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Immigration and Shifting Concepts of National Identity in Brazil during the Vargas Era*

Jeffrey Lesser

Seriam todos os imigrantes não-Africanos e não-Asiáticos brancos? Esta pergunta foi quase sempre respondida afirmativamente antes de 1930 pelas elites intelectuais e políticas no Brasil. Para elas, a construção da identidade nacional brasileira foi uma luta para negar uma verdadeira sociedade Afro-Brasileira que elas mesmas esperavam que desaparecesse com a miscigenação e com a proibição da entrada de imigrantes Africanos e Asiáticos. A situação mudou em torno de 1930. Africanos e Asiáticos continuaram a receber avaliação negativa, mas os poderes no Brasil perceberam que os imigrantes chegados desde 1870 não criaram a identidade nacional almejada. Embora não tenha havido imigrantes Africanos, a maioria dos Brasileiros no poder, seguindo as doutrinas do racismo científico europeu, julgou que muitos dos imigrantes que entraram no Brasil não eram exatamente brancos. A reavaliação dos componentes externos que pudessem modificar a identidade nacional pode ser vista através da análise da política migratória onde a idéia de "raça" foi modificada de modo a incluir o que os acadêmicos hoje chamariam de etnicidade, religião ou nacionalidade. A análise de quem foi considerado "não-preto" ou "não-branco" traz conclusões bem diferentes do que uma análise de quem é simplesmente "preto" ou "branco." Além disso, esta nova trajetória demanda uma nova linguagem de pesquisa, menos focalizada em características raciais associadas antes à cor. Pelo contrário, noções de cor devem ser vistas como códigos sociais para idéias sobre o que era aceitável e não-aceitável. Entre 1932 e 1938 um grupo de Católicos do Iraque, os Assírios, e um grupo de Católicos da Alemanha, os Católicos não-arianos, tentaram entrar no Brasil. Ambos teriam o direito legal de entrar no Brasil, já que não eram Africanos ou Asiáticos. Ambos eram católicos sob a proteção especial das autoridades papais. Ambos eram refugiados com o apoio de organizações internacionais poderosas. Apesar disso, os dois grupos foram impedidos de entrar no Brasil, uma indicação da limitação da categoria de "imigrante aceitável" nos anos de Vargas.

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INTRODUCTION

Are all non-African and non-Asian immigrants white? The question was almost always answered in the affirmative prior to 1930 by Brazil's intellectuals and policymakers.¹ As such, Brazil's elite classes saw the construction of national identity as a battle in which the real existence of Afro-Brazilian society would be counteracted by miscegenation and a ban on African entry that would eventually make that community disappear.² With the Revolution of 1930, however, everything changed. While negative judgements about those of African and Asian descent remained, Brazil's new rulers also began to

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wonder if national identity had not progressed to the stage they desired because of the entry of large numbers of immigrants over the past fifty years. While none were African or of African descent (or black, i.e., unacceptable in the language of the time), many in the Vargas regime, eager to mimic European authoritarian regimes and put into practice the scientific racist doctrines that formed the basis of their education, judged, to their horror, that many were not exactly acceptably white either.

The reevaluation and new concerns about the external social components that would modify Brazilian national identity can be seen most clearly through an analysis of immigration policy. It was in this realm that the Vargas government began to establish policies that modified the notion of race to include what scholars today would term ethnicity or religion. Almost immediately following the Vargas-led coup in 1930, a number of policies diminished the acceptable category. What was particularly interesting about this process was that the discourse that surrounded it frequently was posed in terms of ethnic/regional affiliations rather than strictly racial ones. Brazil's twentieth-century political leaders and intelligentsia used the word "European" not as a descriptive adjective related to region of birth, but as a racial synonym for "white." This meant that European groups (like Jews) or Caucasian phenotypes (like Arabs), were neither judged unacceptably "black" nor acceptably "white." Thus, a number of groups that had easily entered Brazil in large numbers prior to 1930 were targeted as dangerous to Brazilian society.

Such an assertion is certainly a challenge to the established paradigm of black/white race relations that assumes that all those judged as not black were considered white, and vice-versa. Analyzing who was considered "non-black" or "non-white," however, leads to very different conclusions than examining who is "white" or "black." Yet the examination of this question in the 1930s demands a new language less focused on the racial characteristics that previously had been synonymous with color. Readers should not expect, then, to find characterizations of Arabs and Jews using terms like "white" or "non-white." Rather, these notions of color should really be seen as social codes for ideas about acceptability and unacceptability that were frequently discussed after 1930 using terms like "non-European," "uncivilized race," or even simply "Arab" and "Jew."

Between 1932 and 1938 a group of Catholics from Iraq, the Assyrians, and a group of Catholics from Germany, the Catholic non-Aryans, attempted to enter Brazil.³ On the surface, both groups would appear to be ideal immigrants for Brazil. They were Catholics under the protection of papal authorities. They were not blacks and other Christians from their regions of origin, Europe and the Middle East, had entered Brazil in large numbers for decades. Both groups were refugees and had the support of powerful international organizations that promised to promote Brazil's humanitarian efforts internationally. Yet, in spite of the Brazilian guarantees of visas for the Middle Eastern Catholic Assyrians and European Catholic non-Aryans, internal political opposition eventually led to a reversal of that decision. In the end, both groups were denied entry to Brazil, showing how narrow the acceptable category had become.

The telling twist to the two stories, however, is that the Middle Eastern Catholic Assyrians and European Catholic non-Aryans were never actually allowed to enter Brazil. This happened because these groups tested the Vargas government's response to the three factions at odds in the immigration debate: landowners who demanded cheap labor, urban nativists agitating to shut Brazil's doors, and world powers such as the United States and Great Britain involved in trying to resettle refugees anywhere but on their own soil. It was the nativists who emerged victorious, in part because their

clever use of the media and the corridors of political power allowed them to command the descriptive discourse surrounding the Assyrians and Catholic non-Aryans and redefine them as undesirable Arabs and Jews.⁴ With their permission to enter retracted, the Assyrians and Catholic non-Aryans were left in tragic conditions.

The Middle Eastern Catholic Assyrians and European Catholic non-Aryans were only two of the non-African and non-Asian groups denied visas to immigrate to Brazil on the basis of "race." This suggests that studies of Vargas-era social policy must make explicit the operational connections between ethnic, regional, and racial labels in order to construct a new view of the racist nature of the Vargas regime. This can be seen most clearly in the rules surrounding the entry of foreigners which shifted from the inclusive (anyone could enter who was not specifically prohibited) to the exclusive (all potential immigrants were prohibited except those specifically allowed to enter). By the end of the 1930s, Vargas and his politicians had broadened the half century-old ban on the entry of certain non-white races to include secret and semi-public immigration orders that excluded at times Jews, Catholics, Hindus, Muslims, Europeans, U.S. citizens and those from the Middle East.⁵

Increasingly nativist segments of the urban working and middle class, especially in Rio de Janeiro but also to some extent in São Paulo, helped motivate the shift in national self-image that led to the modifications of immigration policy. Frightened by the Depression, they perceived immigrants primarily as competitors for education, jobs and social rank.⁶ Assimilation thus became a catchword that mixed a glorification of white European immigration with a notion of what the literary critic Roberto Schwarz calls "Nationalism by Elimination," that is, a tendency to define an authentic Brazilian culture by denying the viability of supposedly foreign elements.⁷ By designating acceptable immigrants as those who would not modify the ethnic and racial balance in Brazil's cities, the middle class could speak the language of economic development without favoring a radical change in Brazilian society.

Nationalism and xenophobia became powerful political tools for the various Vargas governments because popular nativist sentiment dovetailed neatly with the increasing influence of European scientific racist thought among a small but extraordinarily powerful group of intellectuals and politicians concentrated at the upper end of Brazil's decision-making machinery. Almost all were from urban areas and most had been educated in one of Brazil's law schools where social Darwinism formed the backbone of the analysis of Brazilian cultural and economic development. Imbued with the spirit of scientific racists like Le Bon, Gobineau and Chamberlain, these Vargas appointees, who included the Foreign Minister, Justice Minister and Federal Chief of Police, saw immigration policy as an important tool for manipulating both domestic and international opinion.⁸ With a shared background and social outlook, the men employed by Brazil's Foreign Ministry (known as *Itamaraty*), from ambassadors and consul-generals who would later rise to posts like Foreign Minister, to attachés and vice-consuls who had the right to grant or deny visas, also actively fought to limit immigration. Many of the federal appointees had links to nativist groups like the Integralists or Friends of Alberto Torres, which in turn had strong ties to the middle-class and elite press. Prejudice was simultaneously encouraged and reinforced by urban politicians, especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, who represented urban working and middle class constituencies.

The new ways of thinking about Brazil's future put pressure on politicians to create policies that would make "correct" decisions about "acceptable" immigrants. Since

the press and urban middle and working classes presumed foreigners were undesirable, political decisions allowing any immigrant group to enter forced the federal regime to justify the social and economic benefits this group would bring. Thus, as different positions emerged among powerful federal decision-makers, many immigrant groups appeared initially welcome and then, as negatives were accentuated for both ideological and political reasons, undesirable. Furthermore, as Europe and countries within the Americas became increasingly interdependent in both economic and political spheres in the inter-war years, immigration became as much an international issue as a domestic one.⁹ Given this, discussions over immigration took place not only within the Vargas government, but also between Getúlio Vargas and everyone from the head of the League of Nations to the Pope.

THE MIDDLE EASTERN CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN QUESTION

The first test of the ideology behind Brazil's post-1930 immigration policy came in late 1932 when the League of Nations, in conjunction with the Nansen International Office for Refugees, decided to expend considerable energy in helping 20,000 Assyrian refugees leave Iraq. The Assyrians were a Catholic minority group whose long-time alliance with the British had placed them in a precarious position when a Muslim-dominated regime took power in the newly independent country.¹⁰ In October, 1932, Paran  Plantations, Limited, a British colonization company, proposed to create "a scheme which opens up adequate possibilities for [settling] the whole of the Assyrian population" on an enormous plot of land in Paran .¹¹ In spite of earlier refusals by the Brazilian Government to help refugees, the League of Nations formally asked Brazil to help in the resettlement plans.¹²

The Brazilian government identified a number of advantages in accepting the Assyrian refugees. On the economic side, the group's settlement in Paran  would help populate a relatively deserted area where rail lines were in the process of being laid.¹³ The Assyrians also seemed to fit socially with the regime's desire to return to a more traditional Catholic society in educational and family matters.¹⁴ As Raul do Rio Branco, of Brazil's Delegation in Geneva, emphasized, they "are all Catholics...headed by a patriarch recognized by the Holy See."¹⁵ The diplomat emphasized that the Assyrians were a "Christian population" who had become refugees because of "a Muslim fanatic." Arthur Thomas, representative of both Paran  Plantations and the S o Paulo-Paran  Railroad Company, went even farther, pointing out in a petition to the Ministry of Labor that the Assyrians were "an Aryan race, without any Semitic or Arabic characteristics...their religion is Christianity [and] they are agricultural and pastoral."¹⁶ The acceptance of the Assyrians also had a public relations component since the League of Nations was strongly in favor of the plan and was willing to publicize Brazil's humanitarian efforts to the world community.

On January 3, 1934, the Ministry of Labor's Oswaldo de Costa Miranda telephoned the Brazilian Embassy in London asking them to inform the League of Nations that the Assyrians would be permitted to enter Brazil under the following conditions; 1) Brazil would have no financial responsibility, 2) they would all be farmers, 3) the Assyrians would come in groups of 500 families and each group had to be settled prior to the arrival of the next, and 4) that the League of Nations and Paran  Plantations would assume all responsibility for repatriation if the colony was not a success.¹⁷

Notably absent was any reference to religion, ethnicity, or race as the Assyrians, in official parlance, were transformed from refugees, which carried with it the stain of undesirability, to acceptable “immigrants.”¹⁸ As Minister of Labor Joaquim Salgado Filho pointed out in response to criticism of the plan in Porto Alegre’s *Correio do Povo*, “this immigration can only bring benefits.”¹⁹

The conditions set out by the Brazilian Government were easy to meet. Paraná Plantations saw easy money in the plan since an Iraqi official had publicly stated that “his Government is ready to make as generous a contribution as possible with a view to facilitating the emigration of the Assyrians.”²⁰ Concerns about whether the Iraqis could really afford the £32/person costs were dismissed by the British who also offered to help pay for the scheme.²¹ Most of the Assyrians were farmers and the few who were not could easily be retrained. Thus, on January 9, 1934, the League of Nations official in charge of finding a new home for the Assyrians reported that Brazil had “intimated” it was prepared to admit the refugees in groups of 500 to the extent that Paraná Plantations, Ltd, would provide for their settlement.²²

Within a week the plan was public and numerous British newspapers reported on the League of Nations thanks “to the Brazilian Government for its practical sympathy.”²³ The following month the League’s *Official Journal* went even farther, expressing its “profound gratitude to the Brazilian Government for its generous offer to throw open its territory,” noting that the Brazilian Government had formally agreed to the plan.²⁴ The League of Nations was so confident that a special committee, with a 20,000 Swiss franc (£800) budget, was sent to Brazil to examine the lands promised for resettlement.

The initial findings by the League of Nations Committee, which consisted of John Gilbert Browne, a British general who had worked with the Assyrians in Iraq, Charles Redard, a Counselor of the Swiss Legation in Rio and T. F. Johnson, Secretary General of the Nansen Office for Refugees, were positive. Upon arrival in Rio, the Committee found that the Spanish Ambassador had set up meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Cavalcanti de Lacerda, and a director of the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce. League officials were assured that the Assyrians could set up their own schools as long as Portuguese was taught and that Assyrians Catholicism would be permitted given the religious freedom mandated in Brazil.²⁵ A week later, A. H. M. Thomas, the local director of Paraná Plantations, escorted the three League officials to the proposed settlement site, about 66 kilometers from Londrina, Paraná. Nearby were colonies of Austrian, Czechoslovak, German, Italian, Japanese and Polish immigrants, all of whom were interviewed and expressed the general opinion that immigrants could become self-sufficient within 8 months of settlement.²⁶ The land, most of which was virgin forest, was judged favorably as was another tract that Paraná Plantations owned in Jangada, São Paulo.²⁷

When the positive assessment of the League of Nations, and the agreement of the Brazilian government to take the group, became public knowledge in Brazil, an uproar began. The Vargas regime, which judged the Assyrian scheme of little importance, suddenly became the target of criticism by the press and nativist groups who claimed that the Assyrians could not properly assimilate into Brazilian culture and that any humanitarian efforts should go to Brazilians suffering in the drought-stricken São Francisco river valley. Virtually every news report attempted to inflame passions through the use of provocative language that dehumanized the Assyrians in order to make them appear a danger to Brazilian society. Typical headlines were “A grave danger to

remove: You only have peace with an Assyrian after he dies;⁷²⁸ and “An Undesirable Immigration.”⁷²⁹ The *Jornal do Brasil* appealed to the urban working class hit hard by the depression and angry that immigrant peddling represented the only product distribution system in Brazil by suggesting that the Assyrians would not assimilate and were “future peddlers.”⁷³⁰ Careful readers of *A Nação* were probably confused about why an extremely positive and informative article about the Assyrians was given the headline “An Attempt to Exploit the Humanitarian Sentiments of the Brazilian People.”⁷³¹

Even those articles which did not have inflammatory headlines were filled with the racist rhetoric. The press widely reported that Paulo Vageler, the German head of the Ministry of Agriculture’s Institute of Chemistry, had questioned whether the Assyrians were the same group as “the Assyrians of Ancient History” and quoted his claims that Brazil would find them “racial(ly) inconvenien(t).”⁷³² São Paulo’s *Platêa* dismissed the refugees as part of an “irritating question” and the *Diário Carioca* concluded that Brazil’s immigration policy was “immoral.”⁷³³ The *Diário de Notícias* concurred, judging the plan to settle Assyrians in Brazil as “absurd...incoherent...and reveal[ing] the basic official ignorance of the true economic, racial and moral imperatives needed for a homogeneous Brazil.”⁷³⁴

The public outrage represented primarily an expression of bigotry. Even so, it also contained grains of the growing nationalism that Vargas hoped to promote. The League of Nations was attacked in almost all press reports on the Middle Eastern Catholic Assyrians. The British interest in the matter was also highlighted in comments sure to enrage nationalists: “If the English are so interested in finding a refuge for the Assyrians, they could be placed in the millions of square kilometers that make up the [British] Empire.”⁷³⁵ To make matters worse, the 26-year old Assyrian Patriarch, Mar Shimoun, had demanded that the Assyrians be given special “national minority rights” status in Brazil, suggesting that the community would function like a country within a country.⁷³⁶ Yet the perhaps reasonable concerns about whether any immigrant group should have special minority status in Brazil were not nearly as frequently heard as were claims, regularly expressed in the press and Parliament, that the Assyrians were “semi-barbarians who will only disturb order and cause the Brazilian race to degenerate.”⁷³⁷ British officials reinforced the flagrant accusations by commenting that the Assyrians were “a very difficult people with a genius for irritating even sympathetic persons having to deal with them.”⁷³⁸ A number of Arabic-language newspapers in Brazil seemed to confirm the charges, attacking the Assyrians with reports “of a rather lurid description.”⁷³⁹ Even the official label in the Foreign Ministry bureaucracy changed from the positive “Assyrian immigrants” to the much less desirable “Immigration of Refugees from Iraq” or “Assyrian Refugees from Iraq.”⁷⁴⁰ The wording is critical since proponents of the plan had gone to great pains to distinguish between Iraqis (“fanatic Muslims”) and Assyrians (“a Christian people”). Yet, as soon as the plan became public, the Assyrians became Iraqis.

The most ardent attacks on the Assyrian settlement plan came from the powerful nativist Society of the Friends of Alberto Torres, whose membership was filled with intellectuals, diplomats and politicians, including Integralist leader Plínio Salgado, Agriculture Minister Juarez Távora, and Nicolau José Debané, a former diplomat.⁷⁴¹ The Friends was more than a simple nativist society; its members were closely tied to the press and former Foreign Minister Felix Pacheco, owner and editor-in-chief of Rio de Janeiro’s widely read and influential *Jornal do Commercio*, offered them free space in his newspaper to emit “attacks on the Japanese, the League of Nations, or any other

non-nationalistic element which at the time may figure in the news.⁴² This access to the media, which often reprinted entire lectures attacking the Assyrians on a full page, made the Friends extremely powerful.⁴³ When the group launched an attack on the Ministry of Foreign Relations for approving the Assyrian plan, the Itamaraty was forced to circulate a press release claiming it had been “a mere intermediary between the League of Nations, foreign governments and the Ministry of Labor.”⁴⁴

The existence of nativist groups that played on the emotions of economically hard hit city dwellers, and the willingness of the Vargas regime to try to harness those emotions for its own end, led both the elite and middle class press, especially in Rio de Janeiro, to give prominent coverage to the question of Assyrian entry. Ten different Rio newspapers ran more than one negative story on the issue in the first quarter of 1934, as did newspapers in São Paulo, Santos, Florianópolis, Joinville, Salvador and Porto Alegre. A survey of newspapers from January to April, 1934 shows that the story was constantly in the news with the *Correio da Manhã*, the *Jornal do Brasil*, and the *Diário Carioca* running at least two stories a week about the situation. The *Correio da Manhã* and *Diário Carioca*, the two papers most ardently opposed to Assyrian entry, frequently ran more than one negative article about the Assyrians in the same day.⁴⁵

One of the reasons that the press was so interested in the Assyrian Question was that it could play on nationalist and nativist sentiments at the same time. From the nationalist perspective, the resettlement plan reflected an attempt by England, via the League of Nations and Paran  Plantations, to force Brazil to take a refugee group that the English themselves would not admit. The nationalist argument, however, was always tinged with racist images. The columnist Belmonte, for example, seemed to oppose the plan on nationalist grounds when he wrote “If England has the right to raffle off its inconvenient occupants, we also have the right not to settle them here, giving them a home, food, clean clothes, drinking water and electric trolleys.”⁴⁶ Yet Belmonte was willing to play the racist card as well, conjuring up an image of the Assyrians as a warlike horde by saying in the same article “Until now...Brazil still belongs to Brazilians and (only) we can say if this *invasion* is convenient or not.”⁴⁷

The violent press reaction was magnified as the Assyrian question became an integral part of political debates over the writing of a new constitution for Brazil. Here too the nationalist argument melded easily with the nativist one. Comments on immigration and assimilation were prominent as virtually every politician involved agreed that immigration restriction needed to have the force of constitutional law and that the past use of federal and state decrees no longer sufficed. The catalyst for the debate over immigration was the split between *Paulista* landowners, who for over a decade had supported the entry of Japanese labor which they deemed superior, and urban politicians who argued that immigrants were a cause of Brazil’s post-1930 economic problems. The position of the Federal Government in the debate was complicated by its concern that offending the Japanese Government might lead to prohibition on emigration to Brazil or, more ominously, might create disturbances among the large Japanese population resident in Brazil.⁴⁸ The nativism and growing xenophobia eventually led the delegates to create a constitutional quota on immigration that was fixed at two per cent of the number from each nation who had arrived in the previous 50 years.⁴⁹ The new constitution also gave the federal government total authority over immigration and suggested “the possibility of prohibition, total, or in relation to origin” of immigrants in order “to guarantee the ethnic integration and physical and civic capacity of the immigrant.”⁵⁰

The difficult resolution of the disparate positions on Japanese immigration made the Assyrians, who had the misfortune of finding themselves refugees exactly as Brazilian nativism came to the fore, the unfortunate victims of nativism directed against the Japanese. In other words a prohibition on Japanese entry, while satisfying to some influential members of the Brazilian political elite, would certainly anger others. Barring the Assyrians, however, had no such price. Politicians representing the anti-immigrant urban classes could point to refusal to settle the Assyrians as evidence of their nativism. São Paulo landowners, eager to create nationalist credentials that would ingratiate them into the new regime, could be anti-immigrant in opposing the Assyrians without having to agree to ending the influx of Japanese farm workers. From the federal perspective, prohibiting the Assyrians had few international ramifications since no League of Nations member was willing to settle the group and the Assyrians, without a state of their own, had no political power. As a deputy from São Paulo noted in trying to differentiate widely accepted anti-Muslim prejudice from the hotly debated anti-Asian sentiment, nativist politicians should not let their “anti-Nipponic prejudices make the Japanese the ‘cabeça de turco’ (scapegoat, but literally “Turk’s head”) for the extremely justified opposition to Iraq.”⁵¹

Not surprisingly, the immigration debates in the Constituent Assembly frequently began with discussion of the Japanese but ended with angry commentary on the Assyrians.⁵² The leaders of the anti-Japanese movement in the Assembly, Antônio Xavier de Oliveira, Miguel Couto and Artur Neiva, were also the most ardent Assyriophobes. All three used a mixture of racism and nationalism to achieve their ends. The racist argument was that the entry of any “non-white” immigrant groups, like the Assyrians, would disrupt Brazil’s social progress and both Neiva and Xavier de Oliveira unsuccessfully tried to ban all non-white immigrants constitutionally.⁵³ Xavier de Oliveira insisted that entry had to be limited “to those elements judged preferable, the civilized whites of Central and Northern Europe” and thus rejected the Assyrians in terms of both race (they were not white) and geography (not from Central or Northern Europe).⁵⁴ Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, a delegate who was later appointed War Minister by Vargas concurred, asserting that “it is an error to presume that immigration brings civilization.” According to Góes “disparate and non-assimilable races” of which the Assyrians were one, should be excluded.⁵⁵ The nationalist position neatly fit with the racist one. In this formulation, the entry of the Assyrians was part of an imperialist British policy that correlated to Japan’s seeming use of emigration to further its expansionist goals.⁵⁶

The news that the regime had approved the settlement caused an uproar in the Constitutional Assembly as delegates demanded a formal investigation of this “noxious people in our midst.”⁵⁷ The political pressure and the regular anti-Assyrian press reports, both of which were tinged with a significant dose of anti-Vargas sentiment, forced Getúlio Vargas to rethink the issue. He publicly declared that he had never authorized the entry of the Assyrians and, apparently following the Assembly’s demand, appointed a special commission to examine the question.⁵⁸ The commission was headed by the conservative legal counselor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Francisco José Oliveira Vianna, a historian and professor at the Law Faculty in Rio de Janeiro, whose scientific racist-influenced work was frequently quoted by politicians opposed to the entry of non-white immigrants.

Vianna classified Middle-Easterners as non-whites, important in a nation where “whitening” was the code word nationalists traditionally attached to policies intended

to remake Brazil in Europe's image.⁵⁹ Vianna openly mimicked European racists like Gobineau and Le Bon by applauding the "new Aryan centers" of Southern Brazil, and the settlement of Assyrians in Paraná would clearly not favor his racist goals.⁶⁰ The committee also included Dulphe Pinheiro Machado and Renato Kehl, two fervent nativists and racists. Machado, Director General of the National Population Department (DNP), the agency in charge of colonization, often complained of "parasitical elements that constitute ethnic minorities and that upset the tranquility of the nations where they live."⁶¹ Kehl was founder of the *Boletim de Eugenia* (Bulletin of Eugenics) and the Central Brazilian Commission of Eugenics which he modeled on the German Society for Race Hygiene.⁶² Kehl was closely linked to politicians opposing Assyrian entry and he and Deputy Xavier de Oliveira had proposed during the First Brazilian Eugenics Congress, held in 1929, that Brazil should restrict the entry of non-Europeans, a motion that was only narrowly defeated.

The special commission's investigation was structurally skewed to guarantee a negative evaluation of the Assyrian plan. Vianna, for example, asked the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Brazilian Consulates in Wisconsin and Illinois to report on Assyrians in the United States.⁶³ Although the response was positive, noting that Assyrians were "considered peaceful and hard-workers," the Vianna Commission expressed "the same objections as existed against the entrance of Asians," and the League of Nations' General Browne was unable "to disabuse that commission of a number of inaccurate ideas prevalent in Brazil concerning the Assyrians."⁶⁴ A report condemning both Assyrian and Asian immigration by Raul de Paula, Secretary-General of the Society of the Friends of Alberto Torres, was also introduced as evidence.⁶⁵ This same report, which included strong anti-Assyrian statements from Agriculture Minister Távora, Navy Minister Protógenes Guimarães, and the newly appointed War Minister Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro had previously been presented personally to President Vargas.⁶⁶ De Paula's report also took on a life of its own since it could now be cited as part of a federal investigation. Acting Foreign Minister Cavalcanti de Lacerda referred to it in an official document to Brazil's Special Envoy in Bern opposing the entry of the Assyrians.⁶⁷ When José Carlos de Macedo Soares was later appointed Foreign Minister, the same envoy then referred to the "Friends" report in order to inform the new man of the situation.⁶⁸

By May the Assyrians had been transformed from peaceful Catholic farmers into a warlike group that would bring social and economic dangers to Brazil. A report in the *Correio da Manhã* suggested that "the Christianity of this group...is a pretext for rebellion and disorder" and that "they live in perpetual religious discussion."⁶⁹ João Carlos Muniz, a diplomat in Brazil's Geneva Embassy who later, as head of the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização encouraged a secret prohibition on the entry of Jews fleeing Nazism, cast virtually every attribute of the Assyrians into doubt. He argued that the group was not really Catholic and descended from one "that flourished in the last millennium before Christ."⁷⁰ Even while admitting that groups such as the Kurds were "of an opposite race and religion", Muniz tried hard to link the group to Iraqi Muslims, by referring to them as "the Assyrians of Iraq" and to Muslims as their "brothers." For Muniz, religion was only part of the problem since the Assyrians were "naturally independent and not inclined to discipline." They were "difficult to govern, truculent and extremely unreliable." Furthermore, in a classic case of blaming the victim, Muniz argued that "the long period in which they have been refugees will have certainly reinforced their defects."

The League of Nations continued to insist that the Assyrians would go to Brazil in spite of Vargas' repeated public comments that he had never authorized such action.⁷¹ Even so, Vargas went out of his way to turn the Assyrian question to his own advantage. Meeting with the leaders of the Society of the Friends of Alberto Torres, Vargas claimed he had initially been misinformed "by Geneva" that the Assyrians were "a group of only 3,000 farmers" but, in pursuing the matter later learned that they were "a great mass."⁷² Such comments show Vargas at his manipulative best, appealing to nationalists by subtly attacking the League of Nations and England, appealing to nativists by referring to the Assyrian "masses," seemingly supporting a 3,000 person/nation limit on immigration popular in the Constitutional Assembly and by soothing large landowners and nativist urban dwellers simultaneously by seeming to favor only rural immigration. Vargas's well-publicized denials had the intended effect. In April of 1934, the League of Nations abandoned the scheme, suggesting that general Brazilian immigration policies not specific to the Assyrians were the cause.⁷³ Brazil's press rejoiced, hailing the decision as one which left "all of America free of the Iraqi nomads."⁷⁴ Yet the Assyrians were not the only Catholic immigrant group that would be initially accepted for entry and then banned as Brazilian nativists called their religious, racial and ethnic qualities into question. Indeed, in 1939 a group of Catholics whose sponsor was no less than Pope Pius XII would be judged unacceptable by Brazilian federal policy-makers even though Getúlio Vargas had promised to set aside 3,000 special visas for their entry.

THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC NON-ARYAN QUESTION

The victims of this episode of bigotry were German Catholic non-Aryan refugees.⁷⁵ Most had converted as adults, as children at the behest of their parents, or had been baptized at birth by converted parents. The Vatican deemed the Catholic non-Aryans full members of the Church and spent much energy trying to send them to Catholic countries around the globe.⁷⁶ Catholic non-Aryans were in a particularly difficult position because Jewish refugee organizations judged most who had converted to Catholicism apostates and ineligible for relief. Yet in spite of the religious affiliation of the Catholic non-Aryans, the Nazis, the Brazilian government, and numerous others, considered them Jews. Like the Nazis, the Brazilian government denied the efficacy of baptism, even a papal one. The Catholic non-Aryan refugees were, in the face of Brazilian nativism, unable to cleanse themselves of the undesirable Jewish taint.

The idea of giving special visas to German Catholic non-Aryan refugees in transit and internment camps throughout Europe came from the Archbishop of Munich, Michael Cardinal Faulhaber. Faulhaber was a German World War One hero who wore the Iron Cross First Class and had some influence in Nazi decision-making circles. He recognized the tenuous position of Catholics considered Jews by the Nazis and was concerned about the unwillingness of the United States and others to open their quotas for refugees.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in the aftermath of the *Kristallnacht* and the Nazi formation of the *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration), both Jews and Catholic non-Aryans faced growing pressure to emigrate as the chances of deportation to the concentration camps increased.⁷⁸

The problem, in the face of growing restrictions on refugee admission, was finding locations for Catholic non-Aryan refugees. Faulhaber saw Brazil as a realistic option

because of its large Catholic population and believed that Brazilian politicians might be convinced, as the Vatican was, that Catholic non-Aryans were Catholics and not Jews. With this in mind, Cardinal Faulhaber had Dom Odon, the Duke of Wurttemberg, approach Hélio Lobo, Brazil's representative at the International Labor Organization in Geneva.⁷⁹ During discussions held between late October, 1938 and January, 1939, Odon presented lists containing some one thousand Catholic non-Aryan refugees needing visas. In late January, 1939, Lobo sent the lists to Foreign Minister Oswaldo Aranha along with a letter of support suggesting that Catholic relief groups in Europe should handle the selection of visa recipients.⁸⁰ Aranha appears never to have followed through on Lobo's suggestions, and in March Cardinal Faulhaber sent the head of the Munich *Raphaelsverein*, a German charitable organization set up by the Vatican in order to find places of refuge for persecuted German Catholic non-Aryans, to approach Lobo again.

Believing that Lobo had the influence to garner the visas, Cardinal Faulhaber began investigating Brazilian immigration policy and politics, detailing an approach to Getúlio Vargas in a letter to Pope Pius XII. The plan would only work, wrote the Cardinal, if it was personally approved by Vargas and was so specific that it could not get lost in the bureaucracy. Faulhaber therefore suggested that the 3,000 special visas be given only to Catholic non-Aryans from Germany, Austria or the Sudetenland (including those who had already fled to Holland or Switzerland and were stuck in transit camps) by either Helio Lobo personally or the Brazilian Consul in Hamburg. Faulhaber had a number of other ideas that he believed might make Vargas amenable to accepting Catholic non-Aryans. He emphasized that the *Raphaelsverein* would investigate all the applications carefully and that visas would only be given out to "the most deserving people [from] well organized lists [from which] the less desperate cases could be separated."⁸¹ Faulhaber, knowing of the stated Brazilian preference for agricultural workers, emphasized that all Catholic non-Aryans given special visas to Brazil would be willing to work on the land. Finally, if Vargas was afraid that Germans might form a "Fifth Column" in Brazil, the Catholic non-Aryan refugees were promised to "show themselves thankful to the country which has taken them in through quiet work and loyalty."⁸²

The early contacts between Luigi Cardinal Maglione, the pro-German Vatican Secretary of State, and Archbishop Aloisi Masella, the Papal Nuncio to Brazil, were intended to create a way to convince Vargas to approve the plan.⁸³ The Vatican representative was primarily concerned with demonstrating the Catholic nature of the Catholic non-Aryans just as those who had supported Assyrian entry had always been careful to label them Christians, not Arabs. Maglione never mentioned the term "Jew" and the Catholic non-Aryans were always presented as Catholic first, German second, and non-Aryans only by accident. Masella was instructed by his superiors to make clear that Catholic non-Aryans "because of their nature and situation should not cause the same fears that the Mosaic Jews do."⁸⁴ As had been the case with the Assyrians, the "Christian" nature of the refugees was emphasized by pointing out that they were being aided by a German Catholic relief organization and were persecuted refugees needing humanitarian aid from large Catholic countries like Brazil.⁸⁵

Catholic relief groups in Europe also pressured Itamaraty for action. "For the love of Christ help us," begged Holland's Catholic Committee for Victims of Religious Persecution, which had 1,000 Catholic non-Aryans waiting for visas in a transit camp.⁸⁶ Nuncio Marsella's assurance that there would be "favorable repercussions" if the visas

were ceded interested Vargas.⁸⁷ Within weeks of receiving the formal request, Vargas ordered João Carlos Muniz and the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização (CIC) to investigate the possibilities for granting the visas.⁸⁸

When the request left Vargas' office, a monumental shift in discourse took place as the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, run by the same João Carlos Muniz who had attacked the Assyrians for not really being Christian, took over. Suddenly, in spite of the Vatican's attempts to suggest otherwise, the Catholic non-Aryans became Jews. When the Vatican controlled the correspondence, the Catholic non-Aryans were simply Catholic refugees. Yet in the hands of the CIC, the "Jewish" nature of the refugees was emphasized as a resolution passed by members of the CIC transformed the group from acceptable "Germans" or "Christians," to unacceptable "Semites," "Israelites" and "Jews."⁸⁹ To the CIC, the group was incorrectly labeled "Catholic." The racial theory of religion had now become an instrument of policy: the refugees had become "*Catholic immigrants, but of Semitic origin*" and official correspondence on the visa plan was filed under "Jewish Immigration."⁹⁰ Thus, while other religious groups were categorized by their nationality, Jews, like the Assyrians, were detached from national immigration categories into ethnically specific ones.⁹¹

In spite of the CIC's opposition, Vargas ordered the visa grants. There are a number of reasons why he may have done this. Personal requests from Pope Pius XII, himself being pressured heavily by the *Raphaelsverein*, were hard for Vargas to ignore and the president continued to encourage the Vatican throughout 1939 and 1940.⁹² Furthermore, agreeing to grant visas to refugees would bring a great deal of good publicity to Brazil and strengthen ties to the U.S. and the Vatican. Yet the formal agreement to take the refugees should not imply that Vargas and those in the CIC actually were willing to admit them. In fact, the members of the CIC made it clear that they would do everything possible to insure that 3,000 refugees who they considered Jewish would not be admitted.

Cardinal Maglione was informed that Vargas had agreed to the plan on June 20 and three days later the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização formally approved the concession of the 3,000 visas.⁹³ It had not been an easy decision to make. Complicated internal negotiations had taken place between Vargas and Aranha, who favored the project, and João Carlos Muniz, whose opposition mirrored his rejection of the Assyrians five years earlier. Muniz, again suggesting that the very condition of being a refugee made people socially unacceptable for Brazil, complained that he was under pressure to admit Jews who "are persecuted in their countries of origin, the same countries that push for their entry into Brazil."⁹⁴ Brazil, suggested the immigration chief, should either enforce strictly the frequently ignored prohibition on Jewish immigration that began two years earlier or set rigid and well enforced norms that would put all decision-making power into the hand of the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização. Eventually Muniz gave in to pressure from Vargas and Aranha after realizing that his own power would be enhanced since "the intervention of the CIC can only take place in cases of collective immigration, of which the proposal from the Vatican is the only example."⁹⁵

Getúlio Vargas was an astute politician. Even as he encouraged the Vatican and gave no sign of accepting the CIC's opposition, he had found a way to have his plan and reject it too. By allowing the CIC, which was opposed to entry, to handle the actual distribution of the visas, barriers and new requirements would be set up to keep Jews out. Over the next eighteen months, the CIC frequently added new requirements for entry that forced Catholic non-Aryans into an impossible dilemma. The refugees, for

example, not only had to meet all guidelines set out in published Brazilian immigration legislation, but also had to be farmers or industrialists in families with a minimum of three people between the ages of 10 and 50, pay all travel expenses personally or pre-paid by a Catholic relief group, and disembark in Rio de Janeiro.⁹⁶ Later additions included a substantial transfer of money to the Banco do Brasil and demands that the refugees be personally selected first by papal representatives and later Brazilian officials. Finally, the Brazilians decided to stamp visas only in Berlin to those with letters of recommendation from a papal nuncio and certificates of baptism dated before 1933. All requirements, as intended, were virtually impossible to fulfill.

The strong belief among immigration officials that the Catholic non-Aryans not be allowed to enter Brazil did not prevent the Vargas regime from reaping the benefits that accrued when the plan was announced to the world press. Following the approval of the visas, the Vatican and the Brazilian Press Office began a publicity blitz. *The New York Times* headlined its article "Brazil will admit German refugees: Bars Lifted to Allow Prompt Entry of 3,000 Catholics of Jewish Ancestry" and viewed the move as "a humanitarian gesture" because the 3,000 were "expected to leave Germany for Brazil immediately."⁹⁷ The Associated Press presented both the Vargas Regime and the Vatican favorably, quoting a Vatican spokesman as saying that "Instructions have been sent to Brazilian consulates to facilitate transference of the refugees."⁹⁸ Itamaraty even promoted what appear to be a number of untruths in order to garner favorable publicity. One was that the states of Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina and São Paulo, it was claimed, all desired refugee settlements and in Santa Catarina, where there was a concentration of German-speaker, the refugees "would be likely to counteract Nazi activities among New Germans who follow foreign ideologies."⁹⁹ Within a week, Brazil had received the favorable publicity it wanted without granting a single visa.

Another benefit for Brazil came from the capital of fleeing refugees since the wealth conscious Vargas regime demanded that Catholic non-Aryans transfer at least twenty contos (U.S. \$1,000.00) per family for rural development to the Banco do Brasil. If Brazil was going to accept undesirables they would have to pay, just as the Iraqis, British and League of Nations were expected to pay to save the Assyrians. Catholic non-Aryans, so it seemed, were Jews and Jews were rich. The equation was encouraged by the Secretary General of the *Raphaelsverein* who claimed "Catholics of non-Aryan descent have, like the Jews, rich parents and rich friends who live abroad."¹⁰⁰ If any particular Catholic non-Aryan family had enough money to save themselves, it was the Brazilian government that would have to be bribed for a visa. The financial conditions, however, also functioned as a deterrent since few refugees had the 40,000 marks (U.S. \$1000.00) needed to purchase a Brazilian visa.¹⁰¹

Resolution 39, as the visa agreement was labeled, did more than create a set of impossible regulations; it also created a bureaucratic maze that almost no one could maneuver through. Catholic non-Aryans who desired visas had to be selected by the Chief of Brazilian Propaganda Office in Berlin, making it difficult for those who had already fled Germany.¹⁰² Bureaucratization thus came just when centralization and efficiency were becoming increasingly necessary to save lives. Papal nuncios and Catholic relief organizations in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland increased pressure on the Vatican to get Brazil to issue visas to refugees in their transit camps. As the Vatican became frustrated, it began letting relief organizations and local papal offices know of the problems. These groups, unlike the Vatican diplomatic corps, had nothing invested in the plan and their concern was to save lives. A representative of

the Archbishop of Utrecht went to Brazil's legation in the Hague with a letter claiming that Hélio Lobo had been given permission to give out 3,000 visas. When confirmation was requested from Rio, the response was a simple "this news...is not true."¹⁰³ Complaints soon poured in to Saint Peter's and Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian Consul-General in Antwerp told the papal nuncio in Brussels that a recommendation from the Vatican was needed in order for a Catholic non-Aryan to receive a visa. What was the Belgian to do, however, with the many Catholic non-Aryans who did not have Vatican letters and were in Brussels with their German "J" (Jewish) passports and promises from "a group of rich Americans" to pay their passage out of Europe if they could get visas?¹⁰⁴ Neither the Vatican nor the Brazilian diplomatic corps had a satisfactory answer.

To complicate the situation, many Brazilian diplomats had no idea that the visa plan had been formalized and European Catholic relief organizations seemed to know more about the policy than the foreign service. In mid July, 1939, the Brazilian Delegation in Utrecht received a visa request from a Catholic refugee organization in charge of a transit camp that included "non-Aryans, but of the Catholic confession" and a number of "Aryan" German military and police officers who had married non-Aryans.¹⁰⁵ Since he knew nothing of the visas, the Brazilian delegate in charge of the Utrecht office, Ruy Ribeiro Costa, sent what seemed a nonsensical request to Rio de Janeiro. Unable to conceive of Catholic non-Aryans as different from Jews or that anti-Semitism could exist in Brazil's social democracy, Costa noted that immigrants "without capital (or) without knowledge of rural life" should not be granted visas since Brazil wished to "avoid an influx of anti-social and anti-economic parasitic masses" into the urban areas.¹⁰⁶

"It is perfectly comprehensible that Brazil should not give refuge to the trash from the German ghettos. Among the refugees of the Third Reich and Italy, however, there are studious men, those of the laboratory...mechanics, skilled workers and other useful manual laborers from whom the fact that they are Jews is not the contamination of an abominable addiction. Furthermore, the masses of German refugees contain a large number of non-Jews, at least according to our habitual Brazilian criterion [since] we do not apply racist standards [such as] the blood scales of the Third Reich. Many are "Jews" for Germany, in virtue of the mingling of Israelite blood in past generations; for us they are Germans as much as Chancellor Adolph Hitler."¹⁰⁷

Costa phrased his comments politely yet they reflected the confusion among Brazilian diplomats who had been instructed to both keep out Jews and give visas to immigrants who would be useful for industrial development.

The European Catholic non-Aryan visa situation was simply another component of the exclusionary immigration politics of the Vargas regime. The Foreign Ministry, for example, often justified its actions by accurately noting that many applicants had been baptized at the last minute in order to garner visas. But, if as the *Raphaelsverein* always maintained, even recently baptized Catholics "neither have a relationship with a Synagogue nor with Jews," why not grant the visas?¹⁰⁸ The answer, of course, was unrelated to the time that elapsed between baptism and visa application. Catholic non-Aryans, like Catholic Assyrians, were simply too dangerous socially to allow into Brazil.

A few of the special visas were distributed, if only to reduce the number of communiques from the Vatican to Brazilian decision-makers. In September of 1940, Oswaldo Aranha created a set of rules just for the Consulate in Hamburg that would open the restrictions enough so that a few Catholic non-Aryans might be given visas. Those who could transfer the twenty contos or had a guarantee from a Catholic organization in Brazil that they would have employment upon arrival were now eligible. In addition, the Consul-General in Hamburg received the authority to grant fifty visas a month (twenty-five from *Raphaelsverein* recommendations and twenty-five from the Embassy at the Vatican) to Catholic non-Aryans who had direct authorization from the Passport Division in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁰⁹ Visas could now be given to those baptized before 1935 (for those at least 21 years old), but with a preference for "individuals or family heads who were technicians specializing in agricultural or industrial work."¹¹⁰ In a stroke of the pen Aranha's new plan could force families to send a father or older son to Brazil with a visa and no guarantee that the rest of the family would ever be permitted to join them.¹¹¹

In September 1940 Brazil's Ambassador to the Vatican, Hildebrando Accioly, called Cardinal Maglione to tell him that the concession of visas to Catholic non-Aryans under the special plan had been suspended.¹¹² In 1941, just preceding decisions by Portugal and Spain to deny transit visas to refugees who hoped to depart from those countries, Ambassador Accioly curtly informed Cardinal Maglione that Brazil had ended the visa plan following the Brazilian government's constant complaints that the Catholic non-Aryans were rarely true converts.¹¹³ This is not surprising since Catholic non-Aryans were never seriously considered acceptable immigrants. Since religion and race were synonyms, at least in the case of Jews, Jews could never be Catholics. The Catholic Church acquiesced, accepting Accioly's comment that "if the world situation changes...my Government might revoke its decision."¹¹⁴ In July, 1942, the Brazilian government continued to refuse to modify its immigration policies to accept Catholic non-Aryan refugees and even rejected a Vatican suggestion that the 3,000 visas be given to Catholic Aryans.¹¹⁵ From the Brazilian standpoint, however, the Vatican visa plan had been a success and a bust of Pope Pius XII was unveiled at the Presidential Palace with much fanfare.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Why did the Vargas government go through the international and domestic subterfuge of publicly conceding visas to the Middle Eastern Catholic Assyrians and European Catholic non-Aryans and then reverse the decisions? The simple answer is political expediency. In both cases the regime judged incorrectly the strength of nativist sentiment within Brazil and found that attempts to shore up Brazil's international image would not hold in the face of immense pressure from nativist politicians and intellectuals. Yet the two groups in question represented more than a political annoyance. Indeed, they challenged a new perception of Brazilian national identity that sought to reject the multi-ethnic society that had been unintentionally created by earlier immigration policies. While early Republican (and to some extent Imperial) legislation reflected a simplistic elite social presumption that banning Africans and (most) Asians would lead to a "whiter" Brazil, those in the Vargas regime rejected such a notion. Many intellectuals and politicians who rose to power with Vargas had been

convinced of the value of social Darwinism and scientific racialism and they firmly believed Brazilian policy had to do more than define unacceptable immigrant groups. Rather, they wanted to look at each potential resident by group, class, or occupation (and sometimes all three) and decide on an almost person-by-person basis who was acceptable.

Early hints of this shift in Brazilian national self-perception can be seen in the decision not to allow the Assyrians to settle in Paraná. Soon thereafter, the exclusionary attitudes were reformulated as policies when the Constitution of 1934 put national quotas into effect and reserved for the federal government the right to ban immigrants on the basis of ethnic origin. Yet even this did not go far enough for many in the Vargas regime, especially those most attracted to European totalitarianism as both a political and social system. By 1936 the Vargas government increasingly used secret diplomatic orders to ban the entry of groups that had previously been judged acceptable.

Immigration policy during the Vargas era continued to be an important expression of a "racialist" ideology intended to remake Brazil along some kind of mythical Euro/North American line. While the myth of a future Brazil after 1930 was not all that different from previous decades, the sense of what Brazilian society was, and the methods needed to achieve the goals, were radically new. Federal politicians and intellectuals made it clear that past immigration policy had welcomed too many undesirables simply because they were not of African descent. New policies thus functioned to give the regime the right to choose who was fit to enter while assuming that all others were undesirable. For Brazil this was an innovation. It broadened the anti-African racism of the colonial, imperial and early republican years so that virtually any group, except for a very privileged few, might be excluded from the dream of Brazil as "o país do futuro."

NOTES

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¹Thomas E. Skidmore, *Fact and Myth: Discovering a Racial Problem in Brazil*. Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Paper #173. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1992); Jan Fiola, *Race Relations in Brazil: A Reassessment of the "Racial Democracy" Thesis*. Program in Latin American Studies Occasional Paper Series No. 24. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1990); Pierre-Michel Fontaine, ed. *Race, Class and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1985); Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society*. Report no. 7. (London: Minority Rights Group, 1971); Florestan Fernandes, "Immigration and Race Relations in São Paulo" in Magnus Mörner, ed., *Race and Class in Latin America*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 122–142.

²Decree Law 528, 28 June 1890. Art. 1.

³The Assyrians presented themselves to outsiders as Catholics, and were judged as such by the British and Brazilian governments and the League of Nations. The religion they practiced, however,

was a form of Nestorian Christianity that had been recognized by the Vatican. The term “Catholic non-Aryan” appears to have been first used by the Vatican in early 1939 to refer to Jews who had been baptized. “Introduction - I. L’aide aux Non-Aryens,” in *Secrétairerie d’État de Sa Sainteté, Actes e Documents du Saint Siège relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Edited by Perre Blet, Robert A. Graham, Angelo Martini and Burkhart Schneider. 9 vols. (Vatican City, 1965–75). Vol. 6, *Le Saint Siège et les Victimes de La Guerre, Mars 1939-Décembre 1940* [hereafter ADSS VI, SSVG], 12–25.

⁴Ethnicity and refugee status led most Latin American nations to judge Jews and Arabs as undesirables throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The following edited volumes provide numerous chapters on these and related topics: Judith L. Elkin and Gilbert W. Merckx, eds. *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987) and Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds. *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

⁵In the 1920s a group of North American citizens of African descent were denied visas and, immediately following the Revolution of 1930, an East Indian immigration company had its permission to bring immigrants to Brazil revoked. See: Jeff Lesser “Are African-Americans African or American? Brazilian Immigration Policy in the 1920s.” *Review of Latin American Studies* 4:1 (1991), 115–137 and *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁶Steven Topik, “Middle Class Brazilian Nationalism, 1889–1930: From Radicalism to Reaction.” *Social Science Quarterly* 59:1 (June, 1978), 101–102.

⁷Roberto Schwarz, “Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination.” *New Left Review* 167 (January/February 1988), 77–90. This essay appeared in Portuguese in Schwarz’s *Que Horas São* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987), 29–48.

⁸Francisco José Oliveira Vianna, *Populações Meridionais do Brasil*. Vol. 1, 5th edition (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1952), 13. The first edition was published in São Paulo in 1922.

⁹Stanley E. Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939: The Politics of Trade Rivalry* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975) and Frank D. McCann, Jr., *The Brazilian American Alliance, 1937–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

¹⁰Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 57–59. Khalid S. Husry, “The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I),” *International Journal of Middle East Affairs* 5:2 (1974), 161–176 and “The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II),” *International Journal of Middle East Affairs* 5:3 (1974), 348–352.

¹¹“Protection of Minorities” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:1 (January, 1934), 17.

¹²Letter of Afrânio de Melo Franco (Minister of Foreign Relations) to Tancredo Soares de Souza, 20 June 1931. 6(04).0034 Lata 401, maço 6048. Arquivo Histórico Itamaraty-Rio de Janeiro [hereafter AHI-R]. There was a general reluctance throughout Latin America to accept refugees. See, for example, Haim Avni, “Latin America and the Jewish Refugees: Two Encounters, 1935 and 1938,” in *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. Eds. Judith Laikin Elkin and Gilbert W. Merckx (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 45–70

¹³Memo of Raul P. do Rio Branco (Geneva) to Afrânio de Melo Franco, 20 Nov. 1933. 6(04).0034 Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

¹⁴Vargas’s first Minister of Education and Public Health, Francisco Campos, issued a decree less than a year after the Revolution of 1930 reinstating religious training in public schools. Charles F. O’Neil, “The Search for Order and Progress: Brazilian Mass Education, 1915–1933.” (Ph.D. Diss, University of Texas at Austin, 1975), 293.

¹⁵Memo of Raul P. do Rio Branco (Geneva) to Afrânio de Melo Franco, 20 Nov. 1933. 6(04).0034 Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

¹⁶Petition of Arthur Thomas to Ministry of Labor, 6 Dec. 1933. 6(04).0034 Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

¹⁷Unsigned telegram on 4 Jan. 1934. 601.34(04). Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

¹⁸Unsigned telegram of 4 Jan. 1934. EM 4/1/34, 6(04).0034, Lata 401, maço 6048.

¹⁹Telegram of Salgado Filho, 22 Feb. 1934, EM 21/22/2/34. 6(04).0034, Lata 401, maço 6048.

²⁰“Protection of Minorities” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:1 (January, 1934), 17.

²¹*The Times* (London), 20 Jan. 1934.

²²“Protection of Minorities” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:1 (January, 1934), 17.

²³*The Daily Mail* (London), 20 Jan. 1934, *The Morning Post* (London), 20 Jan. 1934, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 20 Jan. 1934.

²⁴*League of Nations-Official Journal* 2:1 (February, 1934), 152. “Report of the Committee of the Council, Approved by the Council on January 19th, 1934” in *League of Nations-Official Journal* 2:1 (February, 1934), 226.

²⁵“Report by the Committee for the Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq, Submitted to the Council on May 17th, 1934,” in *League of Nations-Official Journal* 6:1 (June, 1934), 547.

²⁶“Report by the Committee for the Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq, Submitted to the Council on May 17th, 1934,” in *League of Nations-Official Journal* 6:1 (June, 1934), 545.

²⁷Summary of the report on Brazil by General Browne, in “Protection of Minorities” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:5 (May, 1934), 121–122. “Report by the Committee for the Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq, Submitted to the Council on May 17th, 1934,” in *League of Nations-Official Journal* 6:1 (June, 1934), 545.

²⁸*Correio da Manhã*, 28 March 1934.

²⁹*Diário de Notícias*, 2 April 1934.

³⁰*Jornal do Brasil*, 25 January 1934. Jeff Lesser, “From Pedlars to Proprietors: Lebanese, Syrian and Jewish Immigrants in Brazil.” In *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 393–410. The same volume includes articles on the Middle Eastern communities in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and the Caribbean.

³¹*A Nação*, 7 March 1934.

³²*A Nação*, 3 February 1934; *Correio da Manhã*, 28 March 1934.

³³*Platéia* (São Paulo), 21 May 1934; *Diário Carioca*, 12 April 1934.

³⁴*Diário de Notícias*, 1 February 1934.

³⁵*A Nação*, 7 March 1934.

³⁶*L’Asie Française* (Paris), no. 319 (April, 1934), 126.

³⁷Letter of the President of the Associação dos Agrônomos e Médicos Veterinários do Paraná to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1 March 1934. 15/5 6(04).0034, Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

³⁸*San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 March 1934.

³⁹*The Times* (London), 22 May 1934.

⁴⁰See, for example, the handwritten label on the letter of President of the Associação dos Agrônomos e Médicos Veterinários do Paraná to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1 March 1934, or the typewritten label on the letter of Cavalcanti de Lacerda to Nabuco de Gouvêa (Special Envoy of Brazil in Bern), 24 July 1934. NP/27/601.34(04). Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁴¹Alberto Torres (1865–1917) rejected concepts of racial superiority. Alberto Torres, *A Organização Nacional*, (Rio, 1914), 136; Douglas McLain Jr. “Alberto Torres, ad hoc nationalist,”

Luso-Brazilian Review 4 (December, 1967), 17–34; Adalberto Marson, *A Ideologia Nacionalista em Alberto Torres* (São Paulo, 1979); Beloch and Alves de Abreu, *Dicionário Histórico*, vol. IV, 3241–3242.

⁴²Letter of Samuel Guy Inman to Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (New York), 15 April 1935. James G. McDonald Papers, “Inman, S.G.-Interviews, 1935” D356-H16, in Herbert H. Lehman Papers (Columbia University, New York).

⁴³*Jornal do Commercio* 2 May 1934.

⁴⁴Undated press release 000232. Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R. *Diário de Notícias*, 11 March 1934.

⁴⁵*Correio da Manhã*, 20 and 24 Feb. 1934; *Diário Carioca*, 11, 15, 20 Feb. 1934.

⁴⁶*Folha da Noite* (São Paulo), 3 April 1934. Similar articles were published in *A Nação*, 7 March 1934 and *Correio da Manhã*, 8 March 1934.

⁴⁷Emphasis mine. *Folha da Noite* (São Paulo), 3 April 1934.

⁴⁸Valdemar Carneiro Leão, *A Crise da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil (1930-1945): Contornos Diplomáticos*, (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão/IPRI, 1990); Patrick M. Fukunaga, *The Brazilian Experience: The Japanese Immigrants during the Period of the Vargas Regime and the Immediate Aftermath, 1930–1946* (Unpublished Ph.D. diss, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1983), 74–83.

⁴⁹Constituição de 16 de Julho de 1934, Article 121, para. 6. Hélio Silva, *1934-A Constituinte* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1969), 209–217.

⁵⁰Constituição de 16 de Julho de 1934. Article 5, para. 19, g and art. 121, para. 6.

⁵¹Morais Andrade, 76 Session, 21 February 1934. *Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. VIII (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 266.

⁵²Exchange between Xavier de Oliveira and Moraes Andrade, 76 Session, 21 February 1934. *Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. VIII (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 266.

⁵³*Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. IV (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 211–216 (Neiva) and 546–549 (Xavier de Oliveira)

⁵⁴Xavier de Oliveira, 58th Session, 25 January 1934. *Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. VI (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 451.

⁵⁵Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, “Discurso à Assembléa Constituinte de 1934,” Secção de Arquivos Particulares-Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, AP 51 (12)- “Communismo, 1930–1936.” Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro [hereafter AN-R].

⁵⁶Artur Neiva, 66 Session, 3 February 1934. *Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. VII (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 328–329.

⁵⁷Telegrams of Itamaraty to Embassy in London, 4 January 1934 (601.34(04) and EM/4/1/34). Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R. Tacúrcio Tôrres, 76 Session, 21 February 1934. *Annaes da Assembléa Nacional Constituinte organizados pela Redação das Annaes e Documentos Parlamentares*, Vol. VIII (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1935), 258.

⁵⁸*A Batalha*, 10 April 1934; *The Times* (London), 1 Mar. 1934, 20 Mar 1934; *The Morning Post* (London), 24 Mar. 1934; *The Sunday Times* (London), 25 Mar 1934; Letter of Nissan Yavou (President of the Community of Assyrians of Athens) to Getúlio Vargas, 7 April 1934. Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁵⁹Vianna, *Populações Meridionais do Brasil*. Vol 1, 13. Vianna, *Raça e Assimilação* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1932), 93–126. Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 64.

⁶⁰Vianna, *Raça e Assimilação*, 97. Nancy Leys Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*”: *Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 156.

⁶¹Dulphe Pinheiro Machado, general comments on immigration. 9 January 1937. Presidência da República-Relações-Fundo Conselho Nacional de Economia-Série Intercâmbio Comercial, Lata 174-No. 468-1936. AN-R.

⁶²Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*”, 157-158.

⁶³Copy of the committee charge drawn up by Oliveira Vianna and sent to Salgado Filho, “Comissão de Inquérito Sobre Imigração Assíria,” 16 April 1934. 601.34(04) Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁶⁴Reserved memo of Cavalcanti de Lacerda (Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs) to Salgado Filho, 4 May 1934. NP/95/601.34(04) Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R. *L'Asie Française* (Paris), no. 319 (April, 1934), 126. Summary of the report on Brazil by General Browne, in “Protection of Minorities” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:5 (May, 1934), 122.

⁶⁵The full text was reprinted in a five column full page article in the *Jornal do Commercio*, 2 May 1934.

⁶⁶*Jornal do Commercio*, 14 March 1934 and 17 April 1934.

⁶⁷Memo of Cavalcanti de Lacerda to Nabuco de Gouvêa (Special Envoy of Brasil in Bern), 24 July 1934. NP/27/601.34(04). Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁶⁸Memo of Nabuco de Gouvêa to José Carlos de Macedo Soares, 6 Sept. 1934. #107, 601.34(04). Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁶⁹*Correio da Manhã*, 28 March 1934.

⁷⁰Muniz to Cavalcanti de Lacerda, 18 May 1934. #40. Lata 401, maço 6048. AHI-R.

⁷¹*O Jornal* (Rio), 31 May 1934.

⁷²*Jornal do Commercio*, 14 March 1934.

⁷³“Summary of the Month” in *The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations* 14:6 (June, 1934), 132, 147. *The Times* (London), 8 June 1934.

⁷⁴*Diário Carioca*, 11 April 1934.

⁷⁵An excellent examination of the Vatican-Vargas visa deal can be found in Avraham Milgram, “O Brasil e a Questão dos Refugiados Judeus Durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial (A tentativa de salvação de católicos não arianos da Alemanha ao Brasil através do Vaticano 1939-1942),” (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Institute of Contemporary Judaism-Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989). Lutz-Eugen Reutter competently analyzes the Vatican documentation (but no Itamaraty files) in his *Katolische Kirche als Fluchthelfer im Dritten Reich: Die Betreuung von Auswanderern durch den St. Raphaels-Verein* (Recklinghausen-Hamburg, 1971), 141-180. See also: John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust, 1939-1943*. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1980), 18-22, Humberto Porto, “Generosos esforços da diplomacia brasileira,” *Encontros*, 12, 7-12, Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *O Anti-Semitismo na Era Vargas: Fantasmas de uma Geração* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988), 234-247, and Haim Genizi, *American Apathy: The Plight of Christian Refugees from Nazism* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983), 164-165.

⁷⁶Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 266. ADSS VI, SSVG, 12.

⁷⁷Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, to Pope Pius XII, 31 March 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 63-64. Cardinal Faulhaber was instrumental in forcing the Nazis to modify medical testing on Aryan Germans (not Jews) who might propagate so-called “congenitally diseased progeny.” J. P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 214-215.

⁷⁸Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1975), 139-140.

⁷⁹According to the Vatican there were 200,000 Catholic non-Aryan refugees in Europe in 1939 and the *Raphaelsverein* was the central organization set up to aid in their relief.

⁸⁰Lobo to Aranha, 28 January 1939. NP/SN/640.16 (99)/Anexo 1, Maço 9697. AHI-R.

⁸¹Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, to Pope Pius XII, 31 March 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 65.

⁸²Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, to Pope Pius XII, 31 March 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 65.

⁸³Saul Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation*, trans. Charles Fullman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 11. There is no evidence that the Catholic non-Aryan question, or the general Jewish refugee one, were issues of any importance in German-Brazilian diplomatic relations.

⁸⁴Archbishop of Osnabrück to Pope Pius XII, 31 March 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 67.

⁸⁵Aloisi Masella (Nuncio of Rio de Janeiro) to Getúlio Vargas, 14 April 1939. Fundo Secretaria da Presidência da República, Série Conselho de Imigração e Colonização. CIC-PR/SC 3117-21797, no. 9404/39. AN-R.

⁸⁶In maço 12213 (833), 558. (99). AHI-R.

⁸⁷Aloisi Masella (Nuncio of Rio de Janeiro) to Getúlio Vargas, 14 April 1939. Fundo Secretaria da Presidência da República, Série Conselho de Imigração e Colonização. CIC-PR/SC 3117-21797, no. 9404/39. AN-R.

⁸⁸João Carlos Muniz to Getúlio Vargas, 8 May 1939. Fundo Secretaria da Presidência da República, Série Conselho de Imigração e Colonização. CIC-PR/SC 3117-21797, no. 45/9. AN-R.

⁸⁹It is worth remembering here that an early argument made in favor of the Assyrians was that they were not Semites. See footnote 16 above.

⁹⁰While the quoted sentence was not underlined in the original typed version of the resolution, it was heavily highlighted prior to its distribution to various members of the CIC. Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, Resolution #39, 23 June 1939. SP/23/558 (99)/1939/Anexo único. Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R. Verbal note SP/10/558, Itamaraty to Papal Nuncio (Rio de Janeiro), 24 June 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 101.

⁹¹Alcir Lenharo, *Sacralização da Política*, (Campinas: Papirus, 1986), 107-138; Tucci Carneiro, 237-246.

⁹²Secretary General of *Raphaelsverein* to Pope Pius XII, 5 June 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 91.

⁹³Aloisi Masella (Nuncio of Rio de Janeiro) to Cardinal Maglione (Vatican), 20 June 1939; Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, Decision no. 39; Cardinal Maglione (Vatican) to Archbishop Faulhaber (Munich), 23 June 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 98.

⁹⁴João Carlos Muniz to Oswaldo Aranha, 3 January 1939. PRR-Relações Exteriores-1940a. PR-69, box 27.667, Lata 201. AN-R.

⁹⁵João Carlos Muniz to Oswaldo Aranha, 3 January 1939. PRR-Relações Exteriores-1940a. PR-69, box 27.667, Lata 201. AN-R.

⁹⁶Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, Resolution #39, 23 June 1939. SP/23/558 (99)/1939/Anexo único. Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

⁹⁷Special cable to the *The New York Times*, 25 June 1939, p. 22. As was the usual case, the "Jewish" nature of the Catholic non-Aryans was highlighted by *The New York Times*.

⁹⁸Associated Press story in *The New York Times*, 25 June 1939, p. 22.

⁹⁹Special cable to the *The New York Times*, 25 June 1939, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰Mr. Grösser, Secretary General of the *Raphaelsverein* (Hamburg) to Papal Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo (Berlin), 1 September 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 132.

¹⁰¹The Nazi exchange rate for Jewish emigrants, of one reichsmark to four pfennigs, made it even harder for refugees to satisfy Brazilian visa regulations.

¹⁰²Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, Resolution #39, 23 June 1939. SP/23/558 (99)/1939/Anexo único. Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹⁰³Pedro de Moraes Barros (Itamaraty) to Legation in the Hague, 3 September 1939. EM/3/9/II/39, Maço 9697. AHI-R.

¹⁰⁴Papal Nuncio Clement Micara (Brussels) to Cardinal Maglione, 8 July 1939. ADSS VI, SSVG, 102.

¹⁰⁵Ruy Ribeiro Costa (Utrecht) to Oswaldo Aranha, 14 July 1939. 640.16 (99), 588. (99), Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹⁰⁶Ruy Ribeiro Costa (Utrecht) to Oswaldo Aranha, 14 July 1939. 640.16 (99), 588. (99), Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹⁰⁷Ruy Ribeiro Costa (Utrecht) to Oswaldo Aranha, 14 July 1939. 640.16 (99), 588. (99), Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹⁰⁸Max Grösser, Secretary General of the *Raphaelsverein* (Hamburg) to Nuncio Orsenigo (Berlin), 1 September 1939. ADSS, VI, SSVG, 130.

¹⁰⁹Oswaldo Aranha to Joaquim Antônio de Sousa Ribeiro, 12 September 1940. SP/31/5558.(99). Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹¹⁰Oswaldo Aranha to Joaquim Antônio de Sousa Ribeiro, 12 September 1940. SP/31/5558.(99). Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R.

¹¹¹See "processo" of Rudolph Max Neumann, no. 15.148, 20 November 1940. PRRE-1941. Document 5.674/41, box 27.741, lata 275. AN-R.

¹¹²Notes of the Secretary of State, 3 September 1940. ADSS VI, SSVG, 404.

¹¹³Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 266.

¹¹⁴Hildebrando Accioly to Cardinal Maglione, 20 November 1941. ADSS VIII, SSVG, 351. Morley, 20–21.

¹¹⁵Notes of the Secretary of State, 25 October 1940. ADSS VI, SSVG, 453. Of the 3,000 visas originally approved, between fifteen and thirty percent appear to have been issued, apparently only to those who met the capital requirements. Brazilian Ambassador Accioly (Rome) to Cardinal Maglione (Vatican) 20 November 1941. ADSS VIII, SSVG, note 2,351. Hildebrando Accioly to Oswaldo Aranha, 2 September 1940. Maço 12213 (833). AHI-R. Avraham Milgram, "O Brasil e a Questão dos Refugiados Judeus," 145. *The New York Times*, 14 March 1940.

¹¹⁶*The New York Times*, 21 October 1941.