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273

Who Was Getúlio? Theme and Variations in Brazilian Political Lore

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Who was Getúlio Vargas—father of the poor or supporter of the rich, nationalist hero or Machiavellian politician, populist or conservative, dedicated statesman or dissembling opportunist, revolutionary or a sort of Dom Pedro III? Was he in fact a chameleon who was all things to all men or a pragmatic leader who became the masterful arbiter of contending factions by awaiting the march of events and placing himself at their head in order to guide them?

For nearly fifty years Vargas has been the subject of controversy in Brazil, of conflicting interpretations offered by friends, enemies, relatives, political associates and opponents, journalists, scholars, people from all walks of life and from all social classes. More has been written about Vargas than about any other Brazilian political figure. Even in the popular *literatura de cordel* (market literature) it has been claimed that Vargas served as the theme for more *folhetos* (chapbooks) than anyone other than Padre Cicero. Vargas is still seen as the major bench

¹ Biographies and more particularized studies on Vargas have appeared since the early 1930s. The earliest book-length biography that I have located is José Pereira da Silva, *Getúlio Vargas* (Rio de Janeiro: Selma Editora, 1934). John W. F. Dulles includes an extensive list of works on Vargas published prior to the mid 1960s in his *Vargas of Brazil: A Political Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, (1967)), pp. 349-368. A more recent appraisal in English is Richard Bourne, *Getúlio Vargas of Brazil, 1883-1954: Sphinx of the Pampas* (London: Charles Knight, 1974).

² Origenes Lessa, *Getúlio Vargas na literatura de cordel* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Documentário, [1973]), p. 59.

mark in contemporary Brazilian political life, the measure by which other individuals, regimes, and tendencies are compared.

In all, a rich and varied body of lore-myths, legends, anecdotes, and attitudes-has developed around the figure of Getúlio. He presents a complex and often paradoxical image which has been created over time from both elite and popular sources. The problem that concerns us here is not one of distinguishing myth from reality; this continues to absorb many biographers of Vargas. Rather, the aim is to see how some general perceptions of Vargas varied within both the elite and the popular sectors of culture, irrespective of their historical accuracy, to see how there were elements of divergence and convergence between the Vargas image in elitelore and in folklore.

Perhaps Getúlio's widespread and lasting popularity, as well as a measure of his political success, can be better understood by examining the lore which helped to mold his image. In identifying the types of sources useful in studying political lore-elite and folk -several processes of image building also come into clearer focus. These processes interacted in such a way as to allow for a certain continuum of the Vargas image along with important variations which reflected differing perceptions. The processes comprise: self-created lore, governmentally created' lore, independent institutionally created lore, popular expression - written, and popular expression-oral.

The sources for the study of Getulian political lore, then, range from his own speeches and writings (many of which were undoubtedly ghostwritten), to biographical and other statements on Vargas issued by the government, to material on Vargas independently published (by both supporters and detractors) within the elite-dominated press and publishing world, to the popularly published folhetos of literatura de cordel, to orally circulated commentary on Vargas, which had to be observed and recorded. The problem of reliability of sources is great. Obviously his own statements and government propaganda were geared to creating a favorable image of Vargas. The extent to which he and his supporters were able to infuse the other processes of lore creation (i.e., the press, literatura de cordel, and even oral expression) with favorable elements of the Vargas image is still open to question. That at times the independent press and publishing world were subverted to his ends is most likely. He might well also have paid *trovadores* for folhetos or sent agents into the streets and cafes to circulate stories about him. The exact line between a genuine, externally created image and one created by and for him through manipulation is difficult to discern.

³ On the concept of elitelore, see James W. Wilkie, *Elitelore* (Los Angeles: Latin American Center, University of California, 1973), and James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, "Dimensions of Elitelore: An Oral History Questionnaire," *Journal of Latin American Lore*, 1 (Summer 1975), 79- 101.

WHO WAS GETÚLIO?

The images of Vargas developed by all processes of lore creation are basically two: the sacred and the profane. On the one hand, a sort of secular hagiography produced a saintly and idolized image of Getúlio in which he is above the people, to the point of becoming at times a messianic figure. On the other hand, more realistic appraisals as well as political lampoons created a humanized, irreverent image, in which he appears very Brazilian, exhibiting the virtues and faults which his fellow countrymen admired or criticized. The two images—"sacred" and "profane"—were expressed both in elitelore and in folklore where each served a different political purpose.

Sacred Image in Elitelore

The creation of a sacred image was given official sanction during the Vargas administration in the mid 1930s, as Brazil became the first Latin American country to undertake a modern, large-scale, systematic propaganda effort. A national propaganda agency was established in a series of steps which included the organization of the Departamento Oficial de Publicidade (DOP), the Departamento de Propaganda e Difusao Cultural in 1934, the Departamento Nacional de Propaganda (DNP) in 1937, and finally the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (DIP) in 1939. Especially in the years of the Estado Novo, 1937-1945, the agency exercised control over the media in Brazil and flooded the country with books, pamphlets, magazines, posters, and radio programs designed to bolster popular support through civic education for the regime and for its "Chefe Nacional," Getulio Vargas. Within this framework a deliberate attempt was made by intellectuals and publicists to spread the lore on which a cult of Vargas could be built.

The elitelore of the official image focused on Getúlio's nationalistic devoutness, on his personal and moral qualities, and on his accomplishments. He was presented as the national savior of Brazil, and his virtues and good works were exaggerated while his weaknesses and failures were overlooked. The desired image, however, was much less extreme than that being created for the more flamboyant fascist leaders of Europe or for the Brazilian Integralist, Plínio Salgado. The image was exalted but kept within bounds acceptable to a wide range of Brazilians. Parallels were drawn with Franklin Roosevelt and Dom Pedro II, not with Hitler and

⁴ The development and scope of Brazilian propaganda activities in the 1930s are described in Aristheu Achilles, *Aspectos da acao do DIP* ([Rio de Janeiro?]: DIP, 1941), pp. 54-78. Walter R. Sharp, "Methods of Opinion Control in Present-Day Brazil," *Public Opinion Quarterly*; 5 (March, 1941), 3-16; Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil under Vargas* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp. 253-284.

Mussolini. He was seen as the personification of a new stage of Brazilian order and progress, something which political turmoil and economic hardship had seriously threatened in the early '30s. His overall image successfully combined elements of national unity, effective leadership, paternalism, and national progress (see figures 1-4 for graphic examples of this image, geared to engender the Vargas cult among the Brazilian youth. Figure 5 casts the new national devotion among children in an idyllic light).

Vargas was portrayed as an exemplary individual who put love of country above everything and everyone. The nationalism which characterized the new Brazil was hailed as the most distinct aspect of his spirit. He was a great statesman and creator of new political values. For him, political power was not to further personal ambitions but to exercise national duty. For Getúlio there were neither friends nor enemies, winners nor losers, rich nor poor, states, regions, factions, classes, nor parties-only the people of Brazil. As a reformer and renovator of Brazilian nationality, no personal sacrifice was too great. He was the living expression, of national sentiment, thought, and aspiration and at the same time, the guardian of public order-administrative and political, material and moral.

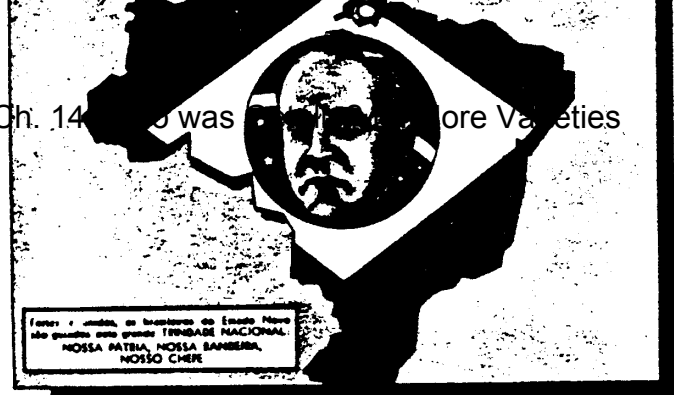
It was constantly stressed that he had all of the personal qualities necessary for political and moral leadership, and the crisis of the times stimulated the affirmation of his great personality. He was dynamic, strong, firm-willed, courageous, methodical, levelheaded, moderate, prudent, generous, objective, impersonal, realistic, magnanimous, patient, simple, good, unpretentious, calm, and tolerant. His political success sprang from rare intelligence, prodigious intuition, providential energy, and a subtlety of mind which was impervious to delusion. Above all, he was democratic, centrist, and nonextremist. As a model of morality, he was 'without fear, without dishonor, without prejudice, and without impulsiveness. He was a good family man and was kind to children, a paternal figure with a ready smile, even in the hardest of times."

⁵ These parallels were most effectively made by Azevedo Amaral, a leading intellectual supporter of Vargas and the Estado Novo, in *his Getúlio Vargas, estadista* (Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti. 1941). p. 41, and *O estado autoritario e a realidade nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio. 1938). pp. 193-204, 209-246.

⁶ Figures 1, 2, and 5: *O Brasil Novo: Getúlio Vargas e a sua vida para a criança brasileira* ([Rio de Janeiro: DIP. 1941]). pp. 100-101: cover. Figures 3 and 4: *Getúlio Vargas para criança* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Patria), p. 111: cover.

⁷ Oswaldo Aranha set the tone for a birthday celebration for Vargas with these sentiments, and they were later published in *Presidente Vargas, expressao do pensamento, do sentimento e das aspiracoes nacionais* ([Rio de Janeiro]: DNP. 1938). pp. 5-10. See also Azevedo Amaral. *Getúlio Vargas*. pp. 31. 34-35, 42-43, 146-147.

⁸ Azevedo Amaral. *Getúlio Vargas*. pp. 17, 37; Aranha, *Presidente Vargas*. pp 5-10; Gilberto Amado. *Perfil do Presidente Vargas* (Rio de Janeiro: DNP. 1937). pp. 6-11, 18, 20-21.



WHO WAS GETÚLIO?

More than a presence and thinker, Getúlio was a man of action. He got things done. His accomplishments were widely acclaimed, by himself and by others. Not only did he set a new political course for the country, but he directed a broad national reconstruction. He built railroads and bridges, encouraged industrial development and agricultural diversification, developed natural resources (steel and oil), built hospitals, introduced protective labor standards for women and children, imposed social justice for workers (eight-hour day, minimum wage, housing, workers' restaurants), expanded education, encouraged sports, and strengthened the armed forces. In short, he was hailed as practically everything from champion of the westward movement to the friend of aviation.

While the exaggerations of the official image on the elite side diminished with the end of the Estado Novo, the sacred image was perpetuated throughout and beyond the lifetime of Vargas. In fact, it took on an added tragic dimension with his suicide in 1954 while he was still in the president's office. In his widely publicized "testament" the final martyrdom of Getúlio was explained. The forces of evil (international groups in



Figure 1

⁹ Getúlio's many accomplishments were widely recorded and reported for all audiences over the air on the DIP-produced "Hora do Brasil" and in publications of all sorts from "the intellectual *Cultura Política* (Rio de Janeiro: DIP, March 1941 - August 1945) to the childrens' books cited in note 6.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

collaboration with national groups) had conspired to defeat Vargas and to attack the national interest and the Brazilian people. But his spirit was not conquered, and his memory would give the people the strength to carry on the struggle. He had given the people his life and now gave them his death. He offered his life as a holocaust and concluded, "Serenely I take my first step toward eternity and leave life to enter history."

Sacred Image in Folklore

From the early 1930s on, the sacred version of the Vargas image underwent a parallel development on the popular level. Also, as with the flood of DIP-inspired materials, the number of folhetos in the literatura de cordel which focused on the figure of Getúlio steadily increased following the coup d'etat of 1937 during the years of the Estado Novo. Unlike the official image makers, however, who lost ground when Vargas was ousted by the military in 1945, the popular trovadores were able to accelerate their output of folhetos on Getúlio. In this they were motivated both by a natural sentiment of admiration and a favorable consumer demand in the fairs and markets. They identified with "*queremismo*" and developed the Sebastianist theme that Vargas would return. On the whole, the folkloristic image was less intellectualized and more heroic than that created in elite circles, but there were many similarities. Greater emphasis was placed on his championing of the poor and underprivileged, and Getúlio's patriotism, morality, and good deeds were couched in a style and in symbols that were more acceptable to the rural masses.

As a patriotic hero, Vargas was portrayed as the people's president whose role was to save the country and to build a better future. For example:

Vem Getúlio! Vem getúlio	Come Getúlio! Come Getúlio
Nosso chefe de verdade	Our true leader
Nosso grande Presidente	Our great president
Com toda realidade	In all reality
Vem salvar o vosso povo	Come to save your people
Que sofre necessidade.	Who suffer poverty.
... Por ele e que o nosso povo	... For he is the one that our people
Ha cem anos esperava.	For a hundred years have been awaiting.
Ele ira para o Catete	He will go to Catete
sera nosso presidente	He will be our president
desta vez a nossa patria	This time our country
vai ter chefe competente	Will have a competent leader
Pois o povo pobre quer	Because the poor people wish it
alem disso Deus consente	And besides God gives His consent.

¹⁰ Dulles. *Vargas of Brazil*. pp. 334-335.

¹¹ Lessa. *Getúlio Vargas*. p. 71

... Ele e o anjo da guarda
Que defende com bravura
Nosso Brasil bem amado
Construindo com cuidado
A grande patria futura.

Ele voltara!
Volta Getúlio bendito
No Norte ao Sul do Brasil
Todos erguem este grito
Vem ser o nosso Presidente
Volta a ser para esta gente
O que foi Moises para o Egito.

He is the guardian angel
Who boldly defends
Our beloved Brazil Constructing with
care
The great country of the future.

He shall return!
The blessed Getúlio will return
From the north to the south of Brazil
All raise this cry
Come to be our president
Come back to be for this people
What Moses was for Egypt.

In these verses Vargas is treated much more in religious tones than in the elite version of his image and he is associated much more intimately with the desires of the masses. He is at once the national savior and father of the poor.

As for his personal and moral qualities, often these were described in much the same terms as they were by Getúlio's elite publicists. He was again the honest, hardworking, able administrator who was motivated by a sense of patriotism. He governed the country with the wisdom of Solomon and resolved all problems with a smile and a calmness of manner. He was a courageous man of action who had both vision and luck. More dramatically, he was the little giant, the force of steel, like David who was able to slay Goliath. He pacified Brazil, subdued the *beatos of the nordeste*, and led the country through World War II. At times no hyperbole seemed too extravagant to recount his virtues:

... um homem admirave!
inteligencia sublime,
sustentaculo inabalavel,
coracao nobre aparazivel,
vulto belo indescritivel,
alma santa e adoravel.

... admirable man,
Sublime intelligence,
Steadfast support.
Noble delightful heart.
Indescribably handsome appearance,
Saintly and adorable spirit.

Many of Getúlio's accomplishments praised in elitelore also appear in the popular folhetos. He stimulated agriculture, built roads and bridges, improved the railroads, established schools, and so on. Much more attention, however, was given to his role as "*o pai dos pobres*" and to various facets of his labor legislation. This emphasis grew steadily from the 1950s on. His image was both personal and progressive:

¹² Ibid., pp. 74, 62, 107, 111.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 48-50, 62, 69-70.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 48, 75-89.

Foi o unico presidente
Que protegeu a pobreza

He was the only president
Who protected the poor.

Foi o unico presidente
Que por nos trabalhou.

He was the only president
Who worked for us.

Getúlio foi quem tirou
Os pobres do atoleiro.

It was Getúlio who pulled
The poor out of the quagmire.

Olhando para a pobreza
Como um cidadao decente,
... [o operario]
e tratado como gente
e nunca como uma canalha

Looking at poverty
As a decent citizen
... [the worker]
Is treated as a person
And never as the scum of the earth.

Hoje o homem que trabalha
para servir seu patroa,
sabe que tem suas ferias
boa remuneracao
e chegada a invalidez
recebe sua pensao,
Mas antes de vir Getúlio

Today the man who works
To serve his boss.
Knows that he has his vacation
Good pay
And when disabled
He receives his pension.
But before the coming of Getúlio

recebia como ferias
ponta-pes e bofetao.

He used to get for vacation
Kicks and blows.

Even the dictatorship of the Estado Novo was seen as a benefit for the poor.

. . . implantou a ditadura
acabou com os coiteiros
tirou do rico a bravura
o pobre passou a ser
tratado com mais brandura.

He imposed the dictatorship.
Put an end to game keepers.
Curtailed the boldness of the rich
The poor came to be
Treated more gently.

That external forces led Getúlio to commit suicide was seen as a betrayal of the masses, and he was elevated to the position of a martyr. He died as he had lived, to save Brazil:

Quem matou Getúlio Vargas
Foram os gananciosos
Foram os politicos sem honra
Foram os vis ambiciosos
Foram os caluniadores
Traidores invejosos!

Who killed Getúlio?
It was the greedy
It was the politicians without honor
It was the ambitious
It was slanderous
Envious traitors!

Quem matou Getúlio Vargas
Nao foram os trabalhadores
Nao foram os pequenos. . . .

Who killed Genilio Vargas
It was not the workers
It was not the little people. . . .

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 79-84.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 94.

Jesus Cristo, pelo povo
 Padeceu morte e paixão,
 Getúlio foi outro Cristo.
 Varou o seu coração
 Com uma bala sublime
 Para salvar a Nação!
 Morreu, mas ressuscitou
 E subiu ao céu com glória.
 Assim há de ser Getúlio
 Que vai ficar na memória.
 Viva eternamente
 Alumbrando a nossa História.

Jesus Christ suffered death
 And martyrdom for the people.
 Getúlio was another Christ.
 He pierced his heart
 With a sublime bullet
 To save the nation!
 He died but was resurrected
 And went up to heaven in glory.
 So there will certainly be Getúlio
 Who will remain in memory.
 He will live forever
 Illuminating our history.

The Profane Image

The distinction between the folkloric and eliteloric development of Getúlio's profane image is less clear than in the case of the sacred image. Popular anecdotes often merged into more elite journalistic treatments, and the real origins of much of this lore creation are difficult to determine. Whatever the origin of specific lore elements, Getúlio's profane image was widespread and important politically. Moreover, this image was often presented in a humorous fashion-albeit at times a poisonous vein of humor-rather than in the exalted manner practiced by the DIP and the trovadores. The personality, appearance, and political habits of Vargas were well suited to both irony and satire, and he was the subject of a flood of political cartoons and jokes for more than twenty years.

This image of Getúlio was more believable and acceptable, both to Brazilians-particularly those who had the greatest political awareness-and to Vargas himself. In fact, he took a keen interest in how he was portrayed in anecdotes and on one occasion indicated that they provided him with a guide to show the sure road between the friendly smile and the softened venom expressed in Carioca humor. The total image which emerged was based on qualities admired by Brazilians or at least expected in their political leaders even by nonsupporters of Getúlio. Rather than having sublime intelligence or saintly virtues, he was seen as clever, pragmatic to the point of ruthlessness, susceptible to corruption, flexible, resilient, a master of *jeito*, and above all in control of the situation. He was a politician who could wield power effectively, even if at times cynically or immorally. This image bolstered both Brazil and Getúlio's own political career with a certain aura of stability and continuity which was able to transcend national crises or temporary political reverses.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 125, 129.

¹⁹ Queiroz Junior, 222 *anecdotes de Getúlio* (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Brasileira de Artes Gráficas, 1955). p. xxii; Getúlio Vargas. *A política trabalhista no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1950). p. 130.

Caricatures which appeared in many newspapers and magazines graphically illustrated these qualities. He was able to outwit his opponents, rise to any situation, and alter his political principles from authoritarian to democratic. For example, see figures 6-13.

Jokes and anecdotes also expressed similar themes and pointed to the same sort of personal qualities. His ability to outmaneuver associates and adversaries was a recurring topic. For example, he was discussing the matter of presidential succession with Flores da Cunha. Evaluating the possible successors, Vargas said that Oswaldo Aranha was too pro-American; José Americo, a great novelist but a poor politician; Eduardo Gomes, too pro-church; Góis Monteiro drank too much; and Ademar de Barros was too crooked. Flores then commented that it seemed to be a stalemate, and Getúlio replied that that was exactly what he wanted. In other jokes, he was seen as an opportunist who would readily change sides or jump on any bandwagon. For instance, as a boy he told his father that he wanted to be a soldier. When his father pointed out that he might be killed by an enemy, Getúlio replied that in that case he would rather be an enemy. In another story, two adversaries were discussing the formation of a united front against Vargas, and one of them warned the other to keep the plan secret. For, if Getúlio learned of the anti-Vargas front, he would surely join it. In yet another story, he was asked if he had confidence in his generals. Having said that he did, he was asked what he would do if his political battles were lost and the generals switched to the other side. Vargas replied that he too would switch to the other side.

With respect to democracy, his cynicism was duly noted. Once, just prior to the coup d'etat of 1937, Getúlio was seen trying to convince General Dutra to move toward an authoritarian system. On learning that Dutra was an admirer of Bernard Shaw, Getúlio quoted Shaw to the effect that democracy always preferred second-rate men. Later, during his constitutional presidency in the 1950s, he was described in a conversation with Lourival Fontes, who asked him how he might deal with the harsh, open criticism of Vargas appearing in opposition newspapers. At the same time Fontes reminded him that they were no longer in the Estado Novo and had the constitution to contend with. Getúlio answered that a constitution was like a virgin: it was made to be violated.

As for personal qualities, there were frequent allusions to his craftiness, as in the joke where a father gave his son the nickname of Getúlio because he thought he was *too* clever. It was also shown that he was not a

²⁰ Herman Lima. *Historia da caricatura no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympia. 1963), Vol. 1. pp. 343, 345, 347-350, 353.

²¹ Queiroz Junior, 222 *anecdotes*, pp. 25-26.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59, 61, 85.

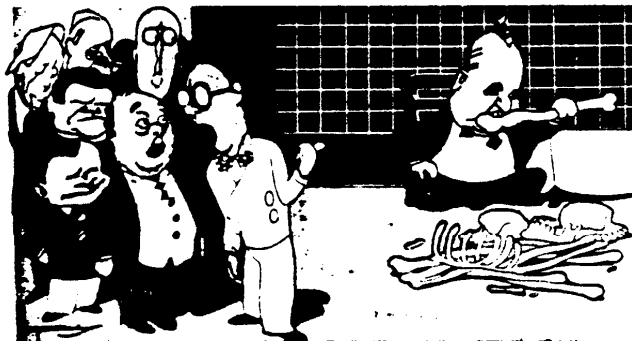
²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 105-106.

WHO WAS GETÚLIO?

285



Figure 6



ONIVORO

Lindolfo Collor—S. Ex.^a logo que termine a sua conferência com um correligionário, deseja avistar-se com a oposição para acordarem uma trégua.
J. Carlos. Currita (15-6-1935).
(A oposição é representada por Otávio Mangabeira, João Neves, Batista Luzardo, Adolfo Bergamini e Bernardes.)

Figure 7

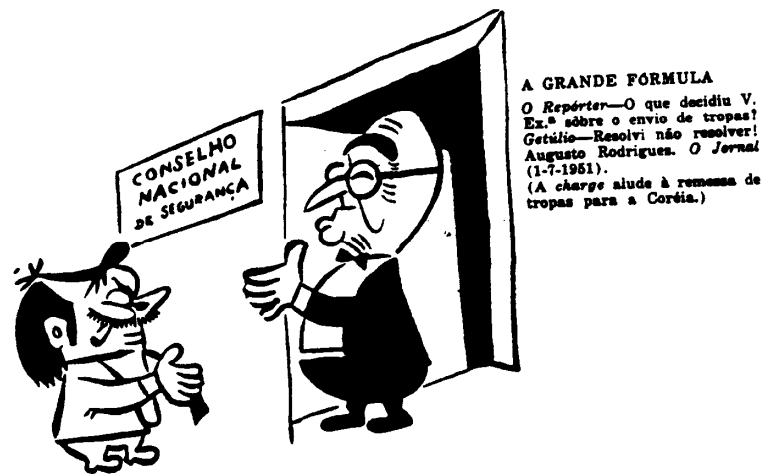


Figure 8



Figure 9

WHO WAS GETÚLIO?

287

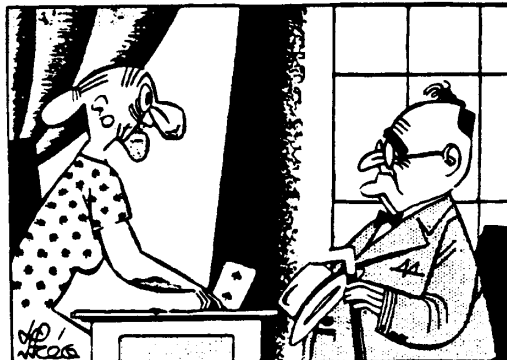


NA PORTA DO CATETE

Getúlio—Para que éres de arame farpado? Bastam as habituaes
casas de bananas...

J. Carlos. Coroa (30-1-1937).

Figure 10



A BOLA DO DIA

A Cartomante—As cartas
dizem que o futuro presi-
dente será um militar.

Getúlio—Um militar?!

A Cartomante—Sim, um mi-
litar cheio de corpo...

Getúlio—Será que eu fui
convocado?

Theo. O Globo (4-4-1945).

Figure 11



NOVO REGIME... NOVA ROUPA

— A nova roupa, Excelência.
— Um pouquinho apertada... Os movimentos... compreende...
NÁSSARA. *Suplemento de Bom Humor* (21-8 a 21-9-1934).
(A caricatura alude à situação de Getúlio, depois de eleito Presidente Constitucional.)

Figura 12



QUANDO AS CIPOLAS TÃO FAZ PERMULUM

$$\frac{1}{\epsilon_0} \nabla \cdot \mathbf{K} = \frac{1}{\epsilon_0} \nabla \cdot (\epsilon_0 \mathbf{E}) = \nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = \frac{\rho}{\epsilon_0} \quad \text{and} \quad \nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{A}}{\partial t} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{1}{\epsilon_0} \nabla \times \mathbf{K} \right)$$

Figura 13

man of his word. On one occasion, he was seen asking a young boy what his political loyalties were. The boy replied that he was a *brigadeirista* (a supporter of Brigadeiro Eduardo Gomes) because his father was. Getúlio said that that was not a good reason and asked the boy what he would be if his father never kept his promises. The boy quickly answered, a *getulista*. Other qualities, from corruption-either personal or on the part of his family-to his incomparable intuition, to his ever-present sense of humor and calmness, appeared in many anecdotes. Even near the end of his life, when asked in the midst of the military crisis if he shouldn't take action against the generals who opposed him, he remained calm and explained that his tactics were, as always, to leave things as they were to see how they would endure.

Conclusion

What was different about image building with respect to Getúlio? Why was the lore which built up around him more significant than in the case of other Latin American leaders? It was, in part, the intensity and longevity of the image-building process which continued on both elite and popular levels for more than twenty-five years. The images of Vargas - whether sacred or profane-were strongly developed and permeated all levels of society. In part, it was also the mechanisms for lore creation and image building-from the official propaganda campaign to the tradition of *literatura de cordel*-which existed in Brazil in a way they did not elsewhere. Ultimately, it was the impact that this body of lore may have had on Vargas himself.

It can be argued that Vargas became a captive of his own lore. Over the years, the profane image suited both his personal needs and Brazil's political needs in a realistic sense. This was the image of success by means of pragmatism capably exercised. Even with his ouster in 1945, this image was still viable for Vargas and for Brazilians. He was to shift positions and return to power in yet another type of government. The important ingredient, however, was a successful Vargas, not the change in the outward nature of the political regime. In the same years, the sacred image served Vargas politically and many Brazilians personally by offering in an ideal sense a personification of a nationalism which would save Brazil from chaos and make possible the progressive improvement of society.

In 1954, when Vargas was on the verge of political collapse after his resignation had been demanded by the military, and when there was almost no chance that he could ever maneuver his way into power again,

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 17, 19-20, 38-39, 48-49, 51, 64, 69, 75.

the profane image of Getúlio, preferred by himself and by many Brazilians, was no longer valid. In order to avoid retirement in total disgrace, Vargas turned to his sacred image. Believing that this image was still highly viable, Vargas chose suicide and martyrdom. It was far better to die in dignity than to live in ignominy. He seemed to feel that his sacred image would extend into history and assure him a favorable place in eternity.