest A. Duff's article "Luis Carlos Prestes and the Revolution of 1924" is another useful text in understanding the lead up to Brazilian populism. Duff's article outlines the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party's life and involvement in political issues beginning in the 1920s. Duff contends that Prestes was an important figure in politics from the 1920s and 1930s whose absence in scholarship should be rectified. Duff

argues that Prestes's actions leading the Prestes Column began his importance in expressing his displeasure with politics in Brazil. Duff's article provided an accessible background of Prestes's life, but did not get lost in recounting amusing anecdotes about Prestes that other works tend to focus on. Duff explains in detail the politics of the time that moved Prestes to create the Prestes column. These details explore what issues were important to Prestes and how they influenced him into becoming a part of the Communist Party of Brazil. While Duff's work creates a foundation for why Prestes is important to Brazilian history and how his early politics affected his later political life, Duff's article ends after the Prestes Column has ended. Duff does not go into detail about how he became the leader of the Communist Party in Brazil. Duff's main argument is that history often overlooks Prestes, but Duff himself does the same thing. Prestes's involvement in the Communist Party and his dislike for Vargas and his ideals are an important part of Brazilian history. Prestes' position as leader of the Communist Part of Brazil revealed how the Communist Party as a whole viewed Vargas and his policies.

Lastly on the topic of the transition to Vargas is the article "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930, Causes and Aftermath," by James M. Daniel. This article explores the issues that laid the groundwork for Vargas's political platform and the actions that ultimately led to his coming to power. Daniel argues that there were two causes for why the coup of 1930 happened: the depression of 1929 and a desire among certain peoples to expand who was considered a part of society. Daniel illuminates how choosing who would ascend to the presidency traditionally alternated between two states. Beginning in the late 1920s, there was unrest with this traditional way of choosing the president, and in conjunction with the uncertainty brought on by the depression, it fueled political

discontent as well the demand a new way of choosing a president. This led to the coup that installed Vargas as president. The strength of this article for this work is that Daniel briefly mentions that Vargas outlined the reasons the coup had to happen in a letter to the *New York Times*. This revealed that Vargas had early correspondence with the US media. While Daniel does explore what Vargas's early plans were for his presidency, he does not go into much detail about the aftermath his article claimed to address.

Mark A. Healey's book *The Ruins of The New Argentina: Peronism and the Remaking of San Juan after the 1944 Earthquake*, explores the rise of Juan Perón in Argentine politics. Healey argues that the 1944 earthquake in San Juan provided a platform for Perón to use to start his political career, using the aftermath of the earthquake, to practice and fine tune his populist rhetoric by putting together committees to help those affected. Perón's constant calls for government aide for earthquake victims made him stand apart from other government officials Healey argues. Healey's text traces Perón's early rhetoric of wanting to help those in the lower classes in Argentina during his early political career providing an example of how Perón adapted his rhetoric over the years, without faltering in supporting the working class by enacting social reforms. Healey's book provides a look into Perón's political rhetoric with only minor mentions of his wife, Eva. Unlike other texts, Healey does not focus largely on what both Perón and his wife tried to accomplish, but instead what Perón himself tried to accomplish.

Daniel J. Greenberg's article, "From Confrontation to Alliance: Peronist Argentina's Diplomacy with the United States, 1945-1951," positions US and Argentine relations with the Peronist era in Argentina. Greenberg argues that Argentina and Perón were viewed as allies of the Axis Powers, which created distrust between the US and

Argentina. Greenberg goes on to argue that while Perón was an economic nationalist, he would eventually give in to some US demands which helped reestablish a trusting relationship. This budding trust helped with the creation of an anticommunist alliance between the two countries. Greenberg's argument of an anticommunist relationship between the two countries reveals how early scholarship overlooked an important source on this time period. The *New York Times* articles used in this work reveal that in the US media, at least, there were questions of whether Perón's anticommunist policies would really work.

Lastly on the topic of Argentina there is Luis Alberto Romero's book *The History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. Romero's book breaks down the twentieth century in Argentina into easily identifiable sections that explore an important change in Argentina's history. Romero's text, while covering the whole twentieth century, focuses largely on Perón and his policies. Romero reveals how Perón created a political movement around his personality and implemented many beneficial social reforms. Romero explores how these social reforms were aimed at the working and lower classes in order to elevate their status inside of society. Romero's in depth look at Perón's social reforms reveal what Perón's plans were for combating communism. In conjunction with the *New York Times* articles, Romero's text helps outline Perón's plans for using social reforms to combat communism.

This thesis is important to overall scholarship on the populist era and its emerging Cold War ideologies because what has already been written tends to gloss over the relationship between populism and Cold War anticommunism. The aforementioned works do not completely leave out that communism was at least a minor problem around

the 1930s and 1940s; however there are many gaps in scholarship on how later communist policies were influenced by populist leader's own anticommunist policies or how those policies fit within broader hemispheric anticommunism. This work aims to look at the policies and legislation made by populist leaders and how US media outlets reported on them as being communistic in what the leaders were trying to achieve. This work also aims to look at what measures, if any, populist leaders took in order to stop the threat of communism. With the use of secondary sources, this work traces how populist leaders' attempts to stop the spread of communism in Latin America were questioned by the US media. I argue that the age of Populism in Brazil and Argentina predated and overlapped with emerging Cold War ideologies.

The secondary sources, mainly Thomas Skidmore's and Ernest Duff's texts, situate how fighting communism was an important issue during the Populist Era. I also look at how foreign policy with the United States affected populist leaders and how the United States responded to the populists' policies through the US media during their time in office. James M. Daniel's article provides an example of how Vargas was in direct contact with the *New York Times* in order to explain his actions. Secondary sources on Perón do not reveal that he had any contact with the *New York Times*. By exploring populist leaders' anticommunist ideologies as reported in US newspapers, this thesis works towards providing an understanding that anticommunist rhetoric in Latin America did not begin with the Cuban Revolution.

Chapter 2: Populism and Pre-Cold War Era

One year after being forced from office after a fifteen year presidency/dictatorship, Getulio Vargas pledged, “Democracy of the workers, to that I belong. For this I will fight on behalf of the people,”¹ is an example of classic populist rhetoric. Populism was on the rise during the 1930s through the early 1940s in Latin America. Populists wanted to change politics from traditional oligarchy to a more inclusive system. The Great Depression hindered many of the policies earlier political leaders attempted during this time. Populism offered an alternative to fascism and communism. Populism does not fit neatly within any particular ideology, even as it often can and has overlapped with ideologies as diverse as fascism and communism.

The Cold War is defined as taking place roughly from the late 1940s to the 1980s, although there is some debate that the start of the Cold War began with the speech that ultimately created the Truman Doctrine (1947-1948).² The main focus of Cold War studies explores the conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union; however, the Cold War, and the ideological struggles at its core, played out in countries throughout the world. The Cold War is the time after the end of World War II when there were no major global conflicts taking place. While the dates of the Cold War are fluid, one can see the beginnings of communist scares taking place even before the beginning of World War II. The perceived threat of communism affected Latin American countries just as much, if not more than, other areas of the world. During the period leading up to, during, and

¹ News/Opinion, “Getulio Vargas Hits Brazil Government,” *The Dallas Morning News*, December 1, 1946.

² Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 135.

after World War II many Latin American countries had populist leaders. While the Populist Era and the Cold War are often discussed as separate time periods in Latin America and the United States, they overlap considerably. In the cases of Argentina and Brazil (notably the first Vargas era, 1930-1945), this thesis argues Populist Era policies and discourse and what scholars have come to identify as Cold War policies blended together.

Populism in Latin America

As the Latin American historical case makes clear, the definitions of populism can be convoluted, broad, and contested. By and large, most scholars place the classic Populist period in the region in the 1920s-1940s. Populism grew in response to the dissatisfaction of the lower and working classes with the traditional oligarchies. Landed elites were in charge and had the most influence over politics. Populism offered the working class, who would become its largest political support system, inclusion in politics. Including previously disenfranchised sectors of society and being able to raise those people's standard of living were what populists wanted to achieve. Populists suggested reforms that would help elevate many people in their respective countries out of poverty; however, the Great Depression sometimes hindered those plans.

What most scholars can agree on is that populism is a political style that is often characterized by often disputed, characteristics centered on a highly visible leader.

The most functional way to define populism is that it is a political style.³Alan

³ Alan Knight, "Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30 (2).

Knight argues that by defining populism as political style, scholars can look at the way a person governs but at the personality of those who are in power.⁴ Knight contends that exploring populism this way allows scholars to see the larger picture before breaking each populist leader down on an individual basis while allowing greater variety among populists in Latin America. Knight's definition provides a broad basis for analysis which allows for populist leaders to assert more individuality.

Other scholars have pushed the search for the defining characteristics of populism even further. Kenneth Roberts outlines certain guidelines for considering what makes a populist leader and has categorized what he calls the "five core properties" of populism: a personalistic and paternalistic, though not necessarily charismatic, pattern of political leadership, a heterogeneous, multi-class political coalition concentrated in subaltern sectors of society, a top-down process of political mobilization that either bypasses institutionalized forms of mediation or subordinates them to more direct linkages between the leader and the masses, an amorphous or eclectic ideology, characterized by a discourse that exalts subaltern sectors or is anti-elitist and/or anti-establishment, and an economic project that uses widespread redistributive or clientelistic methods to create a material foundation for popular-sector support.⁵ Roberts' definition of populism provides scholars with a framework for closely analyzing populist leaders themselves, in addition to the political style as a whole. Roberts's five core properties accentuate a small amount of what could be considered populist characteristics. While Roberts's definition allows well-known populists such as Getúlio Vargas and Juan Perón to fit neatly into its

⁴ Alan Knight, "Populism and Neo-Populism."

⁵ Karen Kampwirth, ed., *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) 2.

parameters, while it excludes other persons classified as populist, such as Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. Roberts' properties also leave out a notable component of most populist leaders' time in power; the repression and garnering of dictatorial powers.

Francisco Panizza argues that populism “blurs the public-private dividing line and brings into the political realm both individual and collective desires that previously had no place in public life” as populists' personalist politics allow them to bring certain demands by marginalized peoples, such as wage increases and access to social services, into the public spotlight.⁶ Panizza contends that up until populist leaders took power, those aforementioned issues were only relevant to those who it affected firsthand. Panizza also contends that scholars insist upon the historical specificity of every populist iteration rather than persisting in the search for a totalizing theory of populism.⁷ Panizza goes on to explain that populist styles and strategies take on meaning only within in the context of particular political struggles.⁸ Panizza is saying that any component of populism only show up when certain issues are already taking place in a political space. The components of populism are not ones that organically show up; they come together when a geographical location has the right political climate. This climate entails unrest with the status quo and a need to elevate certain groups of people in society.

Another well-known scholar that had studied populism is Ernesto Laclau, who analyzed how the subjects of populist politics are constituted as political subjects through

⁶ Jocelyn Olcott, “The Politics of Opportunity: Mexican Populism Under Lazaro Cardenas and Luis Echeverria”, in *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics*, edited by Karen Kampwirth, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 30.

⁷ Olcott, “The Politics of Opportunity,” 30.

⁸ Olcott, “The Politics of Opportunity”, 31.

the pursuit, and sometimes the denial of demands.⁹ Laclau diverges from other scholars by taking a bottom-up approach, examining populism and populist politics through the lens of what the people are trying to obtain and what the outcome of those demands are. Laclau contends that this process of defining and insisting upon demands inscribes the political frontiers with the us-vs-them ideal that permeates populism. Laclau also argues that populism is a specific mode of political articulation that emanates from and is consolidated in the context of unstable institutions.¹⁰ In the Latin American cases, the economic and political turmoil brought on by the Great Depression spurred the kind of institutional instability that led to populism's rise, according to Laclau.

Much of the scholarship tends to agree with Roberts' suggestion that populist leaders found support from previously marginalized sectors, mostly workers. These populist leaders faced much opposition during their time in power because they were attempting to upset the status quo. Populist leaders focused their political attention on the urban working class and how they needed representation in order to obtain a better life.¹¹ The change from the classic model of the elites ruling the poor began to upset many elites.

Another defining characteristic of populism is that it was an expansive style of campaigning by politicians who engaged and drew the masses into their movements and

⁹ Ernesto Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name?" in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by F. Panizza (London: Verso) 2005, 32.

¹⁰ For more discussion of Laclau in the Latin American context, see Olcott, "The Politics of Opportunity," and Stephanie Rousseau, "Populism from Above, Populism from Below: Gender Politics Under Alberto Fujimori and Evo Morales", in *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics*, ed. Karen Kampwirth, (The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 2010), 140.

¹¹ Kenneth Roberts, "Preface", ed. Michael L. Conniff. , *Populism in Latin America 2nd edition*, (The University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 2012), IX.

held their loyalty, sometimes indefinitely.¹² Populists needed to be able to change their political platforms in order to keep up with the demands of the people. Populists are often men who are well spoken and enthusiastic about what they believe in. The masses who were usually viewed by the populists were those who were considered poor and the working class. Many populist leaders used the reoccurring phrase of “for the people” or “being one of the people.” Populist leaders would often adjust their political ideology to cover whatever the biggest issue of the time was.¹³ A more contentious issue regarding the definition of Latin American populism is the matter of charisma. Many populist leaders are often described as engaging and colorful figures.¹⁴ However, as will be argued later, not all populist leaders were overly enthusiastic in person nor were they highly visible publicly.

These populist leaders faced much opposition during their time in power due to the fact that they were attempting to upset the status quo. These leaders found support from previously marginalized sectors, especially urban workers. The change from the classic model of the elite oligarchies ruling upset many elites. The degree of imbalance as it pertains to socioeconomic and political status in Latin America varies, but without exception, small ruling classes made up of big landowners, business men, and political families dominated.¹⁵ Although there was a small middle class emerging, the

¹² Michael L. Conniff, “Introduction,” in *Populism in Latin America 2nd edition*, (Tuscaloosa AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2012) , 4.

¹³ Conniff, “Introduction,” 10.

¹⁴ Conniff, “Introduction,” 4.

¹⁵ Herbert L. Matthews, “The United States and Latin America,” *International Affairs* 37 (January 1961), 10.

overwhelming majority of the population lived in poverty.¹⁶ Before the intervention of populist leaders, the governments were typically exclusive; the rural populations were not organized, and industrial workers often lacked strong labor and political organization.

Another issue that populist leaders were dealing with during their time in power was the aftermath of the Great Depression. The Depression and the disruption in trade with Europe that the Depression and World War II created were just the latest examples of the effects of Latin American economic and social structures that often dated back to the colonial era. In most Latin American countries, the economic crisis of the 1930s witnessed governments of the Left and Right replaced typically by governments of the opposite end of the political spectrum.¹⁷ As in Europe, these political irruptions also brought about or accelerated economic, social, and cultural transformations, including (perhaps most importantly) a transformation in the role of the state.

As in the United States, the Great Depression in Latin America brought sharp drops in employment and was marked by a significant shift in economic policy, characterized by state intervention. Both Juan Perón in Argentina and Getulio Vargas in Brazil suggested that their respective countries would benefit from state intervention. Historians tend to agree that one of the key consequences of the Great Depression was strengthening of the state as the Great Depression strengthened the idea that the state had a role to play in managing the economy and society.¹⁸ The state also saw itself as being the only institution that could help stabilize the country after the Depression.

¹⁶ Brian P. Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of the Middle-Class lives in Brazil*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Paulo Drinot, "Introduction," in *The Great Depression in Latin America*, edited by Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 1.

¹⁸ Drinot, "Introduction," 1-6.

Politically, the Great Depression also accelerated questions people had already begun raising regarding their place in politics, the representative (or non-representative) nature of their governments, and how they could enact change for the betterment of themselves and their country. For the “outs” of the old order, the Great Depression showed that the foundations upon which that order had been built were profoundly shaky and that the moment was ripe for major change, even outright revolution. For the “ins” of the old order, the Great Depression forced a reassessment of the assumptions and the hierarchies that had underpinned their privilege, if only to avoid more drastic and uncontrolled change. In his survey of the global impact of the Depression, as Dietmar Rothermund observed, populism was the main political consequence of the slump in the region; something Robert Findlay’s and Kevin O’Rourke’s recent survey of the world economy reinforces: “The result across much of Latin America was populism, with urban workers and capitalists combining to seize power from the traditionally outward oriented landowning elites.”¹⁹ For these reasons, the Great Depression and the rise of Populism are inseparable in many of the Latin American cases.

Communism in Latin America

Not only were populists attempting to seize power from those who had traditionally held it; they were also dealing with the rise of new radical ideas and political ideologies from the left that challenged populists’ own claims on power. These radical ideas became the focal point of the populists’ opposition to claims that they were in support of Communism. As World War II ended and the threat of communism spread,

¹⁹ Drinot, “Introduction,” 5,6.

Latin America became increasingly worried about what could happen to their country if a communist were to gain political power. The social politics of the 1930s, which consisted primarily of social programs and social legislation that attempted to alleviate the impact of the slump on working peoples, constituted one element, along with outright repression, that elites drew on to contain popular discontent and undermine the appeal of Communist and other radical movements throughout the region.²⁰

The Communist International, or Comintern, was an organization that was concerned with spreading Communism throughout the world. The Comintern was based in Soviet Moscow and was the hub of information on international Communist dealings. Each Communist grouping in different countries would send reports to Moscow to inform them of the progress in local politics in each party's country. During the 1930s, the Comintern moved away from concentrating solely on working only within the Communist Party and began to consider working with the non-Communist left. This idea was deemed a popular front strategy and by 1935 had become the official strategy of the Comintern. At this time, Latin America was not the main focus of the Comintern, one reason for which was that it offered unique challenges for spreading Communism. One of the main issues concerning Latin America was that it was considered to be a dependent region. This meant that the Comintern saw Latin America as being too dependent on the United States. This means that there was a degree of independence that accompanied their economic penetrations and domination by imperialism. Another issue why Latin America was not a large focus of the Comintern was its economic climate.

²⁰ Drinot, "Introduction," 7.

To the Comintern, Brazil provided the ideal Latin American political climate for an emerging popular front to be effectively used by a local party. Thomas Skidmore asserts that when Vargas took power in 1930, Brazil awoke politically. This is why the Communist Party attempted to oust Vargas in 1935. The Communist Party and its members were unhappy with Vargas' leadership and were an organized group that felt that it could do something to rid Brazil of Vargas.. The Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) was not a large party in the 1930s, but it had a devoted and politically aware core, especially in the figure of Luis Carlos Prestes; however the PCB began to gain control of some of the trade unions that were in the process of being officially recognized by the Vargas government.²¹

In November 1935, military revolutionaries began to revolt, but the Vargas regime had anticipated these events. The revolt began prematurely, and the Communist military rebels who were to join in the revolt were not able to hold onto the areas they infiltrated and were overpowered.²² This revolt is an unusual case in that the Communist Party (PCB) attempted to follow two different styles of spreading and achieving Communist power. The PCB used the strategies of a popular front and an armed revolt.²³ In early 1945, with the loosening of Brazil's National Security Act, the release of political prisoners, and an overall general weakening of repression, the Communist Party began to organize quickly. The party soon had headquarters in every city and every state. The party also penetrated the official corporate union structure, although there is still

²¹ Thomas E. Skidmore, "Failure in Brazil: From Popular Front to Armed Revolt," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), 137-142.

²² Skidmore, "Failure in Brazil," 149.

²³ Skidmore, "Failure in Brazil," 141.

some dispute among scholars as to what their plans were. The Communists were ambivalent towards “spontaneous” working-class action, especially strikes, because at this time the Communist party was still committed to class collaboration. It is important to note that the communists were often accused of instigating agitation and strikes within the working-class unions in order to persuade workers over to the communists side. This was a large concern within politics, for the elites, because it looked as if the communists were attempting to take support away from Vargas, since workers were his largest base of support.²⁴

The Argentine Communist Party (PCA) was founded in 1918 predating Brazil’s PCB by four years. The party was formed out of a group opposed to the pro-Alliance stance of the Radical Party government of the time, on the ground that the imperialism of the Allies in WW II had nothing positive to offer the working class.²⁵ From the mid 1920s onward, the party emphasized its worker profile, and it eagerly sought to increase its presence in workshops and factories.²⁶ The Communist Party became marginalized by the influence of Peronism and as a result had a harder time gaining support with the working-class.²⁷ The party achieved its greatest successes when it abandoned the overt class struggle and agitated in favor of a center-left Popular front. Communist militants presented themselves not as class warriors but as responsible leaders, always willing to

²⁴ Leslie Bethell, “Brazil,” in *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948*, edited by Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 46.

²⁵ Mike Gonzalez, “Communism in Latin America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Communism*, edited by Stephen A. Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2014, 253.

²⁶ *The Great Depression in Latin America*, edited by Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight, (Durham: Duke University Press) 2014, 39.

²⁷ Mike Gonzalez, “Communism in Latin America,” 258.

improve the conditions of the workers and to institutionalize negotiations between labor and capital.²⁸ This meant that the Communists were not attempting to create a completely different social order, although many elites saw it as such, but instead a more cohesive relationship between labor and capital.

Among workers the appeal of Communism did not lay in the power of its vision of a classless society or in admiration for the Soviet Union's achievements.

Some historians, therefore, have argued that the success of Communist unionism rested instead in the organizational capabilities and the commitment of its activists, which transformed Communism into a powerful promoter of higher salaries and better working conditions. While what the Communists were agitating for was of concern to those in power in the government, the main concern of the government was that the Communists were able to garner so much loyal support. In the wake of the Depression, the Reds' criticism of Argentina as an unequal and unjust society coincided- more than at any other moment in the past- with the inner feelings and perceptions of a significant number of workers.²⁹

The issues between the United States, Argentina, and the Soviet Union cannot be fully understood without understanding the position of the Argentine Communist Party. The relationship between the three centered on the dissolution of the Comintern, in 1943, and the change in perspective from the idea that Communism was an monolithic entity to one that saw international Communism as groupings of like-minded individuals.³⁰ This

²⁸ Roy Hora, "The Impact of the Depression on Argentine Society," in *The Great Depression in Latin America*, edited by Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight, (Durham: Duke University Press) 2014, 41.

²⁹ Roy Hora, "The Impact of the Depression," 42.

³⁰ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union: History of Political and Commercial Relations (1917-1955)," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 66 (May 1986), 248.

meant that communistic ideas had more individualism than before. The Communist parties located in different countries could outline their own ideas instead of copying verbatim what the leaders in Moscow wanted. Communism was to be seen as a meeting of peoples who shared similar ideas and wanted to come together in order to enact changes for those in society who had long been on the fringes, instead of a large overbearing force that was infiltrating regions with the idea of global domination. This meant that countries could adapt communism to the political situations that might be unique to their governments. The PCA repeatedly stated its stance by stressing the positive virtues of having an alliance between the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain, a stance which the Soviet Union fully supported.³¹

While the perceived threat of communist infiltration and the concern that communists would upset or change the status quo was one that was realistic in the sense that there were Communist Parties that were attempting to play a larger role in politics than they had before, which could be construed as infiltration, the measures taken to prevent “communist” takeover were often excessive. However, the “people” were agreeable, at least at first, to the measures that were taken in order to keep them safe. The fear after 1959 that the Cuban Revolution could happen in their own country provided the final and most notable justification for turning from more democratic forms of government into highly repressive military dictatorships.

In the interwar environment, it was fascism, not communism, which was seen as the biggest threat to democracy in Latin America and to U.S. interests.³² The

³¹ Rapoport, “Argentina and the Soviet Union,” 249.

³² Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 127.

Communist Party in Latin America was not always a hated entity. As World War II came to a close Communist parties joined in anti-fascist activities. This provided them with a small amount of prestige because they tended to act as an integral part of national popular movements rather than an international network. This is one reason why detractors saw populist leaders as communist supporters and Communism as an issue: because they were largely supported by popular movements. Also during this time Communist Parties were legalized or at least tolerated in many countries.³³ Once the threat of Fascism was no longer an issue, Communism took its place. Elites concerned themselves with replacing old fears with new ones. In doing so, the elites were able to create justification for their desire to stay in power.

The return of Anti-Communism in the US in Immediate Postwar context

A key moment in the articulation of Cold War anticommunism was with George F. Kennan's expression of containment. The basic premise for containment was that communism needed to be kept inside the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites after World War II; invasion was impractical, but its spread must be halted. With regards to containment and Latin America, Kennan stated that the largest goal of U.S. policy in Latin America was to prevent military exploitation of Latin America by the Soviet Union. While the United States was concerned with Latin America being infiltrated by Soviet Communism, they were not very concerned with getting themselves involved in the politics of Latin America, in no small part because, in the early Cold War years of the 1940s, Europe received the bulk of the US's attention. This attitude towards

³³ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 126.

³⁴ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 125.

U.S. involvement stemmed from the idea of the Truman Doctrine and its desire to help protect free people from Soviet pressures; however, the U.S. was putting its own pressure on Latin America. Kennan saw communism as the most urgent problem in the Americas, and he was adamant that under no circumstances was communism allowed to take power, going so far as to suggest that the United States should not hesitate to intervene before police repression by local governments began to take over.³⁴ Kennan instead favored strong regimes with US backing in Latin America, in order to stop communist infiltration.³⁴

In response to the threat of communism, the United States' President, Harry Truman, spoke to Congress on what he thought needed to be done in order to combat the rising threat, insisting that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."³⁵ This idea was the basis behind the Truman Doctrine. While Truman's words were inspiring, there would later be issues with his phrasing, the statement implied that the United States would become some sort of enforcer in global issues and that they would involve themselves in the issues of other countries. At first glance this would seem like a positive advancement in helping to combat communism; however, the most glaring problem was that this statement completely ignored the autonomy of any country the United States chose to help, even as it abolished the US's Good Neighbor policies of 1934-1945. The United States saw itself as a sort of global policeman whose job it was to protect weak countries from the threat of communism. On the other side of the Cold War

³⁴ "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere, Volume II," <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v02/d330>.

³⁵ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 119.

conflict, the Soviet Union sought to extend communist influence in support of social solidarity and economic justice.³⁶ At the Inter-American Conference on the Problems of War and Peace, more colloquially known as the Chapultepec Conference, in Mexico City in early 1945, the US led the Latin American states in declaring a “fervent adherence to democratic principles.”³⁷

The United States supported Latin America’s push for regional security organizations, at the founding conference of the United Nations in 1946. Later an article was created from a previous pact (the Rio Pact of 1947), that was essentially a mutual defense pact that stated that an attack on one participating nation would result in the remaining participating nations joining in defense.³⁸ This created a sort of hemispheric defense that was supposed to protect the Latin American countries involved. The U.S. Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, interpreted the article as preserving the Monroe Doctrine, since the United States could still take action in Latin America. However Latin American countries saw Article 51 would cause the formation of regional security agreements that might provide protection for existing governments and place restraints on the United States.³⁹

Through the enactment of the Rio Pact and the Truman doctrine revealed that the United States and the majority of the rest of the Americas had a concern about communist infiltration. The need for these acts showed that the worry over possible communist

³⁶ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 121.

³⁷ Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, “The postwar conjecture in Latin America: democracy, labor, and the left,” in *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948*, edited by Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8.

³⁸ The Rio Pact was a treaty signed by many countries in the Americas that stated if an attack on one country meant an attack on all; <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>.

³⁹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 123.

takeover began before the end of World War II. This anticommunist discourse appeared in US media and populist governments in Latin America in the 1930s. As a result, Latin American populist governments began to take an anticommunist stand as will be seen in later chapters.

Conclusion

As World War II was coming to an end, the leadership in Latin America was changing, drawing on some of the democratic language and ideals that the US expressed in World War II, most notably in Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech. A wave of democratic regimes took over in the region and, as Greg Grandin has pointed out, where only five Latin American countries "could nominally call themselves democracies" in 1944, in 1946, all but five Latin American countries were democratic regimes.⁴⁰ The old ways of having a group of wealthy elites being in charge was starting to worry some. In response Latin American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, turned to leadership that was based around one central leader. Placing the power of the country in one central figure was a troubling prospect for the United States. With the recent conflict between the United States and centralized leaders like Mussolini and Hitler, the U.S. was concerned to see such strong, powerful men begin to take power in Latin America. With the new threat of communism coming into view, there was the concern that these new leaders would gain support from previously marginalized groups of people who were seen as being more susceptible to communism. As Eduardo Elena argues, these new leaders in Latin America stressed popular inclusion within more

⁴⁰ Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, Updated Edition (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011) 5.

vibrant national orders freed from threats of social stratification and the overconcentration of wealth, at the time when there was a break with many of the previously political conventions and as politicians began to identify with the interest of the common people.⁴¹ It is to these transitional moments we now turn.

⁴¹ Eduardo Elena, *Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 5.

Chapter 3: Argentine Populism

When Juan Perón ascended to the presidency, it marked a change in Argentine politics and society that would affect Argentina and its people for the remainder of the century. Perón centered his policies on bringing political awareness to the working class. Perón's plans for his time as the president centered on providing rights to groups of people in Argentine society who previously not had these rights before. He wanted to take the power out of the hands of a select few and put it into the hands of the people. Perón's rhetoric, in general and towards communism, followed classic populist rhetoric in that he constantly reinforced Argentina's need to provide for its entire people.

This chapter analyzes how politics in Argentina went back and forth between populist leaders, nationalists, and supporters of a traditional oligarchy. This section will explore how the onset of World War II affected the economy of Argentina and how increased industrialization brought about a larger working class. This section will also analyze how Perón courted the working class and gained their support once he took office. This section explores how Perón's anticommunist policies fit into his overall plans to provide for the working class of Argentina. Perón's plans for combating communism provided other benefits for Argentina namely to make Argentina a stronger player in the world economy. Perón's largest goal as president centered on providing political and social rights for all Argentines; however, Perón did not separate that goal with his fight against communism. Lastly this section will also analyze what steps Perón made in combating Communism and the US media's criticism of Perón's anti-Communist rhetoric.

Pre- Perón Period (1930-1943)

In 1916, the leader of the *Partido Radical* (Radical Party, PR), Hipólito Yrigoyen, became president in the first truly democratic elections in Argentine history, putting an end to the succession of ideologically liberal but oligarchic governments that had run the country since the mid-nineteenth century.⁴² The PR appealed to the working class even though its leadership came from the elites.⁴³ Yrigoyen's rhetoric constantly stressed change in the political system of Argentina,⁴⁴ and he verbally attacked the elites and included the middle and working class as part of society,⁴⁵ foreshadowing tactics in Perón's own rise to power thirty years later. The Argentine constitution did not permit direct reelection of the president, so in 1922, Yrigoyen stepped down and chose Marcelo T. de Alvear as the PR's nominee.⁴⁶ Alvear won the presidency and wanted the support of the working-class; however, he governed in a paternalistic and less inclusive style than Yrigoyen.⁴⁷ This disagreement on how best to include the working class caused tension between Alvear and Yrigoyen and led to a split in the PR. Yrigoyen once again became president in 1928 and attempted to restore policies he had followed earlier by backing certain types of labor.⁴⁸ The Great Depression stopped any plans that Yrigoyen had, as the uncertainty of the Depression made it difficult to enact new policies and long standing problems began to become insurmountable. These years also saw the start of the

⁴² Mario Rapaport, "Argentina," in *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948* Edited by Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 92.

⁴³ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 24.

⁴⁴ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 24.

⁴⁵ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 24.

⁴⁶ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 27.

⁴⁷ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 27.

⁴⁸ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 28.

participation of the military in the economy and politics.⁴⁹ With civilian encouragement, the military overthrew Yrigoyen.⁵⁰ The elites felt that Yrigoyen and the PR were gaining too much power and influence. Yrigoyen's inclusion of the working class as a member of society upset the status quo and made elites question if they would still have as much power as they did before Yrigoyen took office.

The 1930 coup installed a provisional president in General José Félix Uriburu.⁵¹ With this political turmoil and shift, there was no agreement between the propertied classes and the army on what should be done.⁵² Uriburu supported the nationalists who took pride in their authoritarian elitism.⁵³ This authoritarianism took place in other regimes throughout the world, namely Mussolini's Italy.⁵⁴ The success of other authoritarian regimes during this time, whether new or traditional, gave the nationalists a sense of legitimacy. Unfortunately, the nationalists started to distance themselves from the government and tried to appeal to the army.⁵⁵ The nationalists demanded the establishment of new governing elite that was national and not beholden to foreign interests.⁵⁶ The nationalists were interested in Argentina being self-sufficient and in expanding their economy without the help of foreign capital. They believed that the governing elite could come from the military.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Rapaport, "Argentina," 93.

⁵⁰ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 28.

⁵¹ Luis Alberto Romero, *The History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, Translated by James P. Brennan, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 59.

⁵² Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 59.

⁵³ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 60.

⁵⁴ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 60.

⁵⁵ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 60.

⁵⁶ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 60.

⁵⁷ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 60.

In 1932, Argentine politics witnessed a return to liberal oligarchical interests with General Augustín Justo.⁵⁸ Despite its successes in the economy, Justo's regime was corrupt.⁵⁹ Roberto Ortiz succeeded Justo as president in 1938, but his time in power was no less corrupt.⁶⁰ Ortiz came to power through fraudulent elections, just as Justo had.⁶¹ Ortiz was intent on making changes in both domestic and foreign policies, but was unable to.⁶² Due to health issues, Ortiz had to delegate power to his vice president Ramón Castillo, who assumed the presidency when Ortiz died a short while later in 1940.⁶² Castillo was determined to maintain the existing political system and the policy of neutrality as Europe became embroiled in war once again.⁶³

The beginning of World War II added to the Castillo government's problems. The reestablishment of a genuinely democratic system and later the policy of neutrality in the war were to become catalysts for serious disagreements.⁶⁴ The war impacted the country's economic and commercial relations with the US and Great Britain.⁶⁵ Argentina was in no position to repay the debts that they owed the Great Britain and began trading with neighboring countries in order to make money.⁶⁶ The 1920s and the elections of Yrigoyen established a taste for democracy and the hope for popular participation in politics within Argentina; however, the 1930s undid what the small amount of democracy had done and left a vacuum that somebody could fill by appealing to democratic practice

⁵⁸ Rapaport, "Argentina," 94.

⁵⁹ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 73.

⁶⁰ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 73.

⁶¹ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 72.

⁶² Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 83.

⁶³ Rapaport, "Argentina," 94.

⁶⁴ Rapaport, "Argentina," 94.

⁶⁵ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 82.

⁶⁶ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 82.

and the power of the masses. Juan Perón would be the populist leader who filled that position.

Perón's Political Beginnings

Perón first entered public politics as part of a group of military officers who seized power in a coup in 1943.⁶⁷ The coup had ended thirteen years of repressive and fraudulent (though occasionally nominally democratic) governments, and proclaimed a new future of order, virtue, and social justice.⁶⁸ Perón was one of the most influential members of the *Grupo de Oficiales Unidos* (United Officer's Group, GOU).⁶⁹ The GOU came to power decrying the corruption of the previous order.⁷⁰ Faced with the bitter cost of divisions in the military, the GOU could now prove its capability and advance its authoritarian project for "social justice."⁷¹ Perón in particular had railed against the previous government's indifference to popular needs.⁷² In 1944 Perón became the Minister of War and the swiftly gained charge of the National Directorate of Labor, which at this time was a relatively unimportant position.⁷⁵ As the National Director of Labor, Perón began to establish relationships with union leaders declaring that "We are going to pay off our great debt to the suffering and virtuous masses...the era of Argentine social policy has begun."⁷³

⁶⁷ Joel Horowitz, "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," in, *Populism in Latin America 2nd edition*, Michael L. Conniff, edited (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), 30.

⁶⁸ Mark A. Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina: Peronism and the Remaking of San Juan after the 1944 Earthquake* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.

⁶⁹ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 93.

⁷⁰ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 67.

⁷¹ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 67.

⁷² Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 67.

⁷³ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 67.

On January 15, 1944, the city of San Juan was hit by a powerful earthquake that destroyed the majority of the infrastructure of the town. Now the military regime had a chance to make good on those promises of social justice.⁷⁴ The aftermath of the earthquake revealed that this area of Argentina, like others, had been built on injustice.⁷⁵ While the government in power debated on whether or not to rebuild the city in the same place again or not, Perón decided to use this tragedy to his benefit, busying himself with putting together aid for the people of San Juan.⁷⁶ On the day after the quake, Perón went on national radio to launch a government-led relief drive.⁸⁰ He declared the effort “the measure of a national solidarity,” inviting every Argentine “to come together to provide all the relief that was necessary.”⁷⁷ Perón’s ability and determination to address the people allowed him to set in motion the machinery of his political aspirations. Perón might have come to power in a limited way because of a military coup, but through his charisma and concern for the people, he was securing his place in their minds for later political power. One aid campaign launched the day after the earthquake quickly elevated Perón from a second-tier official into a major public figure.⁷⁸ Perón’s response to the earthquake offered people a vision of hope, in contrast to the stern words of other officials.⁷⁹ Perón saw popular involvement as pivotal to any project for transformation.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 4.

⁷⁵ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 4.

⁷⁶ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 68.

⁷⁷ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 68.

⁷⁸ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 68.

⁷⁹ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 72.

⁸⁰ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 72.

Thus he called on the people to mobilize and remake the country, a statement that would be the backbone of Perón's later political platform.⁸¹

In this new type of personalist politics that Perón was developing, he made clear that, while his policies were to help the working classes and masses in Argentina, he was not an ideologue of the left. In September 1944 Perón, now Vice President, outlined one of the dangers Argentina faced from Communists as he spoke before the Buenos Aires stock exchange and urged them to support the government's plans of "social justice."⁸² Developing rhetoric that would come to typify Perón's position regarding communism, he argued that if the "Communist danger went unchecked, the government would be obliged to fight it with all its might," revealing a clear antipathy towards communist routes to workers' enfranchisement.⁸³ Perón went on to state that the chances for Communism in Latin America seemed "rosy,"⁸⁴ based on the belief that in neighboring countries, Communism had "already taken a firm hold or may do so in the future."⁸⁵ This statement implied that Argentina needed to make changes, especially to reforms for social justice, in order to combat the ever-encroaching communists. In the closing statements of his speech, Perón once again stated how social reforms could stop the trouble of Communism. Perón said that Argentina was prepared to fight Communists, "those enemies of social peace," by violent means if necessary; however, the "best way to fight these dangers is to eliminate the cause of social unrest."⁸⁶ For Perón, social peace

⁸¹ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 72.

⁸² Arnaldo Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital: Perón Warns the Wealthy They Face Peril if They Exploit Labor," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1944.

⁸³ Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital."

⁸⁴ Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital."

⁸⁵ Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital."

⁸⁶ Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital."

was defined as Argentina being free of foreign influence, especially from foreign capitalism- especially the growing presence of United States companies amidst World War II-, and Communism. Perón's definition of social unrest was thus highly nationalist, even as it considered what might happen if the workers of Argentina were not properly provided for.

At the close of his speech before the stock exchange in Buenos Aires, Perón stated that "this fight against communist danger can only be done by giving the workers what they deserve for their work and what they need to live."⁸⁷ Perón's speech successfully took what he considered to be his main issue, social justice reforms, and repackaged it in a new light, framing it not just as assistance for the working class, but also as an ideological tool to help combat Communism. This reworking of his objective could appeal to the elites, given that they were the ones least likely to support reforms for the workers. Framing the perceived threat not as equality, but as Communism that would directly affect Argentine capital, Perón turned the issue into one he hoped the elites would be less antagonistic towards. At the same time, despite his vision of how to curb the spread of Communism, Perón, opted not to break diplomatic relations with Russia, in spite of Brazil's and Chile's urging to cut off relations.⁸⁸ Perón decided that the best way to fight communism would be to rebuild Western Europe.⁸⁹

Exploiting his position as Minister of Labor, Perón began to focus his policies on helping unions to achieve their goals while building his own base of support among the

⁸⁷ Cortesi, "Argentine Pleads for Aid of Capital."

⁸⁸ Milton Bracker, "Argentina Balks at Anti-Red Steps," *The New York Times*, October 23, 1947.

⁹⁴ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina* 72.

⁸⁹ Bracker, "Argentina Balks at Anti-Red Steps."

masses.⁹⁰ Perón's focus during this time was on labor and those who worked in the labor sector. This labor-focused strategy did not sit well with the other military officers in power, and so on October 9, 1945 Perón's was removed from all his positions and placed in jail.⁹¹ Perón's removal did not shift the focus of the Argentine workers, however, who began to agitate and march, asking for the return of Perón. Labor leaders who supported Perón threatened to call transport and public utilities strikes in protest of Perón's arrest.⁹² Perón himself stated that the workers were ready to fight for him and his programs.⁹³ On October 17, 1945, thousands of protesters gathered in the Plaza de Mayo and demanded Perón's freedom and for his return to power in the offices that he had previously held.⁹⁴ This mass gathering and demonstration by his supporters was strong enough to pressure the military, which reinstated Perón only a few days later. The workers' mobilization and display of support provided Perón with a platform on which to run for the presidency. Although Perón would later insist it was he who called the workers to the Plaza de Mayo, the workers were indeed acting of their own initiative and this mass gathering was the first step that led to workers having a direct hand in the course of illustrating that they now had power in the political arena.⁹⁵

In the international arena, relations between the United States and Argentina were strained during the later years of World War II. United States policy towards Argentina

⁹⁰ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 72.

⁹¹ Healey, *The Ruins of The New Argentina*, 72.

⁹² "Perón Backers Protest, Make Strike Threat," *Dallas Morning News*, October 15, 1945.

⁹³ "Perón Backers Protest, Make Strike Threat,"

⁹⁴ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 93.

⁹⁵ Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Perón's Argentina*, Translated by Keith Zahniser, (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 41; Horowitzm "Populism and Its Legacies in Argentina," 34.

was based on the vision of Argentina as an enemy state, due to Argentina's choice to not declare itself in support of the Allied side in WWII.⁹⁶ Secretary of State Cordell Hull concluded that Buenos Aires' neutrality was a smokescreen for pro-fascist sympathies.⁹⁷

Argentina's refusal to declare support for the Allies also caused hostilities with the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ Perón's own declarations on the need to fight communism via reform certainly seemed as a possible factor spurring Soviet suspicions. Like the United States, the Soviet Union was convinced that Argentina was a pro-Nazi country. Even after Argentina broke relations with the Axis in January 1944, its government was still labeled as pro-Nazi. This idea pervaded thought well into 1945, where, at the Yalta Conference, Stalin expressed his concern for Argentina's foreign policy, insisting that the basic requirement for admission in to the United Nations should be that any country seeking membership should declare war on Germany and expressing concern that certain U.N. eligible nations in South America did not have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.⁹⁹

Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed with Stalin and indicated that he had taken steps to get Latin American countries to declare war on the Axis Powers.¹⁰⁰ While several countries still had not declared war, it was only Argentina about whom Stalin inquired directly.¹⁰¹ The issue was that member nations in the United Nations would not feel comfortable having another member- Argentina- that might have Axis sympathies, since

⁹⁶ Daniel J. Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance: Peronist Argentina's Diplomacy with the United States, 1945-1951," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 12 (1987), 1.

⁹⁷ Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance," 3.

⁹⁸ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union: History of Political and Commercial Relations (1917-1955)," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 66 (May 1986),:244.

⁹⁹ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 245.

¹⁰⁰ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 245.

¹⁰¹ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 245.

that country sought to wait and see who would win the war before choosing a side.¹⁰² Roosevelt agreed with this stance and appeared to exclude Argentina from the U.N., for he indicated that only those nations who actively collaborated with the war effort would be invited to join.¹⁰³ Roosevelt set a deadline of March 1, 1945 for countries such as Argentina to make a declaration of war.¹⁰⁴ When Argentina still acted slowly, the US State Department launched an international economic, military, and diplomatic embargo against the Perón regime between March 1944 and April 1945.¹⁰⁵ The diplomatic phase included excluding Buenos Aires from United Nations membership.¹⁰⁶ Other Latin American countries disagreed with the US's stance towards Argentina, and forced them to partially retreat from its position.¹⁰⁷ The US dominated the hemisphere at this time and had the ability to force the embargo on Argentina to get what they wanted- a declaration of war against the Axis powers. The US decided to loosen its strict embargos because they did not want to lose the support and cooperation of other Latin American countries. The US wanted Latin America to be in support of their ideas and by ostracizing Argentina, the US created a rift between the US and Latin America. By partially retreating from their position, the US revealed to other Latin American countries that they were willing to work with them in order to secure hemispheric unity and safety. At the same time, Argentina's stance in World War II set the stage for broader US concerns about Perón, during and beyond the war.

¹⁰² Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 245.

¹⁰³ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 246.

¹⁰⁴ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 246.

¹⁰⁵ Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance," 3.

¹⁰⁶ Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance," 4.

¹⁰⁷ Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance," 3.

The participating countries reached a compromise at the 1945 Mexico City conference. The US agreed to cease its efforts at ostracizing Argentina if they would, at last, declare war on the Axis, sign the Act of Chapultepec, and carry out a program to eradicate Axis influence.¹⁰⁸ The Act of Chapultepec provided three main declarations pertaining to hemispheric protections. The first declaration stated that any aggression on the US state or the states that have signed this act will be cause for the signatories to come together and agree upon what actions to take.¹⁰⁹ The second declaration explained that any aggression on the signatory states would be in direct violation of the war effort by the United Nations.¹¹⁰ The last declaration acknowledged that these provisions were to be instated immediately and that each signatory should prepare to take steps to follow through with whatever is necessary to protect themselves and the other signatories.¹¹¹

The Act of Chapultepec was important because it provided a safety net for western countries in case of attack. The countries who signed the act had protection from other countries or with Axis supporters within their own countries. The act, while not clearly stating so, allowed the US to become more of a protector and influence over Latin America. Any assistance that might be needed militarily to stop aggressions would most likely have come from the US. The US could use this act as a tool for leverage, which they did with Argentina. The US ostracized Argentina until it complied with the US's wish to declare war on the Axis powers.

¹⁰⁸ Greenberg, "From Confrontation to Alliance," 3.

¹⁰⁹ "The Act of Chapultepec: *Declarations on Reciprocal Assistance and American Solidarity*," March 3, 1945, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1945/1945-03-03a.html>.

¹¹⁰ "The Act of Chapultepec," 1945.

¹¹¹ "The Act of Chapultepec," 1945.

While the United States and Argentina had reached an agreement with the signing of the Act of Chapultepec, the Soviet Union was still against Argentina joining the U.N.¹¹² Edward R. Stettinius Jr., a US delegate, argued that Argentina had completed the necessary requirements for joining the U.N.; however other U.S. delegates and even President Truman were ready to accept the Soviet's arguments against Argentina.¹¹³ In March of 1945, Argentina finally accepted the U.S. demand and declared war against the Axis powers on March 13.¹¹⁴ Unlike Brazil, Argentina committed no troops or other significant resources to the war.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless while their concession to the United States' demands were significant enough for U.N. membership, relations were still not good between the two countries and President Truman remained adamant that the United States would not make a defense pact with Argentina until they complied with the Rio Pact agreement.¹¹⁶ The Rio Pact agreement was a re-gathering of the countries who had agreed to the Act of Chapultepec in an attempt to finalize that agreement.

In 1945, the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) was weighing in on the situation with the Argentine Communist Party (PCA). Agilberto Azevedo, one of the leaders of the Brazilian Communist Party, indicated that the Communists in Brazil had made a mistake in aligning themselves against Perón.¹¹⁷ Luis Carlos Prestes insisted that Perón is “eminently democratic” and that agents are twisting the truth to make him appear like a

¹¹² Mario Rapoport, “Argentina and the Soviet Union,” 247.

¹¹³ Mario Rapoport, “Argentina and the Soviet Union,” 247.

¹¹⁴ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 95.

¹¹⁵ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 93.

¹¹⁶ James Reston, “Truman Makes New Efforts to End Feud with Argentina,” April 15, 1947.

¹¹⁷ Mario Rapoport, “Argentina and the Soviet Union,” 251.

reactionary kind of fascist.¹¹⁸ During this time, Perón made mention to US Ambassador Spruille Braden that a member of the Russian legation had paid him a visit to propose a purchase of grain surpluses in Argentina.¹¹⁹ Braden informed the State Department of a possible anti-United States alliance, under Soviet protection, between Perón and Vargas.¹²⁰

This possible alliance, while beneficial to Argentina, would be detrimental to Argentina's relationship with the United States. While the US and Argentina were not allies at this time, a closer relationship between the Soviet Union and Argentina would further disrupt hemispheric relations. Perón was said to have expressed his desire for the Soviet Union to become a major supplier in the Argentine market, but the United States was skeptical that this would really take place.¹²¹ One of Perón's goals as president had been to break Argentina's dependence of US markets. Perón could achieve that goal if the Soviet Union and Argentina could have agreed to mutually beneficial terms, and thus Argentina would no longer be reliant on US trade and markets. The mere mention of a supposed relationship between Argentina and the Soviet Union was enough to hinder positive relations between Argentina and the United States. With Cold War mentalities growing, the US did not want any country in the western hemisphere to have alliances with the Soviet Union. The US thought that by having pro-Soviet Union countries in close proximity to the US, it would be easier for and imagined monolithic communism to take hold and spread throughout the western hemisphere.

¹¹⁸ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 251.

¹¹⁹ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 251.

¹²⁰ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 252.

¹²¹ Mario Rapoport, "Argentina and the Soviet Union," 253.

The problems between the US and Argentina were expanding beyond the postwar treaty agreements and into other areas, according to one US official. Ambassador George S. Messersmith, who succeeded Spruille Braden after Braden's efforts to meddle in the 1946 election to prevent Perón's victory backfired, stated that the break between the United States and Argentina was hampering opposition to communism in other Latin American countries.¹²² The United States' role as hemispheric police allowed them to place the blame for the spread of communism in Latin America on Argentina for their unwillingness to cooperate with them. In a *New York Times* article, James Reston reported that "Argentina has modified her policy toward the Nazis; we are in the process of modifying ours against the Communists."¹²³ This statement was a subtle way for the United States to imply that Argentina might become sympathetic towards communism. Concurring Ambassador Messersmith stated that "the break between the United States and Argentina is hampering the opposition to Communism in several Latin American countries."¹²⁴

Once Perón gained power, his government continued its anti-U.S. rhetoric as he followed a course of the "third position" that did not blindly accept either US or Soviet guidance and alliances, part of a broader geopolitical phenomenon echoed in India, Egypt, Brazil, and elsewhere in the 1940s and 1950s.¹²⁵ Perón's third way was nationalistic in nature. The third way provided that Argentina would establish diplomatic relations only with countries that would benefit Argentina. This third way distanced

¹²² Reston, "Truman Makes New Efforts to End Feud with Argentina."

¹²³ Reston, "Truman Makes New Efforts to End Feud with Argentina."

¹²⁴ Reston, "Truman Makes New Efforts to End Feud with Argentina."

¹²⁵ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 99.

Argentina from both communism and capitalism, although it established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and tried to improve its relations with Washington.¹²⁶ Economically, this third way also aimed to domesticate markets, bring capitalists in line with national priorities, and to protect laboring Argentines as producers.¹²⁷ The third way wanted to establish Argentina as a powerful country in world economics and to put Argentina's needs first before that of any other country regardless of its relationship with Argentina. Argentina was concerned with taking care of themselves before anyone else.

Perón's establishment of relations with the Soviet Union of course did not sit well with the US. However, Perón was not working with the Soviet Union to be antiU.S., but in order to improve Argentina. The Soviet Union's communist rhetoric was not initially a concern for Perón as much as bolstering Argentina's economic independence from the United States was. Perón was not completely against the United States' ideas for combating communism. Perón agreed that the best way to build up a barricade against communism was to rebuild Western Europe, most evident in the Marshall Plan.¹²⁸ Perón's agreement with the United States on this front showed that even though Perón may not have always agreed with the United States, he was willing to work with them in order to combat communism. The US worried that Argentina's relationship with the Soviet Union would lead to communist infiltration of the western hemisphere. The US saw Latin American countries as not being able to withstand or stop a communist invasion; it especially believed Argentina was not strong enough to protect itself from

¹²⁶ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 99.

¹²⁷ Eduardo Elena, *Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 13.

¹²⁸ Milton Bracker, "Perón Maintains Soviet Relations," *New York Times*, October 26, 1947.

outside influences. The US did not want to work with Argentina to combat communism as much as they wanted to tell Argentina how they were going to combat communism.

Another concern that the United States had with Perón was that he was such a demanding presence. The U.S. was concerned with any one person gaining too much power in the wake of World War II. The vast gathering of Perón supporters in the Plaza de Mayo in 1946 only heightened that fear. Those supporters were able to politically mobilize themselves in ways they had not done before, and to create change in the political arena. Perón's supporters took advantage of the political opening that he had offered them to shape national politics themselves. This influence that Perón had over his followers was troublesome to the US. Perón's personalism reminded some in the media and government of Hitler's own popularity before ushering in World War II.

These groups feared that Perón's supposed Nazi tendencies and his gaining popularity could provide a safe place for Axis sympathizers to regroup. There was also the then-unknown matter of how committed Perón would be to combating communism. Perón openly expressed a willingness to work with the US to combat communism; however, with all the difficulties the US recently had with attempting to get Perón to take a stance against the Axis, the US remained concerned about trusting Perón.

The United States, however, was determined to make Argentina pay for remaining neutral during World War II for so long.¹²⁹ The United States set trade sanctions that began to cripple the Argentine economy. This did not faze Perón; indeed, in some ways, they played directly into his hands, as the disruptions in international trade only

¹²⁹ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 99.

accelerated the expansion of import-substitution industrialization and growth in the local economy that he sought for national economic autonomy.¹³⁰ This helped spur Perón's idea of a third way in Argentina. Instead of concerning himself with how Argentina would reestablish its previous relationship with the United States, Perón decided to make suggestions on how Argentina could become self-sufficient. Perón suggested that Argentina begin a program that consisted of two Five-Year plans.¹³¹ These suggested plans, which echoed Soviet discourse in their title, did not help reassure the United States. While Perón's Five-Year plans were vague at best, just their name was enough of a hint of Soviet Communism to concern the uncritical United States.

The United States might have been concerned with Perón's possible communist dealings but such concerns were likely misplaced, as Perón often spoke negatively about communists both during and after World War II. Perón often invoked the threat of a communist revolution and, later, postwar collapse into his speeches.¹³² In his famous Stock Market speech in August of 1944, Perón outlined the danger posed by laboring people who were unorganized.¹³³ While the United States painted Perón as a communist supporter because of his dealings with the masses of workers, Perón himself was simultaneously concerned that if the workers were not organized and did not have their needs adequately met, that this would leave them susceptible to communist infiltration- a message that John F. Kennedy would echo fifteen years later as he prepared the Alliance for Progress.¹³⁴ The Communist Party in many Latin American countries tended to

¹³⁰ Elena, *Dignifying Argentina* , 79.

¹³¹ Romero, *The History of Argentina*, 102.

¹³² Elena, *Dignifying Argentina* , 68.

¹³³ Elena, *Dignifying Argentina* , 68.

¹³⁴ Elena, *Dignifying Argentina* , 68.

discuss with people from the working class how they could agitate for better working conditions. However, their focus was not on gaining supporters for a communist uprising as much as wanting to improve the workers' quality of life.

Perón also spoke out on what his plans were to combat communism in Argentina. In an interview he gave with a group of foreign journalists, Perón stated that he would not outlaw communism in Argentina, but would let the communist party work as it may within the law and Argentina would not combat it with police or other coercive measures, but with ideas and achievements.¹³⁵ Perón's plan for combating communism fit into one of his goals as president, providing the people with what they needed.¹⁴⁰ Perón also stated that this plan would move the state toward a new form where capitalistic exploitation was not possible.¹³⁶ The Communist Party of Argentina's goals and rhetoric in some ways superficially lined up with some of the ideas that Perón was espousing. In its newspaper, *Hora*, the Argentine Communist Party positioned itself "against Yankee imperialism."¹³⁷ In a statement that seemed at odds with previous and contemporaneous anticommunist fear-mongering, Milton Bracker of the *New York Times* reported that "observers here are unanimous in the opinion that the party poses no security problem to the nation."¹³⁸ This statement is particularly notable in that the United States was supposed to be the hemispheric protector against communism, yet here, the language seems to be almost accepting of the party in South America.

¹³⁵ Virginia Lee Warren, "Perón Rules out Communism Ban." *New York Times*, March 26, 1945.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Bracker, "Perón Maintains Soviet Relations."

¹³⁸ Bracker, "Perón Maintains Soviet Relations."

In 1948, now as President, Perón spoke again on his plan to stop the perceived threat of Communism in Argentina. In tune with his earlier declarations Perón stated that the best way to combat Communism was to “provide for the people and keep them free from capitalistic exploitation.”¹³⁹ Perón claimed that Argentina is “moving toward a new state that we are convinced will move toward the suppression of Communism.”¹⁴⁰ Perón once again claimed that in order to get rid of Communism, the people needed to be helped. This ideology followed along with what Perón’s political platform had been from the beginning. Perón’s support of the working class and his desire to provide for them was not a new strategy. Perón was just re-appropriating his previous ideals of social justice from Argentina being independent from foreign capitalist interference to social justice reforms will not only stop capitalist exploitation, but also Communism.

Yet the New York Times reported that Perón had “no intention of trying to outlaw the Communist Party.”¹⁴¹ The *New York Times* report that Perón would not outlaw the Communist Party created doubt as to whether or not Perón was willing to take the necessary steps to rid Argentina of Communism. Unlike other Latin American leaders, especially Getulio Vargas, Perón argued that fighting Communism with violence would not be the way to end it. Perón constantly stated that providing for the workers of Argentina would be the best way to stop Communism from infiltrating the country. The US media saw fighting communism as an all, or, nothing issue. If a country did not state that it would violently eradicate communism, it was seen as sympathetic towards it. The US media, like the US government, did not want to support Argentina’s suggestions on

¹³⁹ Warren, “Perón Rules out Communism Ban.”

¹⁴⁰ Warren, “Perón Rules out Communism Ban.”

¹⁴¹ Warren, “Perón Rules out Communism Ban.”

how to combat communism, but instead wanted to tell Argentina how its suggestion was wrong and proceeded to report on how, in this case, a communist ban would have been a better choice of action. The US saw Latin America, with the exception of the time of the Good Neighbor Policy of the 1930s-1940s, as the “US’s back yard” rather than as equals.¹⁴²

In a transcript of a radio address Perón gave in 1945, he declared that “capitalism and communism had turned the world into a battlefield and that both ideals were wrong” and went on to explain that Argentina would continue its position between capitalism and communism.¹⁴³ Perón continued, “man has been offered a choice between capitalism and communism. I consider that at this time both sides are unjust because they are far from the truth; they are not in reason.”¹⁴⁴ Perón’s statement reveals that he was ideologically and dogmatically bound neither to Communism nor to capitalism, but rather saw both as the wrong choice. He concluded his radio address by stating “Neither everything in capitalism is bad nor everything Communist is bad, both have their good and bad sides”.¹⁴⁵ Perón’s statements revealed that he did not adhere to any traditional political ideology and that he felt that there were issues with both. Printing Perón’s statement about both Communism and capitalism having problems but with neither being inherently bad left doubts as to which ideology Perón would be more in favor of. The fact that the *New York Times* did not make any mention of what Perón’s political ideology

¹⁴² For more information on the US’s historical treatment of Latin America as the purview of the US and as objects of policy rather than equals, see Thomas F. O’Brein’s, *Making the Americas*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

¹⁴³ “Perón Re-Pledges a Struggle for Peace.”

¹⁴⁴ “Perón Re-Pledges a Struggle for Peace.”

¹⁴⁵ “Perón Re-Pledges a Struggle for Peace.”

was is telling. It could mean that they were not aware of what Perón was doing in Argentina or it could mean that the US was unsure of how to report on what Perón was doing until they could be sure he would be a strong ally. The US media excludes mention of Perón's third way concept and its nationalistic overtones. Perón had previously stated that his plan to eradicate communism involved providing more for the working class, but the paper does not mention this at all in the article. Once again the US did not make mention of policies that did not follow their way of dealing with communism.

The New York Times reported that this speech amended previous statements made by Perón that saw him speaking more harshly about capitalism than communism.¹⁴⁶ An unnamed United States diplomat claimed to have conveyed his feelings to Perón that “he [Perón] had still not gone far enough on getting his attitude (towards communism) clearly on record and the Argentine President could go a lot further in making plain his stand.”¹⁴⁷ In a *New York Times* article written in 1948 Perón stated he was against Communism, but once again he had not outlined a platform that was strong enough for the US media. Perón's constant response on how to combat Communism was by giving Argentinean workers more rights. Perón did not threaten to outlaw the Communist Party or to lock up Communists. The US media saw this as taking a soft stance against Communism. If Perón was not willing to say he would completely eradicate Communism, the US media saw him as possibly being lenient to it in the future. Perón did state that he was against capitalism as well, but the issue was not his support of

¹⁴⁶ “Perón Says Policy is Not Inflexible.”

¹⁴⁷ “Perón Says Policy is Not Inflexible.”

United States capitalism, but his being against Communism. Later in the same speech, Perón stated, “We (Peronists) are anti-Communist because Communists are inflexible”.¹⁴⁸

Once again Perón made his stance clear that he was not in support of Communism. The article concluded with a paragraph claiming that perhaps whoever transcribed the speech from Spanish to English made some incorrect choices pertaining to certain adjectives and that was why there was some confusion as to what exactly Perón was trying to say.¹⁴⁹ Perón repeatedly stated that he was not in support of Communism, but still the newspaper claimed that perhaps his meaning had been misconstrued. The US media did not make a definite stance regarding Argentina because they were unsure of if they would need anything from Argentina in the future, yet they could not stop viewing Perón suspiciously despite his years of open rejection of communism as an ideology. The US media also did not take a clear stance on what Perón was saying on the chance that he might turn out to be a Communist sympathizer. The US media was tip-toeing around taking a definitive stance because they did not want to have to explain why they portrayed Perón as being a Communist sympathizer when they might need economic assistance or want trade agreements with his government later.

In previous articles, the *New York Times* quoted Perón as stating that Communism can be fought by social reforms which would make the distribution of wealth in Argentina more equal among social classes. In a 1952 article, Foster Hailey commented that “the social inequalities in Latin American countries make them fertile

¹⁴⁸ “Perón Says Policy is Not Inflexible.”

¹⁴⁹ “Perón Says Policy is Not Inflexible.”

ground for Communist propaganda.”¹⁵⁰ Hailey went on to state that “ self-appointed leaders in Latin America need to realize, before Communism takes a strong foothold, that they need to appeal to the people with a program for the general good then by using the military for their own (the leaders’) good.”¹⁵⁶ This statement goes to show just how deaf the US media had been to the very messages Perón had been proffering and that they had been commenting on. Perón did suggest and attempted to put into place legislation that would be beneficial to the working class of Argentina. Perón’s main platform while running for office centered on helping the disenfranchised. The *New York Times* mentioned Perón’s social reforms numerous times in previous articles, which should have at least been given a passing mention here. Meanwhile, the mention of “using the military for their own good” seemed ironic, expressing a politics that the US would increasingly accept as they supported a wave of right-wing, undemocratic, repressive military regimes sympathetic to US interests throughout the region in the 1960s , 1970s, and 1980s.

Argentine politics experienced democracy early in the 1920s only to have politics return to an oligarchic system with General Justo in the 1930s. The small taste of democracy that Argentines had with Hipólito Yrigoyen led them to crave more especially after the end of the infamous decade. Perón filled that void and readily stepped up to make Argentina a greater power in the world economy. However, Perón’s tumultuous relationship with the United States hindered much of the progress he attempted to make. The US did not trust that Perón would not endanger the western hemisphere. His reluctance to declare war on the Axis powers and his courting of the Soviet Union for

¹⁵⁰ Foster Hailey, “Perón Held Losing Argentine Favor,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1952. ¹⁵⁶ “Perón Says Policy is Not Inflexible.”

trade agreements worried the US. This can be clearly seen in the US media. The threat of Communism in Latin America worried the US. Perón's constant rebuking of US policy continued after World War II with his unique suggestions on how to combat communism. Perón's alleged reluctance to violently put a stop to Communism constantly appeared in the *New York Times*. Perón's insistence on enacting reforms to benefit the disenfranchised and the working class seemed, to the *New York Times*, as support for Communism. As was the case during World War II Perón's main concern with Communism was not being attacked or influenced by it, but how he could provide for the Argentine people and stop dependence on foreign capital.

Chapter 4: Brazil

“We will in a short time confront a very serious situation, perhaps a war, and to take steps belying the poetic supposition that we are free in our own house.”¹⁵¹ Getulio Vargas spoke these words when he explained in a speech the need for a new constitution in 1937. Vargas had concerns that communist infiltration might divide his country. He was concerned that communism would turn Brazilians against each other and create a climate that could only be ended with violence. This chapter analyzes how the oligarchic system of the First Republic led to the political and social unrest of the 1920s and 1930s. This section will explore the role of patronage politics in the largest sections of Brazil—São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and later Rio Grande do Sul. This chapter will reveal the background that provided a niche for Getulio Vargas in politics. This section will also analyze how political unrest shaped the later leadership of the Communist Party of Brazil. This section will explore how Vargas’s political style of populism influenced his policies towards Communism and how the US media portrayed Vargas’s policies on Communism. This section will also explore Vargas’s use of the US media to state what his anticommunist policies were thereby revealing that the threat of communism in Latin America began in the early 1930s.

The Brazilian First Republic (1889-1930)

Brazil’s First Republic began in 1889. The establishment of the First Republic was the product of a coalition between high-ranking bureaucrats, sectors of the rural

¹⁵¹ Robert M. Levine, *Father of the Poor?: Vargas and his Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

landowning class, and merchants in the principal cities who were anxious to contain social and political agitation. The social classes that emerged in new areas of economic expansion began to argue in favor of a federal republic, with a measure of political autonomy.¹⁵² This was most evident in the coffee growing sectors of São Paulo.

After the triumph of those regional class interests responsible for the formation of the Republic, the central government lost considerable power to the newly created states. The political system of the First Republic can be broken down into three different levels. At the most local level there were those who controlled the rural population of a given area; these men were known as *coronéis*, or “colonels,” though they often lacked any official military office. This was the class of landowners who owned the means of production in the coffee growing areas. Above them were the state oligarchies who were effectively a federation of *coronéis*. This group would include those who were in charge of the coffee growing areas who provided the money for their operations. At the topmost level there was the federal government, which was an alliance between the oligarchies of the most important states, namely São Paulo, which produced coffee and Minas Gerais, an agricultural state, leading to the First Republic often being referred to as “*café com leite*,” or “coffee with milk,” symbolizing the pact between the two states.¹⁵³

While the *coronéis* essentially furnished votes, they depended on the influence of the state oligarchies in government for obtaining favors, which in turn were the basis of their power over the local population. This was the basis for the patronage

¹⁵² Narrative based on Boris Fausto, “*Society and Politics*,” in *Brazil Empire and Republic, 1822-1930*, edited by Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 265.

¹⁵³ Fausto, “*Society and Politics*,” 266.

politics that were common in the First Republic. The *coronéis* would provide goods or services to peasants; in return they would ask the peasants to vote for their political candidate. Politicians at the state level determined the choice of president of the Republic and in turn the federal government did its best to assure that the dominant political factions at state level stayed in power by not encouraging political dissidence. Paternalism and clientelistic relationships, above all in relation to the rural population, dominated social and political life during the First Republic. Rural areas provided the ideal conditions for the maintenance of clientelistic relationships. These relationships were based on the unequal exchange of favors between men situated at opposite ends of the social scale. A tiny minority controlled production and there was an almost total absence of public social welfare, and conditions for survival did not allow the lower classes to pursue any other course than to seek protection from the most powerful elements.¹⁵⁴

The constitution of 1891 formalized the federal system while at the same time giving expression to the distinction of power between the most powerful and the weakest states. The election of the president of the Republic reflected the degree of agreement or disagreement between the most powerful states. While the *café com leite* system ran smoothly, tensions within this alliance began after 1910 with the entry of a third state on the political scene: Rio Grande do Sul, the region where Getulio Vargas had political influence and power. The most notable feature of this whole political system was the low level of political participation by the mass of the population. The constitution of

¹⁵⁴ Fausto, "*Society and Politics*," 266-268.

1891 formally expanded the base for political representation; instead of voting rights based on suffrage based on property and income, it was extended to all literate male Brazilians over the age of twenty-one.¹⁵⁵ While this shift would expand the amount of men who were eligible to vote, it would still leave large numbers of immigrant and lower class workers without a means of political representation.

Unrest in the Late First Republic

As Thomas Skidmore observed, by the 1920s there was widespread agreement throughout Brazil that there was an urgent need to overhaul the political system with a growing revolutionary spirit that was on the rise.¹⁵⁶ Historically, two states, São Paulo and Minas Gerais, dominated the presidential office.¹⁵⁷ The presidency alternated between the two states- including Vargas's home state of Rio Grande do Sul- leaving the smaller states without any real executive representation.¹⁵⁸ Vargas had been one of the men to run for president in 1929, but did not win the office.¹⁵⁹ Vargas's loss appeared to be another example of the elites in power being able to win control of the presidential office, and people in Rio Grande do Sul, Vargas largest area of support, began a revolutionary movement, building a broad coalition of support among junior officers, nascent middle classes, other states, and *tenentes*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Fausto, "*Society and Politics*," 267-278.

¹⁵⁶ James M. Daniel, "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930, Causes and Aftermath," *The Historian* 9 (Autumn 1946) : 37.

¹⁵⁷ James M. Daniel, "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930," 37.

¹⁵⁸ James M. Daniel, "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930," 37.

¹⁵⁹ James M. Daniel, "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930," 38.

¹⁶⁰ James M. Daniel, "The Brazilian Revolution of 1930," 38.

While 1930 brought an end to the First Republic, opposition to oligarchical rule had been growing throughout the 1920s, perhaps most visibly among the *tenentes*. The *tenente* movement began in 1922, when army cadets and officers revolted against the government which they accused of political corruption.¹⁶¹ The *tenentes* revolted again in 1924, controlling the city of São Paulo for around two weeks, and then in 1926 as well.¹⁶² The most well-known and myth-building event that took place as part of the *tenentista* movement was the Prestes Column.¹⁶³ During the 1920s, Luis Carlos Prestes became the leader of a dedicated group of men committed to a democratic evolution in Brazil within the social order.¹⁶⁴ Prestes, like many junior officers in the military during the 1920s, approved of the ideas of an enlarged middle class and industrial proletariat concerned with reform of the political structure of Brazil.¹⁶⁵ The main idea of Prestes's beliefs revolved around expanding the political base of the country, thus effectively wresting political control from the hands of rural oligarchies and big-city industrialists.¹⁶⁶ Prestes wanted to wrest the power away from *coronéis* and to have it distributed equally among the working-classes in Brazil. This would give the working and lower classes a voice in politics and would allow their votes to represent their own interests instead of those of the *coronéis*.

¹⁶¹ Michael L. Conniff, "The Tenentes in Power: A New Perspective on the Brazilian Revolution of 1930," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 10 (May 1978) : 61.

¹⁶² Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁶³ Fausto, "*Society and Politics*," 299.

¹⁶⁴ Ernest A. Duff, "Luís Carlos Prestes and the Revolution of 1924," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 4 (Spring 1967) : 3.

¹⁶⁵ Duff, "Luís Carlos Prestes," 5.

¹⁶⁶ Duff, "Luís Carlos Prestes," 5.

In December of 1923, Prestes and a group of army officers began scheming to foment a new revolution designed to unseat the current president. While they achieved small temporary victories, Prestes and the army officers ultimately could not hold off the government forces. Ernest A. Duff argues that much of the success of the revolting army officers was due to the part that Prestes played, as his personality and leadership helped him excel during the 1920s revolt.¹⁶⁷ Prestes' ability to repeatedly outmaneuver his opposing forces built up the myth of Luis Carlos Prestes and what he was capable of. This borderline mythical status would follow him into the political situations of the 1930s.

The *tenentes* received their education during a time of transition for both the military and society.¹⁶⁸ The role of the military evolved to that of professional soldiers who would be removed from politics; however, the *tenentes* adopted one of the principles of the doctrine of soldier citizens, namely, that of the right of the military to intervene in politics.¹⁶⁹ They believed that the job of the armed forces was to be protectors of the people.¹⁷⁰ The *tenentista* movement produced a rift within the military establishment between junior officers and their commanders.¹⁷¹ The *tenentes* were interested in associating themselves with higher-ranking personnel to lend more credibility to their rebellious actions.¹⁷² Unfortunately for the *tenentes*, higher-ranking officials with few exceptions were not interested in supporting the *tenentista* ideals. This lack of support

¹⁶⁷ Duff, "Luís Carlos Prestes," 5.

¹⁶⁸ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁶⁹ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁷⁰ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁷¹ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁷² Fausto, "Society and Politics," 299.

only strengthened the *tenentes*' resolve to cleanse society and the military.¹⁷³ The *tenentes* themselves were outside of the workings of the government and were involved in a struggle against the power structure.¹⁷⁴ With the actions of the Prestes Column, the *tenentes* attempted to use military intervention as a means to overthrow the decentralized government and to replace it with a more expansive central government that could enact social reforms.¹⁷⁵

Getulio Vargas's political beginnings

With his 1930 candidacy, Vargas was attempting to wrest power away from the hands of the elites in São Paulo and Minas Gerais, bringing an end to the compact politics that defined the era and shut out most of the public and states from direct political participation in presidential politics. Fighting broke out between the military and the backers of president-elect Júlio Prestes. When the military outmaneuvered Prestes, it set up a junta and president-elect Prestes resigned. During this time Vargas was speaking and outlining his program for when he took power. Vargas' program included promises for a new constitution, social legislation aimed at the betterment of the masses, and cooperation with central and state governments.¹⁷⁶ Vargas's ideas on cooperation between central and state governments reiterated what the *tenente* movement sought to achieve; political power that was shared between the central and state governments instead of just by the state governments.

¹⁷³ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 299.

¹⁷⁴ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁷⁵ Fausto, "Society and Politics," 298.

¹⁷⁶ Daniel, 39-41.

Vargas' ideas on how to change the political system upset the traditional oligarchy of the First Republic (1889-1930). On November 3, 1930, Vargas took over as provisional president; eight days later he suspended the constitution and dissolved the federal parliament, state legislatures, and the municipal courts marking the first (and far from last) example of Vargas taking excessive measures in order to obtain his goals of transforming government and its relationship with society. Vargas organized his government to meet the needs of the country and its people, mobilizing urban Brazilians into a future base of personal political support.¹⁷⁷

In 1930, President Washington Luiz, the last president of the First Republic, referred to Vargas as a Moscow agitator who led a Communist uprising to overthrow the republican regime, pointing to the ways that anticommunism was filtering into domestic politics and discourse in Latin America well before the Cold War.¹⁷⁸ Labor-focused and paternalistic, most of Vargas's reform measures were designed to maintain state control.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, Vargas would later use fighting Communism as an example to defend why the state needed to maintain and expand its control in labor and other areas. Vargas's political platform centered on taking power away from the elites who had been in power during the First Republic. By referring to Vargas as a Communist from Moscow, Luiz wanted to discredit Vargas and what he stood for. Luiz's statement compared Vargas's rise to power by a military coup with that of the actions of those who participated in the Russian Revolution. This was a reasonable accusation because Vargas, just like the

¹⁷⁷ Lillian Estelle Fisher, "Getulio Vargas, the Strong Man of Brazil," *Social Science* 19 (April 1944), 82.

¹⁷⁸ John W. White, "Brazil's Old Fight Renewed in Revolt: Reforms Promised by Vargas in His Successful Rising Are Demanded Again on Behalf of Workers," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1935.

¹⁸⁵ Levine, *Father of the Poor*, 2.

people in the Russian Revolution, wanted to change the way politics had traditionally been and put power into the hands of those who had always been left out. Luiz's statement attempted to foreshadow what he thought would happen in Brazil; that the lower and working classes would take advantage and rise up to take power from the elites. This is what happened when Vargas took power. The large amount of support that Vargas obtained from the workers of Brazil allowed him to stay in power from 1930-1945 and then to be re-elected in 1951. Vargas's constant appeal to the workers allowed him to always have a large base of support.

Vargas did indeed make a significant break with the decentralized oligarchical rule of the First Republic. He crafted a role for government and a drive for industrialization, economic development, and national integration that would create a "modern Brazil" that abandoned Brazilian dependency on the export of primary goods and importation of manufactured goods.¹⁷⁹ Like Perón in the 1940s, Vargas's political style was often pieced together from other ideologies, taking and using only the parts of each that he saw as being able to work in Brazil. At first, early media reports accurately portrayed Vargas as a nationalist who relied on pragmatism more than ideology, thus contributing to his characteristic unpredictability.¹⁸⁰ Politics in Brazil at this time were still somewhat ruled by patronage and negotiation.¹⁸¹ While Vargas wanted to get away from the politics of the First Republic, his paternalistic style was reminiscent of patronage politics where political decisions were based on what someone could do for the President and in turn what could the President do for them, even as he extended state paternalism in

¹⁷⁹ John W. White, "Brazil's Old Fight Renewed in Revolt."

¹⁸⁰ John W. White, "Brazil's Old Fight Renewed in Revolt."

¹⁸¹ Robert M. Levine, *Father of the Poor*, 3.

new ways. Vargas wanted the support of the working class in order to stay in power by having a large voting class that supported him and in return for those votes Vargas promised reforms that would benefit the workers.¹⁸²

Overall, Vargas's plan for Brazil was to turn it from a backwater country into a modern nation that could play a part in global economics by breaking Brazil's dependence on coffee exports and by spurring national industry. Under the First Republic, the Brazilian economy had been highly dependent on a few agricultural crops, most notably coffee.¹⁸³ Brazil exported coffee, using the resulting foreign exchange to import nearly all of the manufactured goods consumed at home.¹⁸⁴ The specter of overproduction and the accompanying problem of violent price fluctuations had become acute by the twentieth century. In order to maximize their foreign exchange earnings, Brazil resorted to the practice of withholding stocks of coffee from the world market. By the 1930s Brazil exported primary products and imported finished goods.

The dependence on coffee as Brazil's main export backfired with the Great Depression. With people not being able to access their money, luxury items were not seen as important as they once were and coffee purchases dropped. The Brazilian government expanded its purchases of the surplus coffee stocks as it attempted to compensate the coffee growers with loss programs, but the economy could not be stabilized. With the loss in export earnings, Brazil's capacity to import declined further.¹⁸⁵ The drop in coffee

¹⁸² John D. French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern Sao Paulo*, (UNC press, 1992) ; *Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture*, (UNC Press, 2004).

¹⁸³ Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41.

¹⁸⁴ Skidmore, 41.

¹⁸⁵ For more information on coffee in Brazil's First Republic and the early Vargas years, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, pp. 41-42.

prices and revealed that only depending upon on product would not always support the economy. This is one reason why Vargas was intent on industrialization. If Brazil industrialized, not only would it cease being completely dependent on coffee as its only export it could begin to produce some of the finished goods that Brazil was buying and save money.

Despite attempting to transform labor, Vargas's antipathy towards Communists and their sympathizers was evident as early as 1931, when Vargas contracted the New York City Police Department to send two specialists in Anti-Communist tactics.¹⁸⁶ Vargas also suspended the constitution in order to eliminate the institutional vestiges of the First Republic, prompting a brief civil war with the state of São Paulo- a war that federal forces won, allowing Vargas to implement reforms even while building a new sense of nation with the reintegrated *paulistas* (people in the São Paulo state) under a new constitution.¹⁹⁴

When Vargas took power, there were two key measures which he wanted to focus upon; to purge the "corruption" of the old politicians, and make governmental provisions to satisfy working-class needs.¹⁸⁷ In 1934 Vargas drafted a new constitution for Brazil. One tenet of the constitution was that there was now a guarantee of free elections.¹⁸⁸ This new system did not sit well with the established elites; however, this played right into Vargas' hands as it incorporated millions of previously disenfranchised or excluded

¹⁸⁶ Barbra Weinstein, *Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). ; Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). ¹⁹⁴ Daniel, 42.

¹⁸⁷ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 13.

¹⁸⁸ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 19.

groups who could now participate, and who could and often did credit Vargas for their inclusion. The new free elections would provide the Brazilian people with the opportunity to remove from power the old elites in the national government Vargas appointed “interventors” or governors, at state level and put it in the hands of someone they felt had their best interests in mind. Vargas supporters were also feeling positive about the new constitution because it would now be the government’s responsibility to take care of issues in the areas of economic development and social welfare.¹⁸⁹

This new constitution established a new, highly centralized state and reflected the country’s increasing nationalism. The constitution provided for an impartial judiciary as a check on the previous system of patronage by establishing political offices independent from the *coronéis*. The 1934 constitution also transferred power from the states to the federal government.¹⁹⁰ The federal government now supervised the production and marketing of coffee.¹⁹¹ A chamber of deputies was created to have control over the private economy in order to control state-sponsored capitalism.¹⁹² In these ways, Vargas’s government brought real institutional and political transformations to Brazil.

The new political system Vargas established would have far-reaching consequences. The political groups that were most content with the new constitutions were being superseded by a new regime of political activism.¹⁹³ Politics were now becoming more radicalized. The Communist Party of Brazil was rallying large numbers of middle-class voters; however, as Skidmore argues, some were more attracted to the

¹⁸⁹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 19.

¹⁹⁰ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 19.

¹⁹¹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 33.

¹⁹² Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 33.

¹⁹³ Skidmore, 20.

leader of the Communist Party (PCB), Luis Carlos Prestes, than they were to the actual party itself. This popularity dated back to the 1920s, when Prestes had led the *tenentes* on their long march. By the 1930s, Prestes had further moved left, becoming the leader of a more radical faction demanding greater transformations in Brazilian politics that would follow a communist path and greater workers' control of the state and of production. This radicalized group of people became known as the National Liberation Alliance and was intent on putting together a popular front movement aimed at overthrowing the old elites.¹⁹⁴ More middle-class voters were joining in the communist cause and were joining with militant labor unions to support radical programs.¹⁹⁵

Building on his success in the *tenente* movement of the 1920s, Prestes was the leader of a dedicated group of men committed to a democratic revolution in Brazil within the social order.¹⁹⁶ Prestes, like many junior officers in the military during the 1920s, approved of the ideas of an enlarged middle class and industrial proletariat concerned with reform of the political structure of Brazil especially expanding the political base of the country thus effectively wresting political control from the hands of big-city industrialists.¹⁹⁷ Ernest A. Duff argues that much of the success of the revolting army officers was due to the part that Prestes played.¹⁹⁸ Prestes' personality and leadership helped him excel during the 1920s revolt and provided the justification for his placement in power in the National Liberation Alliance. Prestes' ability to repeatedly outmaneuver his opposing forces built up the myth of Luis Carlos Prestes and what he

¹⁹⁴ Skidmore, 21.

¹⁹⁵ Skidmore, 21.

¹⁹⁶ Duff, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Duff, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Duff, 3.

was capable of. This myth followed him into the political situations of the 1930s, even as his politics had been radicalized. Even as Vargas was consolidating the centralized state, Prestes had become leader of the Soviet-oriented *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Communist Party, PCB) in the 1930s, putting him on a collision course with Vargas in ways that would shape Brazilian Politics in the latter half of the 1930s and beyond, even as US media increasingly misinterpreted or misunderstood Vargas's politics

Communism, Vargas, and the New York Times during the Estado Novo, 1934-1945

After the establishment of the 1934 Constitution, governmental supporters in Congress began to have some concerns about communist subversives. Vargas himself had been maneuvering to gain more control and to discredit this Popular Front movement.¹⁹⁹ In a cable to the *New York Times* Vargas's Minister of Justice, Vicente Rao, stated that it was imperative "to give the government suitable tools to crush communism".²⁰⁰ Rao's statement is a strong one, using language that implied that the perceived threat of communism is so strong that steps need to be made quickly in order for the government to handle them. Rao does not say that the government is going to merely rid the country of communism, but instead crush it- extreme terms that did not mimic the Vargas government's position. The language Rao used provided a clear example of what the development of explicit anti-Communist rhetoric in Brazil well before the Cold War with which such rhetoric is often associated. That US media reported on his statements also

¹⁹⁹ Skidmore, 22.

²⁰⁰ Special Cable, "Brazil Slates Red Trials: Vargas to Seek 90-day Extension of 'State of War'," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1936.

illustrate how anti-Communist sentiments circulated in public discourse via the media in the pre-Cold War era in the US media, even from and through foreign voices.

In April of 1935 the Vargas government passed a special National Security Law that gave the government special powers to combat “subversive” political activities.²⁰¹ Chapter Two, Article Fourteen of the National Security Law stated that “direct incitement of hatred among social classes are crimes against the social order. Vargas used this new law quickly ordering police to raid the headquarters of the *Aliança Nacional Libertadora* (National Liberation Alliance, ANL) and seize documents that were later used to prove that the Alliance was Communist-led.”²⁰² Vargas went after the ANL because of its appeal to the middle-class due in no small part to the ANL’s popular leader Luis Carlos Prestes who had risen to power through his status as leader of the Prestes Column.²⁰³ The middle-class saw Prestes as a strong leader because he was able to avoid the military during his time leading the Prestes Column. Vargas did not want such a large group of people to be in support of ideals that challenged his. If the ANL were able to obtain a large politically active support base, they might be able to find a candidate to eventually topple Vargas. Vargas would not let a group that could potentially threaten his power continue to grow and agitate.

The National Security Act also allowed Vargas to arrest people whom the state deemed “subversive.” Among the first people the government imprisoned was Luis

²⁰¹ Skidmore, 22.

²⁰² <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1930-1939/lei-38-4-abril-1935-397878-norma-pl.html>, Skidmore, 22.

²⁰³ Skidmore, 21.

Carlos Prestes. Arrested in 1935, Prestes was not released from prison until April 18, 1945.²⁰⁴ The seizing of the ANL's documents provided proof that Vargas and Congress used to hastily outlaw the National Liberation Alliance and move toward a more authoritarian and politically-closed regime.²⁰⁵ Vargas declared that Brazil would remain one hundred percent loyal to American ideals and would follow the good neighbor policy strictly.²⁰⁶ Vargas's declaration that Brazil would remain loyal to American ideas showed President Roosevelt that he could be trusted to do business with the US. Vargas's insistence that he would follow the Good Neighbor policy showed him in a favorable light to President Roosevelt. If Vargas was willing to adhere to US policies such as the Good Neighbor policy, then it would stand to reason that he would entertain the possibility of working with the US in future negotiations. Vargas even initiated negotiations for a trade treaty between the United States and Brazil.²⁰⁷

In November 1935, military revolutionaries began to revolt, and Communist military rebels were to join in the revolt to overthrow the government; however, things did not go as planned, and the Communists were thwarted before they could cause any damage.²⁰⁸ An article in the *New York Times* described the revolt as "communistic like all other recent uprisings."²⁰⁹ The *New York Times*' wording of that this revolt was "communistic like all others" revealed that the *Times* saw any action against the

²⁰⁴ Leslie Bethell, "Brazil," *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948*, Edited by Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43.

²⁰⁵ Samuel Putnam, "Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil," *Science & Society* 5 (Spring 1941), 106.

²⁰⁶ Frank M. Garcia, "Pacts With Europe Barred by Vargas; U.S. Policy Backed," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1932.

²⁰⁷ Putnam, "Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil," 105.

²⁰⁸ Skidmore, 24.

²⁰⁹ John W. White, "Brazil's Old Fight Renewed in Revolt: Reforms Promised by Vargas in His Successful Rising Are Demanded Again on Behalf of Workers," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1935.

government was communistic. The author of the article, John W. White, did not go into detail about what other recent uprisings had taken place in Brazil. White could also have left out a more detailed description of what other uprisings he was referring to because he referred to them as “Communistic” and would assume that the uprisings were all the same.

In the same article, White wrote that “no South American government has fought sporadic communistic agitation with more vigor than Brazil.”²¹⁰ This statement reveals the ongoing anti-Communist discourse in the media in the US in the inter-war period, even as it operated in the context of an isolationist policy. Implying that Brazil has had more than one communist uprising justified the government’s strong reaction while implicitly raising the specter of communist revolution elsewhere for Americans to fear. Additionally, the *New York Times* subtly reinforced the United States desire to be an ally of Brazil. Reporting that Brazil was making such a strong effort to combat communism revealed to the American readers that a diplomatic relationship could be beneficial in the fight against communism, even at a time when US policy was directed inwardly as much as outwardly.

This revolt is an unusual case in that PCB attempted to follow two different styles of spreading and achieving Communist power, drawing on both the strategies of a popular front and an armed revolt.²¹¹ Meanwhile in late November 1935, military revolutionaries in the northern garrisons of Natal and Recife began a barracks revolt by

²¹⁰ John W. White, “Brazil’s Old Fight Renewed in Revolt.”

²¹¹ Thomas E. Skidmore, “Failure in Brazil: From Popular Front to Armed Revolt,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), 141.

murdering their senior officers.²¹² The coup fell apart because these northern garrisons did not coordinate with their southern counterparts which caused Communist military rebels to attempt to strike too late. This gave local commands the time to come together and stop the rebels.²¹³ This attempted coup gave Vargas justification to gain emergency powers and begin his repression of the Left.²²³

Vargas's reasons for wanting these special powers were "that a state of war was necessary to permit the recently created special tribunal to try the Leftists accused of instigating the revolt and that democratic institutions were still menaced by subversive elements paid by international organizations."²¹⁴ Vargas' use of the term "democratic institutions" here implicitly defined any activities performed by communist supporters, whether successful or not, as a threat to democratic governance. Vargas' mention of international organizations was a way for him to place the blame outside of Brazil. By vaguely referring to international organizations, Vargas could frame the revolts as antinational and led by outsiders, rather than by Brazilian citizens. This "othering" allowed

Vargas to reinforce his support for "the people," implicitly suggesting that it could not be Brazilians causing these outbursts on their own, but instead those under the influence of despised imperial powers. The Brazilian Congress gave its consent to being under Vargas's control to combat communism and keep Brazil safe.

²¹² Skidmore, 23.

²¹³ Skidmore, 23.

²¹⁴ Special Cable, "Brazil May Prolong the State of War: Vargas Requests Congress to Continue Condition 90 days Because of Menace," *The New York Times*, September 15, 1936.

During his first decade in office, Vargas regularly spoke out against communism. In an article written in 1936 in the *New York Times*, Vargas stated that he “would lead a never-ending fight against communism.”²¹⁵ Despite much emphatic statements not all were convinced, inside or outside of Brazil, that Vargas might not secretly be leading the country down the path to Communism. Brazilian elites were concerned that by politically mobilizing the workers, they would turn towards communism and overthrow the government, ignoring the fact that Vargas had actually strengthened the government’s power in comparison to the First Republic. Vargas’s promises to workers, such as saying he would raise the minimum wage, were enough to begin to gain popular support and make elites nervous.

In an article for the Associated Press, Vargas argued that “the workmen in the area of Pernambuco had pledged their solidarity to the government” when faced with communists who were attempting to mobilize.²¹⁶ One way in which Vargas attempted to gain support from workers was to bring them together through state-sponsored unions called *sindicatos*.²¹⁷ The *sindicatos* were created to provide for the workers a safe place to have their voice heard, even while completely allowing the state to control labor mobilization. In these unions, the workers could air their grievances on conditions in the workplace. With these *sindicatos* in place, the workers would not need to look elsewhere for political supports.

²¹⁵ Special Cable, “7 Brazilian Reforms for Year are Listed: In Radio Speech Vargas also Pledges Continuance of his Warfare on Communism,” *The New York Times*, January 2, 1936.

²¹⁶ Dr. Getulio Vargas, “Vargas Says Brazil Will Spurn Communism; Sees Workers Hostile to ‘Barbaric Ideology’,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 1935.

²¹⁷ Joel Wolfe, “The Faustian Bargain Not Made: Getúlio Vargas and Brazil’s Industrial Workers, 1930-1945,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 31 (Winter 1994), 77.

In that same article, Vargas explained that when he took power in 1930, he did give workers more class representation on an equal footing with the employer of power; however, he noted that he “did not follow the minority of terrorists that wanted Brazil to follow in the Soviet Republic’s footsteps.”²¹⁸ Vargas’s labor reforms were nationalist; they sought to protect Brazilian workers from “foreign” influence, especially that of Communism. Vargas’s union was a direct line to the government where a worker could have his voice heard, while Communists’ proposed unions, which in Vargas’s eyes were just a distraction for workers and were dangerous. The Communist unions were not working towards bettering Brazil through its working-class, as Vargas said he was, but instead were introducing them to foreign ideas and concepts that would not work in Brazil, and were therefore dangerous.

In a special cable to the *New York Times* in 1936, one year after the failed ALN revolt, Vargas laid out one of his plans for dealing with Communism, asking Congress to approve legislation to organize special tribunals to “try all radicals.”²¹⁹ Vargas’s plan was to bring imprisoned men who were seen as subversives or communists- the two terms were often conflated- to trial more quickly.²²⁰ Vargas was not interested in freeing the imprisoned men, but instead wanted to try these “radicals” quickly in order to “rid the country of radicals.”²²¹ Vargas claimed that the administration was “feverishly seeking to purge the nation of Communism.”²²² Speedy trials would have allowed him to appear

²¹⁸ Dr. Getulio Vargas, “Vargas Says Brazil Will Spurn Communism; Sees Workers Hostile to ‘Barbaric Ideology’,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 1935.

²¹⁹ Special Cable, “Brazil May Seize Foreign Concerns,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1936.

²²⁰ Special Cable, “Brazil May Seize Foreign Concerns,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1936.

²²¹ Special Cable, “Brazil May Seize Foreign Concerns,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1936.

²²² Special Cable, “Brazil May Seize Foreign Concerns,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1936.

tough on Communism, and swiftly dealing with the radicals would make him appear to have a firm stand against Communism. Such trials also opened the door for Vargas to rid the country of any political opponents under the guise of protecting the country. The tribunals would give Vargas even more power and influence over who was included as part of the Brazilian nation, further centralizing the state's power. The Communists' attempts to win over workers through enrollment in non-state-sponsored unions were another reason Vargas wanted to crackdown on subversives. Vargas wanted to include the workers as part of the Brazilian nation, but only to a certain extent. Vargas wanted the workers to be politically aware in order to use them as an untapped resource, just as Perón did, to keep himself in power, but he also did not want them to be too politically aware to the extent that they would want to agitate for ever increasing rights that he was not willing to give.

In September of 1937, with Presidential elections on the horizon in 1938, the Army General Staff discovered a document purporting to be the battle plan for a Communist revolution. Eurico Dutra denounced this alleged plot, known as the "Cohen Plan," and the next day Congress approved the suspension of constitutional rights. In his radio broadcast of November 10, 1937, Vargas explained that Brazil must forgo the democracy of political parties which "threaten national unity." Vargas also denounced the Constitution of 1934 and established the Constitution of 1937. This new constitution gave Vargas even more power as president, declared a state of exception, and ushered in a new era in Brazil, known as the *Estado Novo*, or "New State." During this time Vargas also suspended Congress, declaring it as an "inadequate and costly apparatus that continuation

was inadvisable.²²³ While by many definitions an authoritarian regime, a contemporary, Lillian Estelle Fisher, argued that Vargas drew up the new constitution to better meet the needs of the nation. Fisher claimed that Vargas was living in a time where things were changing rapidly and that he needed to make changes according to the circumstances he was living in at the moment, with no concern for the future.²²⁴

Even as the authoritarian-nationalist shift under the Estado Novo was beginning, Vargas cited communism to justify his own power-grab. In another special cable to the *New York Times*, Vargas stressed that the Communists worked secretly in Brazil and that this was the justification for why there was the request for a state of war.²²⁵ Vargas did not give a specific date for when he suspected the Communists were working, but this cable was published in October of 1937, well before the start of World War II and also in the early years after the establishment of the Good Neighbor Policy. The wording used in the article reveals that the US was already touting anti-Communist rhetoric. In books by Robert M. Levine and Thomas E. Skidmore, the justification for the request for more power from Vargas was referred to as a “state of emergency.”²²⁶ The *New York Times*, however, referred to the justification for extra powers as a “state of war,” suggesting a more combative stance against communism in the Western Hemisphere. Vargas insisted that the new regime had nothing to do with the upcoming elections (after which he would

²²³ See Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 27-29.

²²⁴ Lillian Estelle Fisher, “Getulio Vargas, the Strong Man of Brazil,” *Social Science* 19 (April 1944), 83.

²²⁵ News/Opinion, “Vargas Denies Move to Prevent Election,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1937.

²²⁶ Levine, 46.

by law have to leave office) and that they would go on as normal.²²⁷ While the Cohen Plan was the purported reason for this tightening of control, the main reason Vargas wanted to gain more power was to prevent presidential elections that were supposed to take place in January 1938, as promised by the 1934 Constitution.²²⁸ Vargas did not set an exact date as to when presidential elections would eventually be held, but did offer the vague statement that free elections would eventually take place.²²⁹ During that same speech, Vargas declared that he would not be running for president.²³⁰

In a 1937 interview with a German newspaper that was reprinted in the *New York Times*, Vargas stated that “Communist and other ideologies falsify the ideal of the nation.”²³¹ Vargas described a “Brazilian tradition, of allowing foreign workers who come to Brazil to work side by side with us, and to help them adapt themselves to the framework of our existence.”²³² This was Vargas’ ideal of a nation: one that welcomed foreign workers who were willing to become part of Brazil. In this characterization, however, Vargas placed Communists outside of such a system, portraying them as outsiders with radical ideas antithetical to the nation’s “Brazilian-ness” that would upset the status quo and cause problems within a country. Vargas declared that unlike Communist or radicals, foreign workers often “adapt themselves to the framework of Brazilian workers and therefore are no danger of becoming a negative foreign

²²⁷ News/Opinion, “Vargas Denies Move to Prevent Election,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1937.

²²⁸ Bethell, “Brazil,” 36.

²²⁹ Bethell, “Brazil,” 39.

²³⁰ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 48.

²³¹ News/Opinion, “Dr. Vargas Confirms Authoritarian Rule,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1937.

²³² Wire to paper, “Dr. Vargas Confirms Authoritarian Rule: Brazilian President Repudiates Both Communism and German Radicalism,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1937.

influence.”²³³ This statement revealed that Vargas assumed nationalism would win out over political ideology; indeed, if there were any political ideology one could consistently pin to Vargas, it was nationalism.

Despite Vargas’s insistence that Communism was an “outside” force, the 1935 uprising belied such notions. Members of the military worked with Communists in an attempt to overthrow the government. If Communist ideology was considered a foreign influence, and Vargas was convinced that Brazilians were not susceptible to foreign ideology, then the military would not have worked with the Communists. In a statement that he sent directly to the *New York Times*, Vargas insisted that “the new regime is the most logical movement against communist tactics” and that Brazil had been threatened constantly from outside and within.²³⁴ He asserted that “the Comintern made its point to take root in Brazil” through the revolt, and that the previous 1934 Constitution left room for communist propaganda.²³⁵ Hence, according to him, the new 1937 constitution and the *Estado Novo* were necessary correctives. These extreme policy changes had been made before the start of World War II and the Cold War. Communism was framed as a problem even before fascism had been eradicated. Vargas often wrote to the *New York Times* himself to clarify or outline statements he had made. Writing to the US newspaper himself would allow Vargas to shape the narrative about him for a foreign audience. The *Times* often offered their own analysis of what Vargas said in the cables he sent to them,

²³³ News/Opinion, “Dr. Vargas Confirms Authoritarian Rule,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1937.

²³⁴ Special Cable, “Vargas Holds New Regime Vital; Aims at Reds, Defiant Governors,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1937.

²³⁵ Special Cable, “Vargas Holds New Regime Vital; Aims at Reds, Defiant Governors,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1937.

but by Vargas sending in his own words, he still had control over how he was portrayed in US media.

In these struggles in the name of the nation, Vargas tried to stake a position as a partner with the United States against foreign ideologies. He maintained that he agreed with President Roosevelt that there needed to be peace throughout the Americas and that the “centuries old friendship between Brazil and the United States” would make Brazil especially proud to be a part of that peacemaking.²³⁶ Vargas saw that threat in Communism. His direct contact with the *New York Times* backs up his claims of supporting the United States in the fight against Communism. Vargas’s words are also telling in his reiteration that the desire for a state of war by the armed forces had nothing to do with upsetting the upcoming elections, but instead had to do with fighting the menace of Communism. Contacting a US newspaper allowed him to make Brazil-US connections himself, even while he could guide the narrative on his own decreasingly open regime in the US media.

The 1937 Constitution brought other changes to Brazil besides granting Vargas more powers as president. The global economic crisis had hit Brazil hard, and as it sought new trade partners beyond the US and Great Britain, it began to turn to trade with Germany. The introduction of Germany into the Brazilian economy also had political effects. However, as seen above, Vargas had been transparent about his nationalism well before 1941 the War was reshaping how the US viewed Brazil, not how Vargas’s own ideology operated. Vargas was more concerned with how Brazil could help itself out and

²³⁶ News/Opinion, “Vargas Denies Move to Prevent Election,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1937.

make “Brazil for Brazilians.”²³⁷ Putnam was a critic of Brazilian literature, an antifascist, and also served as a writer for leftist publications and the Communist party in France.²³⁸ Putnam argued that with Vargas’s nationalistic overtones, it was simple for Germany to come into Brazil and agree with Vargas that Brazil had been treated unfairly by the US and Britain.²³⁹ Anti-capitalistic rhetoric brought Brazil and Germany together, Putnam suggested, revealing his own understanding of facism not as state capitalism, but as anti-capitalist. Vargas was extremely anti-capitalist. He saw the United States as a capitalist country whose main concern focused on making and obtaining money instead of being concerned about its people. Vargas’s anti-capitalist ideals focused on enfranchising those who had always been left out of politics in order to create better lives for all Brazilians. Vargas focused on how politics and people could achieve this, not on money.

Brazil’s maneuvering during the 1939-1941 period shows that the Vargas government made shrewd use of the rivalry between the United States and Axis powers.²⁴⁰ Vargas’ policies during this time were ambiguous. While he proclaimed to be interested in Pan American ideals, Vargas courted Axis goodwill. This is why Vargas’ use of writing to the *New York Times* is important. While Vargas was not conclusively cutting ties with the Axis Powers, he was actively keeping friendly channels with the United States open via media missives. Vargas’ letters to the *New York Times* allowed

²³⁷ Putnam, “Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil,”100.

²³⁸ Harvey Gardiner, “Samuel Putnam, Brazilianist,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 8 (summer 1971), 104, 110.

²³⁹ Putnam, “Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil,”100.

²⁴⁰ Stanley E. Hilton, “Brazilian Diplomacy and the Washington-Rio de Janeiro “Axis” during the World War II Era,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 59 (May 1979), 208.

him to outline his plans for Brazil, which were positive steps towards democracy in the eyes of the US. Even though Vargas had not completely ruled out economic relations with Germany, if the United States proclaimed any doubt, Vargas could point to his *New York Times* correspondence as evidence to the contrary. Vargas was not concerned so much with establishing working relationships with other countries just for diplomatic reasons, but instead he concentrated on brokering deals with whichever country would provide the best deal for Brazil. As early as January 1941, Vargas secretly authorized the construction of U.S. airbase facilities in the strategically important Brazilian Northeast for a future war against Germany, even though the Vargas government had yet to break its relationship with Germany. In addition to the placement of the air bases, Brazil was a major supplier of strategic materials important to the war effort., getting aid from the US to establish national industry in Brazil in exchange²⁴¹ Vargas declined to immediately break ties with the Axis until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the war and in agreement with the Rio Conference in January 1942.²⁴² In July of 1944 Brazil sent an expeditionary force to fight in the European theater, the only Latin American country to do so.²⁴³

Vargas, Communism, and the US Media in the Cold War, 1945-1954

As World War II progressed and Brazil joined the Allied war effort in August 1942, Vargas saw that global politics, including in Brazil, were turning more towards

²⁴¹ Bethell, "Brazil," 33.

²⁴² Hilton, "Brazilian Diplomacy," 210.

²⁴³ Oliver Dinius, *Brazil's Steel City: Developmentalism, Strategic Power, and Industrial Relations in Volta Redonda, 1941-1964*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

democracy. This change prompted Vargas to focus his attention on a seldom looked at portion of society: the workers. The 1943 consolidation of Labor Laws helped further strengthen Vargas as a friend of the workers.²⁴⁴ Vargas knew that in order to capitalize on his popularity with the workers, he would need to provide them with more political opportunities; thus the creation of the Brazilian Labor Party. Vargas appealed to national sentiment by promising to protect Brazil's natural resources from foreign involvement, improve economic planning, with a focus on controlling inflation, and, in a specific appeal to the working class, to redistribute wealth among the people.²⁴⁵ Vargas's attention to and mobilization of the working class was a new tactic in Brazil. Vargas was attempting to upset the status quo and to take the power out of the hands of the select few elites that were in charge. The idea that the lower classes should have any power was a frightening one for those who were already in power. The very tenet of communist thought was predicated on the idea that "the people" could rise up and take power due to their large number and political mobilization.

However, those appeals would have to wait. In the face of mounting pressure against the lack of elections or democracy since the 1937 formation of the Estado Novo, Vargas stepped down when the military threatened to forcibly remove him. In typical populist/Vargas fashion, he spoke to the Brazilian people and informed them that any decision he made was for their "aspirations and legitimate interests."²⁴⁶ Even as he was

²⁴⁴ Michael L. Conniff, edited, *Populism in Latin America 2nd edition*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press ,2012), 53.

²⁴⁵ Conniff, "Brazil's Populist Republic," 53,55.

²⁴⁶ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 52.

being ousted by the military Vargas still took the time to speak to the people, and remind them that he was on their side.

When President Eurico Gaspar Dutra was elected president on December 2, 1945, Vargas' political discourse reform had dramatically transformed since the falsified "Cohen Plan" of 1937. In pointing to the path towards national progress, Vargas proclaimed that there were two ways to transform the nation: one was liberal democracy, symbolized in Dutra's election, and "the other way, besides old liberal capitalist democracy, is socialist democracy of the workers. To that I belong and will fight on behalf of the people."²⁴⁷ With Dutra's opposition to Vargas, Vargas began to set up the foundation for his eventual return to power when Brazil turned to democracy.²⁴⁸ Dutra constantly appealed for a return to normalcy in the wake of fifteen years of Vargas's shifting governments- provisional, constitutional, and dictatorial, all with elements of populism.²⁴⁹ The Dutra administration barely had time to get settled in before Vargas admirers began to organize for his candidacy in the elections of 1950. Vargas worked under the aegis of the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Labor Party, PTB), which he created shortly before being forced from public office in 1945 and he encouraged workers to join.²⁵⁰ He did not speak out against President Dutra, instead speaking on a platform of *trabalhismo*, which was a mixture of social welfarism, working-class political activity, and economic nationalism, reflected in the name of the PTB itself.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ News/Opinion, "Getulio Vargas Hits Brazil Government," *The Dallas Morning News*, December 1, 1946.

²⁴⁸ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 39.

²⁴⁹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 64.

²⁵⁰ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 64.

²⁵¹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 73.

Vargas' departure from the presidency in 1945 led to noticeable changes in Brazil. One issue was the specter of Vargas' personality. While not as visibly personalist in his politics as Perón he was nonetheless always lurking near the political stage, watching and waiting and even being elected as Senator from two different states (his home of Rio Grande do Sul, as well as Rio de Janeiro, though he did not actively serve for either). Nevertheless, his election in two separate states (legal under constitutional and electoral rules at the time) revealed his ongoing popularity among many despite his ouster. Even after Vargas was removed from office in 1945, he continued to speak out on behalf of the Brazilian workers. Vargas backed PTB candidates for election to Congress in order to put his supporters into office. Vargas claimed that the PTB would be the party most likely "bring happiness to all Brazilians" through its political philosophy. As leader of the PTB, Vargas spelled out what his and the PTB's political philosophy would be: that of *trabalhismo*. This platform was no different from previous political ideals that Vargas had; however, by the late 1940s, Vargas was using the PTB, not the state, in his promises to deliver. Vargas was building himself as a democrat instead of the dictator that he had been during the *Estado Novo* years.²⁵² Vargas's defeat in the 1945 elections showed that Brazil turned towards a more democratic country, and Vargas was prepared to use that to his advantage.

Vargas was out of the presidential office in 1946, but that did not mean that he disappeared from US news coverage. Indeed, his shift in rhetoric with the PTB led to a very different portrayal of Vargas in US media than he had experienced in the 1930s.

²⁵² Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 75.

Frank L. Kluckhohn's article on the "Communist Peril in Latin America" focused on Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. On Brazil, Kluckhohn reported that Communists were being blamed for a series of "price riots" that had taken place in Rio de Janeiro. Kluckhohn asserted that dealing with the Communists would be easier for President Dutra if it were not for Vargas, stating that Vargas had been "flirting" with the Communists in an attempt to regain power.²⁵³

Kluckhohn's own position was perhaps unsurprising in hindsight. He was a Chief South American correspondent for the *New York Times*. In 1955, Kluckhohn became the Assistant secretary for Security and Consular Affairs in the federal government. It is during the mid-1950s that Kluckhohn wrote his book, *The Naked Rise of Communism*, in which he outlines what exactly Communism is and where it began. Kluckhohn states that he wrote this book in order to inform the people what exactly Communism was and to make sure people were not left unguarded by their lack of knowledge. Kluckhohn's text traced the establishment of Communism in the Soviet Union and other countries; however it did not discuss Communism in Latin America. Kluckhohn's decision to leave Latin American Communism out of his book is an odd choice. Kluckhohn wrote about Communism in Latin America for the *New York Times*, so he would have had access to information about Latin American Communism during the time that he was writing his book. He also had no trouble referring to Vargas as a Communist and it would have been reasonable for him to even briefly mention this in his book.²⁵⁴ Kluckhohn's own

²⁵³ Frank L. Kluckhohn, "Latin Nations see Communist Peril," *The New York Times*, September 2, 1946.

²⁵⁴ Kluckhohn, 1.

avoidance of any mention of Latin America in his text reveals the broader problem with scholarship on the pre-Cold War era. Mentions of communism before the affixed date of the beginning of the Cold War are glossed over or entirely ignored, even when the author has the facts in their possession.

This emphasis on Vargas's vaguely threatening and alleged ties to "communism" was a theme that became common in later reports on Vargas and his administration, reflecting broader transformation in the very early years of the Cold War. Kluckhohn did not go on to explain how or why Vargas was attempting to use the Communists to regain power. It could have been that the prevailing thought during this time was that there was no justification for working with Communists. The strategy of Containment backed this vision up, with its plan to prevent the spread of Communism. Stating that Vargas was even considering looking to Communists for any type of support was damaging. Already in 1946, well before points of tension like the Berlin Airlift or the Korean War, well before the fear mongering preceding the 1954 CIA coup in Guatemala or Fidel Castro's victory in Cuba in 1959, a leading paper in the US was already expressing concern regarding Communists taking power in Latin America.²⁵⁵ This report singled Vargas out, even with that one sentence, as possibly being a Communist sympathizer, even while just nine years earlier, Vargas had written in those same pages of his antagonism to Communism. Yet by 1946 that no longer mattered to Kluckhohn; Vargas had not spoken poorly of socialism, and so in a Manichean vision of the Cold War world as "overt capitalist or communist," Kluckhohn painted Vargas as a Communist.

²⁵⁵ Stephen Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Revised edition (David Rockefeller Center, 2005); Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution* (WileyBlackwell, 2010).

Such portrayals continued as the Cold War developed. An article written in early 1949 continued to question Vargas's alleged courting of the Communist Party in Brazil. The article stated that the PTB, headed by Vargas, set out its platform in a way that implicitly equated the PTB with Communism, even as it failed to outline what the PTB stood for. The article reported that "Vargas had set out a platform," but did not report what that platform was.²⁵⁶ The article then went on to say that Vargas and the PTB had been described "in some sections of the press" as sympathetic to certain plans of Luis Carlos Prestes.²⁵⁷

Yet there are problems with this portrayal that tell us less about Vargas's politics and more about how US anticommunist fears shaped the media's portrayal and understanding of Vargas and Brazilian politics in the Cold War. In claiming that "some sections of the press" had described Vargas as sympathetic to Communist ideas, the report perpetuated fabricated and unsubstantiated anticommunist claims. The *New York Times* itself printed such claims only a year earlier. The *Times* failure to mention that they were the ones to refer to Vargas as sympathetic to Communist ideas is problematic. It only says that some sections of the press had proclaimed this truth, but it does not mention any names. It could be that the *Times* attempted to create the idea that more than one source had made these claims; yet the claims against him were themselves vague to the point of being empty. As they appeared in the 1948 article, the claims of supposed association with the Communist Party were mentioned briefly and not explained in any detail. This would suggest that the United States was attempting to keep its distance just

²⁵⁶ Special Cable, "Vargas Sets Party Aims," *The New York Times*, May 1, 1949.

²⁵⁷ Special Cable, "Vargas Sets Party Aims," *The New York Times*, May 1, 1949.

in case relations with Brazil deteriorated. By claiming that there could possibly be support for Communists from Vargas, the United States could later claim, if need be, that they did not support him or Brazil because of their Communist ties. It could also provide justification for ousting Vargas if need be. The justification provided by the claims in the newspapers could be backed up by the Truman doctrine and its claims to want to protect other nations from foreign or local threats.

On January 3, 1951, Vargas was elected president in an open and democratic election. Vargas chose to concentrate on stepping up industrialization in the name of national development and economic autonomy- a preoccupation of his dating back to the 1930s.²⁵⁸ Vargas was also still against foreign investment in Brazilian industries and an advocate for economic nationalism. Vargas wanted Brazil to work towards stabilizing its own economy instead of relying on bailouts from foreign investors. Vargas stressed that Brazil needed to focus on internal economics to stabilize the country, and to do this he nationalized the petroleum industry and the electric industry.²⁵⁹ Nationalism was a strategy that could bring Brazilians from different classes together with a sense of community. The fact that one might be an industrial worker or a banker did not matter; under nationalism, being Brazilian was what mattered most. However, members of the Brazilian Communist Party wanted to practice radical nationalism predicated upon the idea that foreign investment needed to be removed from

²⁵⁸ Oliver Dinius, *Brazil's Steel City*. ; Shawn C. Smallman, *Fear and Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889-1954*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁵⁹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 96-97.

Brazil in order to have a redistribution of power among the classes.²⁶⁰ Vargas sought autonomy and social reform, but not on nearly such a radical scope.

There was another issue with Vargas's ultimately precarious dependence on economic nationalism. He tried to combine his nationalist and orthodox approach in a complex strategy aimed at maintaining the support of different classes. His mixed approach to economic policy-making was political, inspired by the need to maintain wide support. However, the problem of inflation led to social tensions, upsetting the distribution of income and creating uncertainties about future income. The people who were affected the most by inflation were the workers. There had not been a wage increase since the one Vargas had decreed in 1943, and although in 1951 Vargas decreed a new minimum wage, it did not match recent price hikes.²⁶¹ That meant that Vargas's largest groups of voters were the people who were suffering the most. It also meant that the measures that Vargas took were not enough to help them.

Throughout 1952-1953, Vargas made attempts to stabilize the economy and to placate all sectors of Brazilian society. Vargas continually blamed foreign investors for the economic problems in Brazil. Vargas needed to pass anti-inflation legislation, but knew that it would be unpopular, hence his strategy to blame foreigners. By blaming outside influences, Vargas hoped to gain political support at home. By early 1954, workers were striking to oppose the rise in the cost of living and to demand the minimum wage be raised again.²⁶² Vargas's early strategy of enfranchising the workers started to

²⁶⁰ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 109-110.

²⁶¹ Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 111.

²⁶² Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil*, 122.

backfire on him. The workers had become politically aware enough to realize that they could agitate for more rights, rights which Vargas had always said he supported.

In July of 1954, the Brazilian Congress upheld Vargas' decree to double the minimum wage.²⁶³ The prevailing thought of non-Communists was that the wage decree would be detrimental to Communists, countering the latter's propaganda that stated the courts were conspiring with employers to have the decree declared unconstitutional.²⁶⁴ The *New York Times* article reporting on the wage increase claimed that Communists in Brazil had begun a "series of meetings in private homes to plan a strategy for the upcoming elections," despite the fact that the Dutra government made the PCB illegal in 1948 and that they remained mobilized for elections in 1954.²⁶⁵ The *New York Times* suggested Communists were fighting to get political favor in the hopes that they would achieve political office. The article even went on to make the scare-mongering and unsubstantiated claim that the wage bill that Congress passed that would also reinstate the PCB.²⁶⁶ This fact is only mentioned once in this article, but it seems to be a bit of foreshadowing. In following articles on Brazilian politics in the *New York Times*, there were mentions of how Vargas and the Labor Party were in support of Communists. This reporting, while not accurate, could have created doubts in the minds of American readers. These unsubstantiated claims that working with the Brazilian Labor Party would be beneficial also revealed that the American media was interested in perpetuating

²⁶³ San Pope Brewer, "Vargas is Victor on Wage Decree," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

²⁶⁴ San Pope Brewer, "Vargas is Victor on Wage Decree," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

²⁶⁵ San Pope Brewer, "Vargas is Victor on Wage Decree," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

²⁶⁶ San Pope Brewer, "Vargas is Victor on Wage Decree," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

antiCommunist rhetoric. A previously symbiotic relationship between the United States and Brazil seemed to fall apart in the press.

Anti-Vargas groups that first showed up during Vargas's campaign in 1950 increasingly spoke out against Vargas and his reluctance to raise the minimum wage. One of his leading critics was Carlos Lacerda. Lacerda, a spokesman for the conservative *União Democrática Nacional* (National Democratic Union) and its middle-class base, often spoke out about the incompetence of Vargas.²⁶⁷ Lacerda's appeals to the middleclass gained him a large following. The middle-class felt ignored by Vargas's policies, which were aimed at elevating the working class. Just as it was during the First Republic, elites did not want the division between social classes to be smaller than it had previously been. Lacerda dedicated his energy to undermine Vargas and used assistance from Brazilian elites, along with his own newspapers to do so.²⁶⁸ Lacerda spearheaded the ouster campaign that indirectly set in motion the events leading to Vargas's suicide in August 1954.²⁶⁹

After Vargas's suicide, the *New York Times* began printing articles that called into question Vargas's distrust of the Communist Party. In a 1954 article printed the same month as Vargas' suicide, Sam Pope Brewer wrote that events since the suicide had strengthened the impression that there was an alliance between Vargas's PTB and the Communists. Brewer went on to assert that there were "many reasons" to think that the Vargas administration had an agreement with the Communists, namely to get votes.

²⁶⁷ Brayn McCann, "Carlos Lacerda: The Rise and Fall of a Middle-Class Populist in 1950s Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 8 (2003), 662.

²⁶⁸ McCann, "Carlos Lacerda," 662.

²⁶⁹ McCann, 662.

Brewer contended that, by voting with the administration, Communists could get their own candidates into power without overtly declaring that they were Communists.²⁷⁰ The supposed plan by the Communists to get votes would have worked because the Communists would not have been running for office as part of the Communist Party. Instead, the Communists would be running for office under as part of the Brazilian Labor Party. Even the title of the article, “Tie to Reds Seen in Vargas Party,” sounded more salacious than it really was, especially since the Communist Party had already been declared illegal and that, even with these overtures to “socialist democracy,” Vargas had long opposed Communism, defining it as foreign. The eye-catching title makes it seem as if Vargas himself was openly supportive of Communists, which the article did not provide evidence for. Vargas’ suicide opened the door for speculation as to why he killed himself, even though he did explain himself in a suicide note, and his death gave Brewer and others the opportunity to make outlandish claims against someone who can no longer defend themselves.

Getulio Vargas spoke out against Communism before the start of the Cold War. Vargas outlined what his policies towards fighting Communism in Brazil through the medium of the *New York Times*. At home, Vargas passed the National Security Act to enable him to deal with Communists quickly. Vargas’s dependence upon the workingclass as the backbone of his political support brought him into contact with Communists who were also looking to gain the support of workers while the middle-class was left feeling unrepresented. Vargas’s opponents took advantage of elite antagonisms

²⁷⁰ Sam Pope Brewer, “Tie to Reds Seen in Vargas Party,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1954.

and of the under-represented (yet still minority) middle-class and they often spoke out against Vargas.

Vargas's supporters took matters into their own hands which ultimately led to Vargas's suicide. After his death, the *New York Times* reported that Vargas was sympathetic towards Communism. Vargas's policies towards Communists revealed that he took what measures he saw necessary; however, with this issues of inflation and a consistently unsatisfied working-class, Vargas was not able to establish more substantive measures against Communism. Vargas fought Communism, much like Perón, in that he fought it the way he most saw fitting. His real concern was for the Brazilian people and how Communists were attempting to sway them away from what Vargas saw as traditional Brazilian ideas. Vargas had many different important issues to contend with, the perceived threat of Communism was one that occupied his time.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In response to the Russian Revolution of 1917, US elites and politicians spurred a “Red Scare” that its allies throughout the world replicated. The revolution perpetrated by a large group of the country’s peasants and urban proletariat in order to end the traditional political system was a radical action. The Russian peasants and workers were a disenfranchised group of people who were unhappy with their lives and acted to do something to enact changes. Countries were worried that the events that took place in Russia might possibly take place in their own countries. While this fear did exist before World War II, it was reignited by the fight against fascism. The United States and Great Britain were concerned that once fascism was eradicated, communism would step up and take its place as a new dominant ideology. Communism’s appeal to the lower classes of society provided it with a large base from which to draw support, another reason for the US and Great Britain to be concerned. The two countries were at first mostly concerned with the threat of communism in Europe; however their focus shifted after by the 1950s.

In Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s, the political climate resembled that of the period before the Russian Revolution. The lower classes were becoming more politically aware and unhappy with their position in society. The traditional oligarchy and its use of patronage politics was falling out of favor. Instead there was a call to instill political leaders who would concern themselves with the rights of all peoples, not just those who were financially able to hold political power. This concerned those who already held the power. The 1930s and 1940s in Latin America saw the rise of populist leaders who were willing and able to create more for the lower classes. These populists, like Vargas and Perón, aimed their policies at providing a place

in politics for the working class so that they would be included as members of society.

Once the working class became aware of these populist leaders, they began to demonstrate and agitate for them to ascend to the presidency.

From the 1930s through the early 1950s and beyond, Communism was an important issue in Latin American politics. While Argentina and Brazil were both concerned, at one time or another, with fighting fascism at the time, Communism had started to spread and quickly replaced fascism as the ideology to be wary of. Vargas's and Perón's close relationship with the workers was one reason their detractors became wary of communism spreading throughout Latin America. Their close relationship with workers also concerned the US. Both Perón and Vargas sought political support from the working class, but the Communist Parties in Argentina and Brazil also sought out the working class. The Communists were hoping to educate the workers and lead them to the realization that their voices needed to be heard, just as Perón and Vargas were doing. Both the populist leaders and communist leaders were interested in getting the working class to ask for more rights in order to elevate their status in society. This quest for worker support by both sides was seen as collusion by outsiders such as the United States. The US saw the working class as being able to be swayed into supporting communism, a fear that both Perón and Vargas had as well. This is one reason why Perón and Vargas were working to provide for the workers: as a means to keep them from being influenced by communism.

Scholarship traditionally sees the Cuban Revolution as the rise of a Red Scare in Latin America; however, fear of Communism well pre-dated 1959. As this thesis has illustrated, there already were fears of communist infiltration in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Cuban Revolution only confirmed the fears that a communist style takeover could occur in Latin America, although it took place under a unique set of circumstances and provided justification for militaries to take power in order to fight Communism.

Communism and Communist Parties existed in Latin America before the 1920s, in many ways that shaped political life not just in the 1960s-1980s, but also in the 1930-1950s.

Once reason for this could be that Communist parties were outlawed for a number of years in Latin America; however, this would not mean that communism just went away.

Even though the Communist Party might have been illegal for a time, the fear of communism was still there. This work has provided numerous examples of the United States' media reported on the threat of communism in Latin America, yet scholarship overlooks these examples.

Both Vargas and Perón spoke out against communism, with a vehemence much scholarship has glossed over. With the Great Depression, World War II, and the aftermath of both, communism was not the main focus of Vargas's or Perón's attention; however it was an important enough issue that they spoke out on what their anticommunist plans would be as they defined their own nation-building projects. Perón and Vargas had differing ideas on what was the best way to combat communism, through social reforms or through violence, but they still revealed those plans to their nations. Media in the US also reported heavily on what steps Perón and Vargas took to combat communism.

The United States media, specifically the *New York Times*, questioned whether populist leaders Juan Perón and Getulio Vargas were supportive of Communism or not. The *Times* journalists who reported on Brazil and Vargas were varied, yet coverage in the *New York Times* oftentimes was consistently misrepresenting populism in

its reporting. Frequently, articles about both Perón and Vargas stated the two did not have plans for combating communism in their countries; however, previous articles had already reported on what Perón and Vargas outlined as their policies towards communism. Ultimately, the *New York Times* articles reflected not only what policies on Communism were in Latin America, but also they revealed the attitude of the US towards communism and anti-communist policies.

The *New York Times* reported that Perón did have a plan for combating Communism and that any steps he proposed to take against communists were not likely to work. The *Times*' portrayal of Perón revealed him to be a man who was not willing to take the necessary steps to combat Communism, which would be to outlaw it completely or to threaten to bring it to a violent end. Perón frequently gave speeches outlining how he hoped to combat Communism, but the *Times* did not think that his plans were enough. US media saw Perón's plans for social reforms as a strategy that would be favorable to the communists. While Perón never openly supported communism, he did state that there were some favorable aspects to it which caused the *Times* to see him as sympathetic towards communism. The convoluted relationship between the US and Argentina during World War II continued into the early Cold War era.

On the other hand, at least in the early years of Vargas's first presidency, the *New York Times* reported that Vargas's plans to eliminate communism were the right ways to handle communists. The strained relationship between Perón and the US played a role in his negative portrayal in the media. Vargas unlike Perón repeatedly stated that he would completely rid Brazil of communism. Perón never fully denounced communism as did Vargas. Vargas's suggestions for combating communism, unlike Perón's, were aimed at

completely eradicating it and to lock up those who were considered subversives. Vargas's close relationship with Brazilian workers was a cause of concern for the US. Communists also attempted to court the workers for their support. After Vargas's suicide, the New York Times changed its stance on Vargas and reported that he had most likely been a communist sympathizer. Vargas's close ties with the working-class and the communist's attempts to court the workers led the US media to suspect that Vargas would accept support from the Communist Party in elections.

In Argentina, Juan Perón was most concerned with providing a place in society for those of the working class and creating an Argentina that was for the Argentine people. These concerns did not stop him from being worried about communism. Perón frequently spoke out about plans to combat communism in Argentina. Perón combined his nationalism with his desire to keep communism at bay by stating that the best way to combat communism was to enact social reforms. Perón wanted these reforms to aide the working class, but structured his anticommunist rhetoric to fit into his overall plans for Argentina. This early instance of anticommunist rhetoric also revealed that Perón saw the need for changes elsewhere in the world in order to combat communism, he stated that rebuilding Western Europe would keep communism from spreading. Perón saw Argentina as being able to keep communism away by continuing to focus on its nationalism. Perón saw no need to fight communism violently and was certain that by making Argentina less dependent on foreign help, communism would not come to Argentina. Perón did not seek to explain his decisions directly to the United States, but instead spoke with assurance that his decisions would work for Argentina.

The use of the *New York Times* articles provided this project with an expansive amount of information that unfortunately, could not all be included. This plethora of information could lend itself to a larger project on how the Times *reported* on Latin American communism with more specified dates than were used here. There is also the possibility of expanding the research to include other Latin American Countries with populist leaders during the years before the Cold War and to compare and contrast such leaders' portrayal in US media with each other. There is also the possibility to expand the research here to include the years immediately following Perón's and Vargas's presidencies to the start of the Cuban Revolution until the creation of military dictatorships. The secondary scholarship used within this work also could be used to expand research into the years immediately before the Cuban Revolution.

In Brazil, Getulio Vargas also had other concerns besides communism; however he still spoke about the need to keep communism and communists out of Brazil. One issue Vargas dealt with was his desire to stay in power. Anti-Vargas regimes constantly tried to force Vargas out of office. Vargas also dealt with reactions to his gaining more power for the president. While these two issues were both of importance, they also played a role in Vargas' anticommunist policies. Vargas's constant worry over whether or not he would be ousted weighed heavily on him, hence his desire to gain more power. Vargas creation of the National Security Law not only gave Vargas the power he wanted, but also provided him with a way to combat communism. Vargas's anticommunist rhetoric was violent and decisive. The National Security Act allowed for Vargas to get rid of his opponents by suggesting, even slightly that they might harbor procommunist tendencies.

Vargas, like Perón, wanted to provide for the working class. The major focus of Vargas's anticommunist rhetoric centered on the need to provide for the workers of Brazil and to allow the government to have control over the countries labor force. Brazil's communist party also wanted to influence the workers, but by Vargas being so focused on the welfare of the workers, he could keep them from being swayed by communist ideologies. Vargas felt the need to contact the US media in order to state what his anticommunist policies would be. Vargas repeatedly wrote to the *New York Times* where he explained and outlined what his anticommunist policies would look like and why he felt they were necessary. This almost constant correspondence worked favorably for Vargas because it meant that in case of an attack on his regime by communists, the US would be on his side.

The US media oftentimes changed its position on what it thought of both Perón and Vargas. The US media would question if Perón or Vargas were being sympathetic towards communist parties in their countries and would question if they were doing enough to stop the spread of communism. The US was unsure of Perón's commitment to combating communism. Perón's claims of providing social reforms for the Argentinean workers did not seem like a drastic enough step for the US in the fight against communism. Perón's refusal to denounce communism as a completely terrible ideology provided the US media with justification to question whether Perón really wanted to rid Argentina of communism or not. The US media seemed pleased with Vargas's plans for combating communism. Vargas's proposed policies of violence towards communists fit into what the US saw as the proper way to fight communism, by completely getting rid of it. Vargas's constant communication with the *New York Times* and his stance on how to

rid Brazil of communists allowed for him to be viewed favorably by US media. After World War II, the United States focused its attention on fighting communism the same way as Brazil; however, the US did not see this way as working for Brazil. The United States took its role from the Truman Doctrine, as a global enforcer, seriously and was concerned that without their interference, any fight against communism in Latin America would not succeed. Furthermore, with the US's view of Latin America as a sort of backyard to the US, it is not surprising that they would think any plans to combat communism would not be successful in Latin America.

Media in the US reported on the threat of communism in the early 1930s and 1940s. Both Argentina's and Brazil's leaders set out to enact policies that would stop communism from infiltrating their countries. Scholarship states that the Cuban Revolution created the fear of communism throughout Latin America; however, this thesis has shown otherwise. The threat of Communist infiltration in Latin America began in the early 1930s and continued well into the 1970s.

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