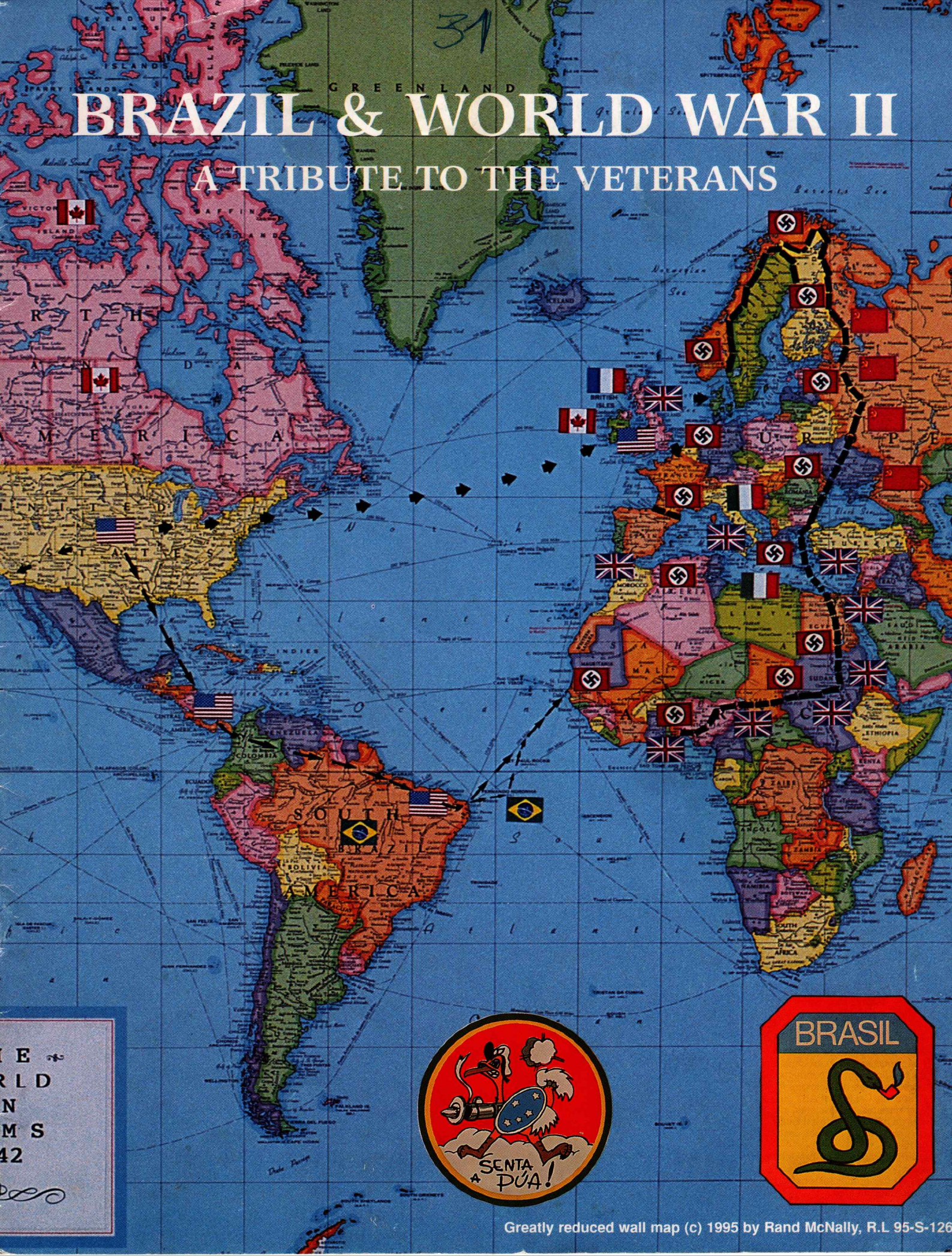


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BRAZIL & WORLD WAR II

A TRIBUTE TO THE VETERANS



THE
 WORLD
 IN
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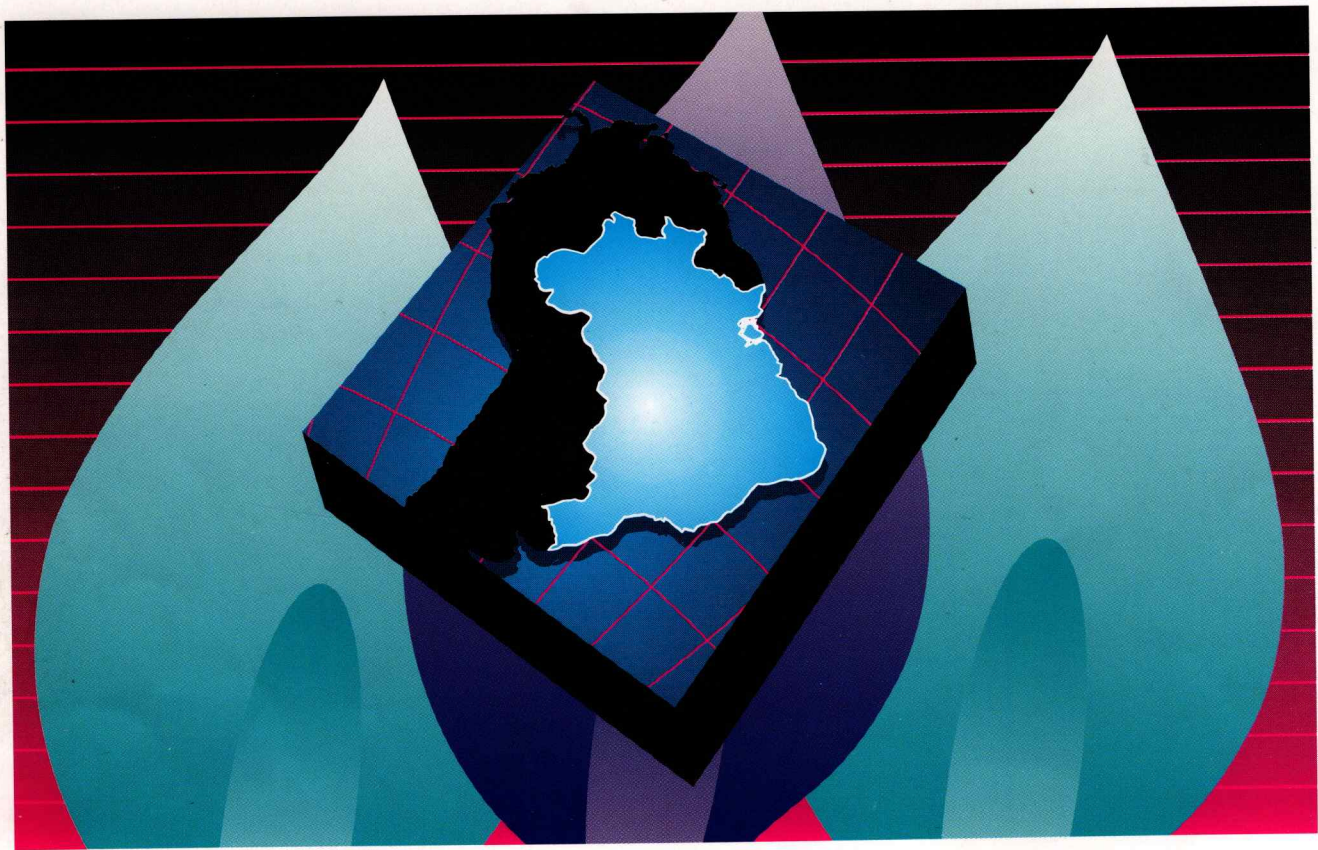


322

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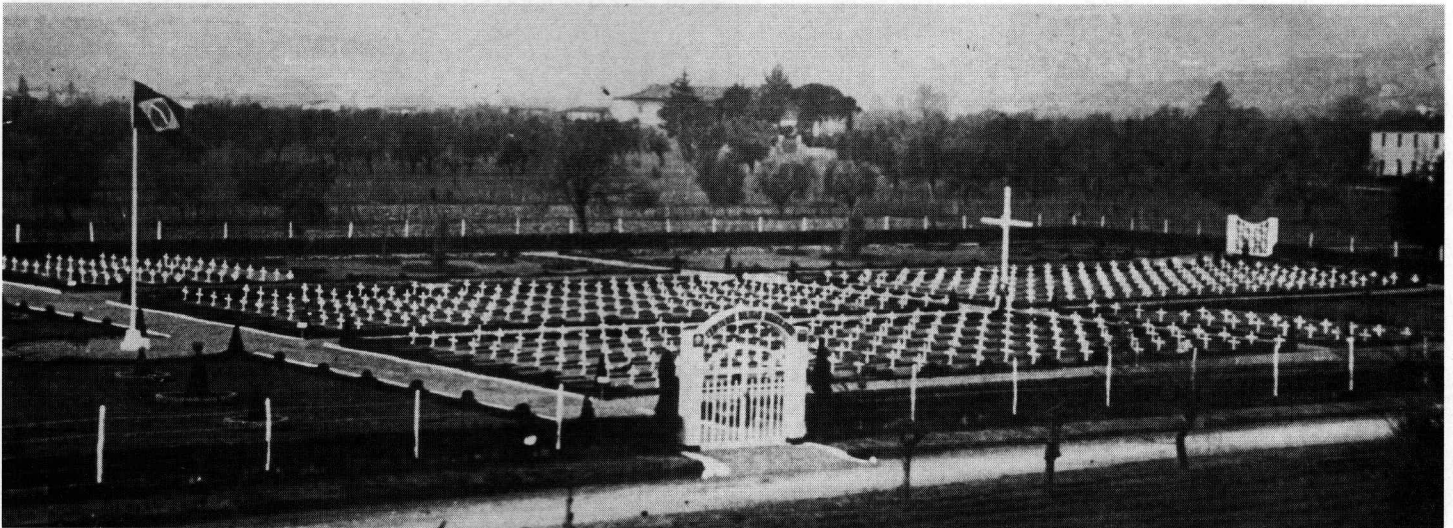
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BRAZIL & WORLD WAR II

A TRIBUTE TO THE VETERANS

*When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
we gave our today*



Brazilian War Cemetery in Pistoia - Italy

Joining the City of Houston's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, *CASA BRASIL – Brazilian Society of Houston* – is proud to present a photographic exhibition of the involvement of the Brazilian people and the participation of the Brazilian Armed Forces in the conflict.

This exhibition is a tribute to the WWII veterans of all countries who, facing the uncertainties of the war, risked their lives and future to defend the moral principles of the democratic society: justice and freedom for all.

As part of the exhibition, this booklet highlights the circumstances that led Brazil to the decision to fight against the Axis forces, and summarizes the role played by the Brazilian Armed Forces in the War.

The historical background, as presented in this booklet, was given by a group of Brazilian veterans. It is therefore a version of the war by those who fought it.

CASA Brasil is grateful to all those who helped this event to happen, and in particular to *BTB GROUP*, whose enthusiasm and generous contribution made this publication possible.

Houston, May 1995
Casa Brasil
Mario Campos de Araújo,
General Coordinator

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORLD WAR II AND THE BRAZILIAN-AMERICAN ALLIANCE.

After World War I, the rise of the Third Reich in Germany, the Fascism in Italy and of an expansionist military regime in Japan, forming the Axis block, set the stage for World War II.

In Germany, the economic chaos and national frustration caused by the defeat in WWI favored the growth of Nazism. In his book "Mein Kampf" (*My Struggle*), Adolph Hitler preached the superiority of the German race and set his goals for the nation.

In Italy, Benito Mussolini also nurtured expansionist dreams and looked towards an alliance with Germany. In 1935, Italy invaded Abyssinia, in Africa.

In the Far East, the Japanese throne gave strength to the military, which opposed the political and economic influence of the West in that part of the world (Asia for Asians).

World War II started in September 1939 with the invasion of Poland by Germany. Soon thereafter, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany.

Germany's powerful and well trained army invaded Denmark and Norway, followed by the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, forcing the British expeditionary forces to abandon the European continent in Dunkerque. Germany then launched attacks on the United Kingdom, and in June 1941 turned his forces towards the Soviet Union. Supported by Italian troops, Germany also invaded Yugoslavia, Greece, and the island of Crete.

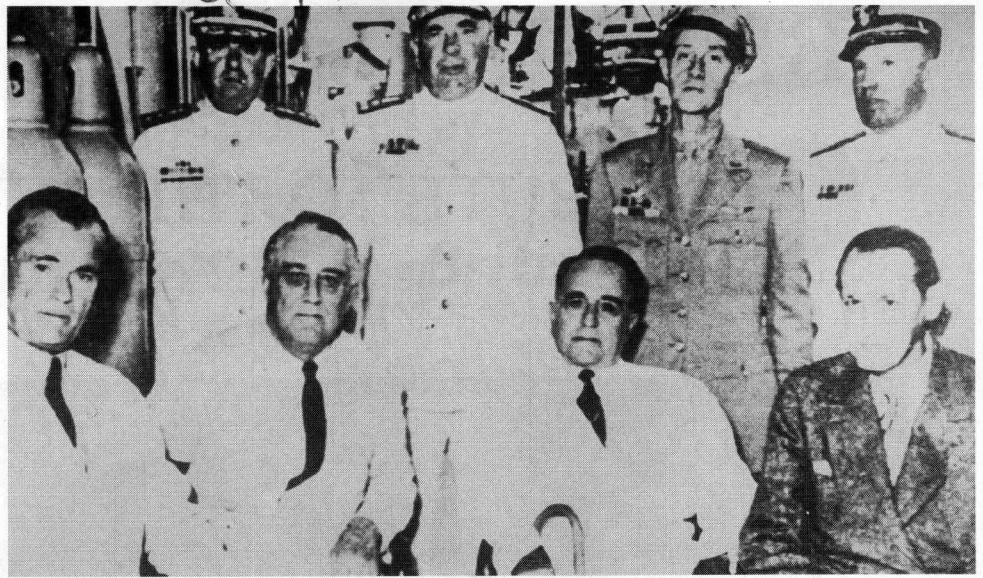
In 1941 Hitler launched the African campaign, with the German Afrikakorps under the command of Field Marshal Von Rommel. Despite valiant fighting, the British troops defending Northern Africa were pushed towards the Suez Canal.

It is about that time that the United States, which entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, sought Brazil's support for the Allies.

The geographical location of Northeastern Brazil vis a vis the war operations in Northern Africa made the Brazilian coast a strategic position for military bases. Public opinion in Brazil was frankly in support of the Allies, and the United States was authorized to establish naval bases in Brazilian territory.

On December 8, 1941, one day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, President Getúlio Vargas wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt: *"having learned about the Japanese aggression, I convened the members of my Government, and I have the honor to inform you that it was decided that, consistent with its traditions and commitments of continental policy, Brazil should declare its solidarity with the United States."*

President Roosevelt acknowledged on the same day the above message of solidarity.



Returning from Casablanca, President Roosevelt meets President Vargas in Natal, Brazil, February 1943.

The decision by Brazil to sever diplomatic relations with the Axis countries drove Hitler to unleash an intense submarine campaign targeting Brazilian commercial ships. Angered by the aggression, Brazilians declared war on the Axis countries on August 22, 1942.

In Europe, Germany had invaded Russia in June 1941. Advancing rapidly, the Germans reached Stalingrad, but the Russians fought tenaciously reversing the course of the war.

In the Pacific, the Japanese, who had advanced to the Philippines, suffered their first defeat in the Midway and the Guadalcanal battles of 1942.

The Allies took the offensive with renewed enthusiasm. U.S. Military bases in Northeastern Brazil supported the Allied, mounting pressure on the Axis forces in North Africa. In June 1942, the British, under the leadership of General Alexander, defeated the Afrikakorps in the battle of El Alamein. In 1943 the Allies landed in Sicily.

In 1944 the Russians liberated Romenia; and Yugoslavian, Albanian and Greek partisans forced the Germans to abandon their territories.

On June 6, 1944, General Eisenhower led 55,000 British, American and Canadian troops in the greatest naval operation in the history of the world ("D" Day). The troops left England to land on the coast of Normandy, France.

On June 27 the American took the port of Cherbourg, while the Canadian and British forces entered Caen. Continuing to advance, the Allies liberated Paris on August 25 and crossed the German border on September 12, 1944. Attacked by the Russians from the East and the Allies both from the West and South, Germany suffered heavy aerial bombing and was forced to capitulate. On May 8, 1945 the war in Europe was finally over.

In the meantime the Americans were fighting forcefully in the Pacific, capturing the Aleutian, Gilbert, Marshal, and Mariana Islands, as well as the Philippines in 1943 and 1944. Then, in the beginning of 1945, along with British and Chinese troops, the Americans reconquered Burma. In February 1945, they had their first victory on Japanese soil – the island of Iwo Jima. With the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese were forced to surrender on September 2, 1945.

THE BRAZILIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (BEF).

The Brazilian military action during World War II was not limited to sending an expeditionary force to Europe.

In fact, Brazilian involvement started earlier when the Allies realized that the American continent could possibly face an invasion by Axis troops through Northeastern Brazil.

Given the short distance between the Northeastern Brazilian coast and Africa, it was necessary to fortify defenses in the region, as well as to prepare for the possible landing of Allied forces in Africa in the future.

Therefore, between 1941 and 1945, Recife, Natal, Salvador and the island of Fernando de Noronha not only sheltered naval bases operated both by Brazil and the U.S., but also concentrated 50,000 men fit for actual service.

The invasion of North Africa by the Allies in November 1942, the defeat of German troops in Tunisia in 1943, and the landing in Sicily by the Allied troops, however, eliminated any danger of invasion of the American continent.

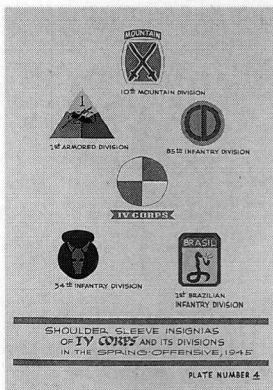
Preparing the ground for a more active participation of Brazilian troops in the conflict, Brazil and the United States decided to revise a military agreement they had signed on May 22, 1942. Initial plans were that Brazil would send to Europe an army comprised of three infantry divisions, one armored division, a liaison and aerial observation squadron, a squadron of fighter planes, as well as support and health services. However, given the difficulties experienced, the Brazilian military corps eventually consisted of one Expeditionary Infantry Division, a squadron of fighter planes, and the necessary support groups.

At that time the difficulties to organize the expeditionary force were so great that it was commonly said in Brazil that it would be easier for a snake to smoke than for the Brazilian Expeditionary Force to ever join the conflict. This gave inspiration to the emblem adopted by the expeditionary force and carried to the frontline: a snake smoking a pipe.

On July 2nd, 1944 the first 5,000 Brazilian combatants (Pracinhas, as they were known) left for Europe aboard the SS Gen. Mann. They formed the first combat team. Between July 1944 and February 1945 another 20,000 Brazilian soldiers and officers followed the same way, transported by U.S. ships which were escorted by Brazilian Navy vessels. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF) was under the command of General J.B. Mascarenhas de Moraes.

According to the decisions arrived at by the Allied Command, the BEF was taken to the Italian front. It was incorporated to the U.S. V Army led by General Mark Clark and placed as a division of General Willis Crittender's IV Corps.

The BEF fought together with the American First Armored Division, the South African 6th Division, and the Task Force #45. In fact, on September 14 the Brazilian Team replaced Task Force #45 in a section of 9 km along the frontline, which at that time was in the Apennines. The next day the team went through



its baptism of fire. Despite the advantageous position and the stronghold the Germans had over the Apennines, the Brazilian soldiers conquered the cities of

Massarosa, Monte Comunale, Monte Camaioire, Monte Prano, Lama di Sotto, Fornaci, Barga, Galiciano, Lama di Sopra, Pradescello, Pian de los Rios, Collo and San Chirico. In Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, however, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force suffered its first setback.

The objective of the Allies was to break through the famous "Gothic Frontline" in Italy before the winter. There, General Albert Kesselring's soldiers tried to stop the Allies' march towards the Valley of The Po River, where the important cities of Bologna and Turin are located.

Following the orders received from the Allied Command, the Brazilian soldiers attacked the fortified position of Monte Castelo, which had already been targeted twice without success by an American task force. Although also unsuccessful in its four consecutive attacks, the Brazilian effort served to relieve the Allies from German pressure in other parts of the Italian front, as well as to turn inexperienced soldiers into experienced fighters.

Aware of the impossibility to penetrate the German defenses at that time, the Allies decided to abandon their slogan "Bologna before Christmas". But instead they set an even more ambitious goal: to win the entire Po Valley by the beginning of the spring. Despite 18C degrees below freezing temperature which the Brazilians were not used to, they remained in their positions until spring, hidden in their "fox holes".

At the beginning of the spring, the Allies launched the global attack plan denominated "Encore". The first Brazilian Fighter Planes Squadron, along with heavy artillery, supported both the Brazilian and American movements, allowing the Brazilian Expeditionary Force to conquer the positions of Monte Castello, La Serra, Castelnuovo, and Soprassasso, and the 10th American Mountain Division to defeat German units at Monte Belvedere, Monte Gorgolesco and Mazzancana.

After a short rest, the BEF returned to action in the battle of Montese, the fiercest battle in which the Brazilians were engaged. They suffered 426 casualties in two days.

From Montese the BEF progressed toward Northwest Europe. When the war ended on May 8, 1945, the BEF had been in combat 239 days, liberated tenths of cities, suffered 2,000 casualties and forced the 148th German Division to surrender in Fornovo.





BRAZILIAN WINGS OVER ITALY.

The 1st. Brazilian Fighter Squadron was formed by Presidential Decree on December 18, 1943. Nine days later, President Vargas named Major Nero Moura as its first commander. The decree stipulated that the personnel of the fighter squadron were to be volunteers. In an overwhelming show of support, the vast majority of Brazilian pilots immediately volunteered. Major Nero Moura chose a total of 32 men who left Brazil on January 3, 1944 to be trained at the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics in Orlando, Florida.

There, the pilots went through a month long course in USAAF organi-

zation and air tactical theory which included training in both day and night fighting operations, as well as aerial bombing. They had also a second month long course, at which they logged 60 flying hours in P-40 airplanes.

Meanwhile, in February, the rest of the group, a total of 350 men, began arriving in Panama where they were joined by the pilots who had completed training in Florida. In Panama, the Brazilian pilots were trained by USAAF Colonel Gabriel Disosway.

Set up to resemble the war conditions, the training was meant to prepare the Brazilian squadron to function as a tactical unit.

On October 6, the members of the Brazilian Fighter Squadron arrived at the Italian port of Livorno. From Livorno they travelled by train to Tarquinia, where they received their P-47 planes. On October 31st, 1944, the Brazilian pilots began to take part in combat missions as part of the American squadrons of the 350th Fighter Group. The Group was part of the 22nd Tactical Air Command of the 12th Air Force. The Brazilian Group became fully operational on November 11, and by December they had already flown 819 sorties in 134 missions. The Group had an active participation both in the winter campaign and spring offensive against German positions in Italy.

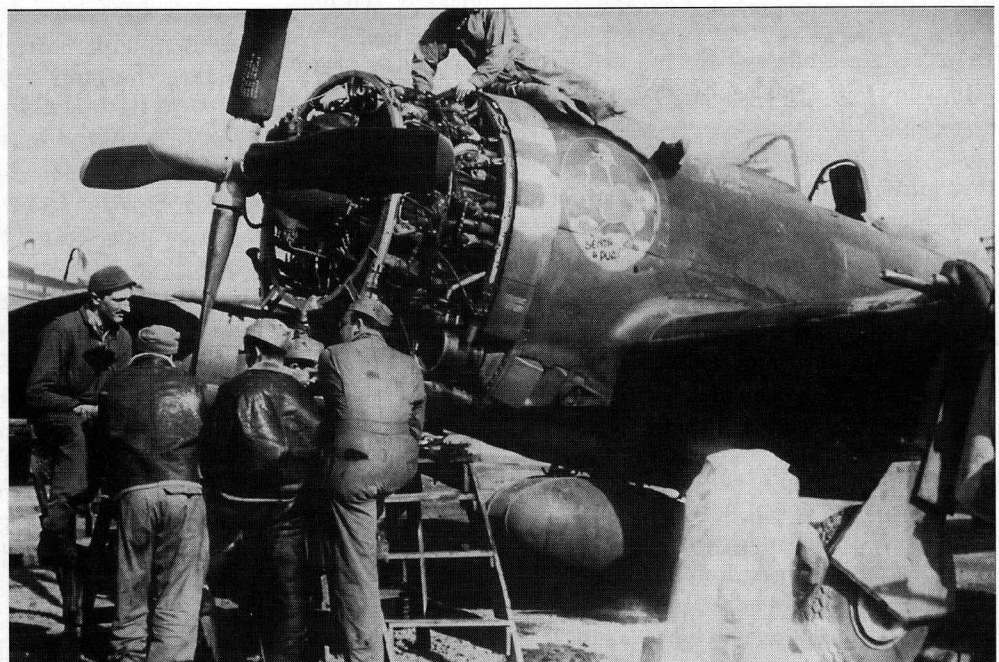
The greatest day of the Group came on April 22nd when they flew 42 sorties in 11 missions with 22 pilots. Between the 6th and the 22nd of April, 1945, the Group took part

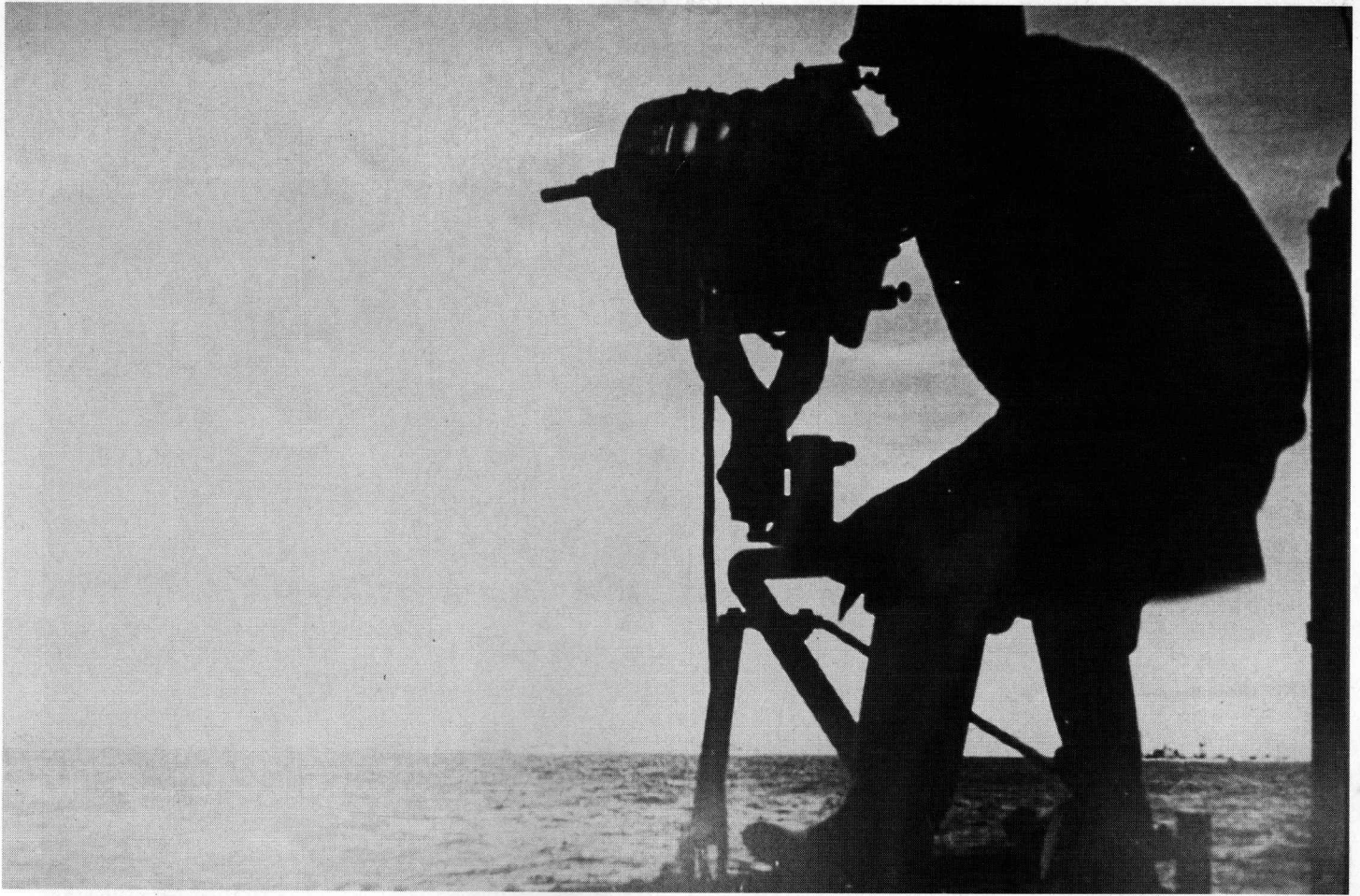


in 5% of the missions accomplished by the 22nd Tactical Air Command with outstanding results.

When the war ended they had only 22 pilots left. They had flown an average of 70 missions per pilot, twice and sometimes three times a day.

For their actions during the last eight months of the war they were recommended by the 12th Air Force for a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation.





THE BATTLE OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

In the Atlantic, the Allies needed to neutralize German submarines (the U-boats, as they were called) which were attacking not only the Allied military vessels but also merchant ships of different nationalities, putting at great risk the supply and refueling network of the Allied countries.

Brazil severed its diplomatic ties with the Axis countries and authorized the U.S. government to operate naval bases in the cities of Recife and Natal.

In retaliation the Axis forces stationed 26 German and 10 Italian submarines in the South Atlantic.

Between February and August 1942 German submarines torpedoed and sank 12 Brazilian merchant ships. Later, six more Brazilian ships were torpedoed by one single German submarine (U-507), resulting in 607 casualties.

These attacks prompted Brazil to declare war on the Axis countries on August 22, 1942.

The Brazilian Navy then created the Northeastern Naval Force, under Admiral Alfredo Carlos Soares Dutra's command, which joined the U.S. 4th Fleet and became known as its Task Force #46. The Brazilian Air Force (FAB) planes responsible for the safety of the naval traffic formed Task Force #49. The air naval operations were coordinated from Recife.

The responsibility of the Brazilian Naval Task Force was to protect the convoys running every 10 to 15 days on route from Trinidad to Rio de Janeiro and vice versa. There were a total of

140 convoys (30 to 40 vessels each one) with ships from 16 different nationalities. In addition, 216 small convoys (516 merchant ships) navigating along the Brazilian coast were also protected.

The numbers below also portray the magnitude of the operations in the South Atlantic:

Brazilian merchant ships sunk by German submarines	32
Dead or missing persons	975
Sunken tonnage	134.000
German submarines sunk in Brazilian waters	12



THE BRAZILIAN WOMEN AND THE WAR.



Since the early stages of the war, the Brazilian women had expressed their desire to serve the country. In 1942, the Brazilian Red Cross, a civilian organization, opened applications throughout the country for condensed courses in nursing (called "samaritans") as well as crash courses for first aid helpers.

For those approved in the courses the opportunity to get more actively involved arrived when the Brazilian Army started to prepare its Expeditionary Force for the fight in Italy. The Army request for volunteers to be trained as military nurses was answered by hundreds of ladies from all ranks of the Brazilian society and all corners of the country. Training at the Army hospitals as military nurses, they were prepared to endure the hardships of the wartime life.

On July 7, 1944, the first group of a total of 73 military nurses, all volunteers, were sent to Italy and waited there for the Brazilian troops to arrive.

As agreed within the Allied Command, Brazilian doctors and nurses assisting the Brazilian Expeditionary Force would work in American combat hospitals already installed on the front.

Working closely with the American nurses in American hospitals, the Brazilian nurses had to overcome the barrier of a different language. They had also to get rapidly familiarized with hospital procedures which most of the time were completely new to them. They were able nevertheless to overcome the difficulties. Their determination increasingly ensured a feeling of self-confidence and made them valiant nurses. During 11 months they worked in all kinds of hospitals caring for the soldiers wounded in combat. They worked in field hospitals that moved constantly following the frontline; in evacuation hospitals, and in station and general hospitals.

With the end of the war nurses and their patients returned in small groups to Brazil.

THE VICTORY.

28 à 38



The Victory Parade in London, 1945

World War II completely changed the world.

In Brazil, like in many other countries, the return of the soldiers who had defended the cause of democracy, gave to the entire nation at home a feeling of pride and self confidence. Neither the returning soldiers nor the people were again to be the same.

A profound change would take place internally in Brazil. Since 1937 the country had lived under an autocratic regime headed by President Getulio Vargas. Having fought for pluralism, democracy and freedom in Europe, Brazilians could now accept nothing less than full democracy for their own country.

Together with their victory, the officers and soldiers would also bring home the winds of democracy for which they had fought so bravely.

This prompted President Vargas to dissolve and dismiss the

Brazilian Expeditionary units right after the victory while they were still stationed in Italy.

But the people reacted immediately to this decision. Those men and women who had risked their lives for democracy during the war had won deep respect and the sincere gratitude of the nation. The same people who had asked the Government to declare war against the Axis in 1942 were now claiming for full democracy at home and forced general elections to be called at all levels in 1945, including to renew Congress and elect a new President.

Today, 50 years after these tormentous times, the Brazilian community of Houston, through this photographic exhibition pays a tribute to the veterans of all military services who helped with their sacrifice to make Brazil a truly democratic society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

29

Army Ministry, Brazil

- Fort Copacabana Historical Museum
- Office of Cultural Affairs
- Library of the Army
- Military Police Corps
- Memorial for the Missing in Action in World War II

Air Force Ministry, Brazil

- Air Space Museum

Navy Ministry, Brazil

- Historical Museum
- Documentation Office

Brazilian Consulate in Houston - USA

National Council of Brazilian Veterans, Rio de Janeiro - Brazil

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City of Houston World War II Commemoration Committee

Carlos Meira Mattos (Gen), Brazilian Veteran

Célia Resende

Eliane d'Avila (in honor of Col. Simon D'Avila)

Elisabeth d'Avila (idem)

Elza Cansanção Medeiros (Nurse-Major), Brazilian Veteran

Francisca True

Francisco Ruas Santos (Col), Brazilian Veteran

Fides Moreira de Souza

Hélio Leôncio Martins (Adm), Brazilian Veteran

Henry True

Luiza Webb

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THE EXPEDITIONARY SOLDIER'S SONG

Lyrics by GUILHERME DE ALMEIDA

Music by SPARTACE ROSSI

*Você sabe de onde eu venho?
Venho do morro, do engenho,
Das selvas, dos cafezais,
Da boa terra do côco,*

*Da choupana onde um é pouco,
Dois é bom, três é demais
Venho das praias sedosas,
Das montanhas alterosas,
Dos pampas, do seringal
Das margens crespas dos rios,
Dos verdes mares bravios
Da minha Terra Natal.*

REFRAIN

*Por mais terras que eu percorra
Não permita Deus que eu morra
Sem que eu volte para lá
Sem que leve por divisa
Esse V que simboliza
A Vitória que virá,
Nossa Vitória final
Que é a mira do meu fuzil
A ração do meu bernal
A água do meu cantil
As asas do meu ideal
A Glória do meu Brasil.*

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