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# The Faustian Bargain Not Made: Getúlio Vargas and Brazil's Industrial Workers, 1930–1945

Joel Wolfe

Este artigo, ao analisar a criação e o funcionamento das instituições trabalhistas durante o período de 1930 a 1945, refuta a idéia de que os trabalhadores brasileiros participaram ativamente no sistema estatizado de relações industriais criado por Getúlio Vargas. Demonstra que o novo Ministério do Trabalho tinha um orçamento limitado e que só funcionava na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, capital federal. Porque não havia uma burocracia trabalhista efetiva, os trabalhadores brasileiros evitaram os sindicatos e preferiram confiar nas suas próprias formas de organização local. Essas condições impediram que eles fizessem uma aliança política com Vargas ou com o governo central.

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Getúlio Vargas, as provisional president, dictator, and populist leader, profoundly changed labor relations in Brazil. Vargas presided over the establishment of Brazil's complex, state-centered industrial relations system that sought to institutionalize the country's class struggle. Vargas also attempted to bring workers into state-sponsored *sindicatos* that would become a new basis of support for him politically. The unions were to provide a means for negotiating—through state institutions—improved work conditions and wages. They would also furnish social services for union members. Over the course of creating this new industrial relations system (1930–1945), Vargas experimented with various institutions and levels of state involvement in the day-to-day operation of industrial life. One constant factor during this period was Vargas's and his advisers' hope that this industrial relations system would create a grateful working class that would serve as a cornerstone of support for the regime.

Analyses of Vargas's relationship with Brazil's industrial workers tend to emphasize the co-optive nature of the 1930s and 1940s labor legislation. Workers are seen as having entered into a Faustian bargain whereby they exchanged their independence for benefits ranging from increased wages and social services to an effective means for settling disputes with employers. Some scholars blame the workers' lack of sophistication for their participation in this system,<sup>1</sup> and others cite the miscalculations of labor leaders for making this deal with Vargas and the state.<sup>2</sup> One historian has turned the Faustian bargain model on its head, arguing that labor benefited in both the long and short term from this arrangement.<sup>3</sup> No matter what their conclusions, all these analyses share an assumption that Vargas and Brazilian workers—implicitly or explicitly—struck some sort of deal in the 1930s and early 1940s.

A close examination of the actual labor institutions created during the first Vargas period and of workers' relationship to those institutions challenges the assumption

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that a bargain had been struck. In some cases, workers' groups avoided the new state structure because they distrusted the government. In other cases, workers did not participate in the state's industrial relations system because it did not yet exist in their state or city. And in still other cases, workers utilized the new industrial relations system because it seemed to offer some benefits without greatly challenging their independence. All the cases studied here share one key similarity that undermines the idea that Brazil's workers entered into a sort of Faustian bargain with the Vargas regime: When and where there was state intervention in labor relations in the 1930–1945 period, it more often than not involved violence and repression of labor than subtle legal and institutional co-optation.

## IDEOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONS

Vargas and his allies attempted to fashion an industrial relations system that would institutionalize class struggle within the state. Both workers' unions and industrialists' associations were to become *sindicatos* that would meet to negotiate—peacefully and without recourse to strikes and/or lockouts—wages, work conditions, and other terms of employment. When these groups failed to reach consensus, they would bring their cases to the state for mediation. Wage and other disputes were to be settled by tripartite commissions made up of representatives of labor unions, industrialist associations, and the state. In the late 1930s, Vargas used the tripartite system to create a series of local commissions to determine each municipality's minimum wage rate.<sup>4</sup>

Vargas had two broad goals in mind when he and his advisers fashioned this corporatist industrial relations system.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, they hoped to deepen Brazil's nascent industrialization by translating class struggle into state-sponsored conciliation.<sup>6</sup> On the other, Vargas and his advisers hoped that they could use these new labor institutions to extend the federal government's control into the states, which had traditionally been highly independent from Rio de Janeiro's authority. Vargas's dramatic November 1937 burning of the state flags was a symbolic expression of his intent to strengthen the national government's power; throughout the 1930s and early 1940s he attempted to create a series of institutions—especially those tied to the newly founded Federal Ministry of Labor, Industry, and Commerce—that would in practice extend his regime's authority over the states.<sup>7</sup>

The Vargas program envisioned workers' *sindicatos* as an important building block for the new regime.<sup>8</sup> According to one Ministry of Labor official, "Unions in the *Estado Novo* have a dual representative function, in that they conform to the old role as professional associations, and they [also] are bodies vested with duties as representatives of the State."<sup>9</sup> This specific role in the furthering of a nationalist *Brazilian* identity is a little discussed, but highly significant, aspect of this new industrial relations system. Participation in the state-sanctioned unions was to be limited to Brazilian citizens, and citizenship was also required before a worker could file a claim with the newly established Conciliation Commissions (*Juntas de Conciliação e Julgamento*). To complement these citizenship requirements, Vargas established the 1931 Law of the Nationalization of Labor which decreed that all commercial and industrial firms would have to have a work force that was at least two-thirds Brazilian-born.<sup>10</sup>

Despite its initial limits, Vargas's program was quite innovative. No other Brazilian president had ever sought to integrate workers and other popular class groups into

national politics. Vargas offered workers a rather straightforward deal: They would gain access to their citizenship rights by participating in the state-run industrial relations system. In this way, Vargas and his advisers—especially Lindolfo Collor, Brazil's first Minister of Labor—hoped to create a series of government structures that would obviate workers' strikes and other protests, and at the same time provide a means for the smooth incorporation of the popular classes into politics. In 1932, for example, Vargas created an *ex-officio* voter registration system that permitted illiterate Brazilians to vote in the 1934 elections if they were members of *sindicatos*. A British diplomat noted that Vargas's program sought to demobilize workers in the area of industrial relations, but make them active supporters of the regime in the political arena. Vargas was attempting to "on the one hand...keep order, and, on the other to harness the working class to [his] chariot."<sup>11</sup>

An important institutional innovation that would make this industrial relations system work was the creation first of the Conciliation Commissions and later the Labor Courts. These tripartite tribunals were made up of one representative from labor, industry, and the government. They were to mediate all industrial disputes, but they focused on wages. These courts are a telling example of how Vargas sought to institutionalize his goals of national harmony (*concliação*) and the strengthening of the central state. Rather than striking, workers were to file petitions for wage increases through their unions. The petitions would then be judged by a tripartite panel.<sup>12</sup> This was the only legal means to settle such disputes, for Vargas outlawed strikes.

The newly founded Ministry of Labor, Industry, and Commerce was to administer this industrial relations system.<sup>13</sup> Various state agencies along with the National Department of Labor in Rio had studied working-class conditions and attempted—in an *ad hoc* way—to mediate industrial disputes in the pre-1930 years. The new ministry was to centralize the federal government's role in labor relations and to coordinate the activities of the various state departments of labor.<sup>14</sup> The new agency not only sought to play a role in the expansion of Rio's authority, it would also help Vargas develop greater "autonomy" for the central state. By serving as the central authority over the entire industrial relations system—including all unions, labor courts, and so forth—the Ministry of Labor would become the single government institution to have a presence throughout Brazil. There would eventually be unions representing industrial, commercial, and agricultural workers, along with the *sindicatos patronais* (employers' associations) within each *município*.<sup>15</sup> By creating the Ministry of Labor, Vargas had established the institutional means for the federal government in Rio to reach into every corner of Brazil.

The Ministry of Labor was to reach individual workers through the union system. The most important principle of Vargas's unionization scheme was the notion of the *sindicato único*. Simply put, the idea was that there would be one union per industry per municipality.<sup>16</sup> Thus, spinners, weavers, mechanics, maintenance workers, warehouse workers, and others in cotton, jute, and silk textile plants in the city of São Paulo would be members of the city's Textile Workers' Union. These new *sindicatos* were industrial unions, but unlike those of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the United States, these were *mandated* by the state. Moreover, their officers not only had to receive the approval of various government agencies, they were also paid by the state. Another important difference between the Brazilian and North American unions was the absence of locals in Brazil. There was no formal shop floor or factory level organization to these *sindicatos*.<sup>17</sup>

The Ministry of Labor also mandated a vertical structure for the unions, tying each municipality's union to a state federation of like unions; the federations were then affiliated with a national confederation of unions for that industry. It was illegal to form a body like the CIO itself; the Ministry of Labor would serve as the ultimate organizer of all of Brazil's unions. In addition to sanctioning union officials, the ministry also received personal information (nationality, previous work history, political affiliations, etc.) on each applicant for union membership and held the final authority on whether or not someone was permitted to become *sindicalizado/a*. To coordinate and finance labor activities, the ministry collected a union tax (*imposto sindical*) from all workers and redistributed it to the unions, federations, and confederations.<sup>18</sup>

The corporatist system that evolved over the course of the 1930s sought to provide government-sponsored institutions that would represent all sectors of Brazilian society. Moreover, those institutions would work with the Ministry of Labor on issues ranging from wage rates to strategic planning for different manufacturing sectors. Vargas established this system not only to control Brazil's class struggle and deepen national industrialization, he also sought to incorporate new actors (e.g., the industrial working class) into the regime.<sup>19</sup> Such incorporation, Vargas believed, would not only make Brazil a "modern" industrial society, it would also provide him with needed political backing once the *Estado Novo* dictatorship came to an end.<sup>20</sup>

## THE PRACTICE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, 1930–1945

All did not go as planned for Vargas and his advisers. Indeed, most of the elaborate industrial relations system they hoped to establish remained a legal fiction during the 1930s and early 1940s. Throughout most of Brazil, the unions that were to serve as the cornerstone of the corporatist system were more often than not discredited state institutions that workers avoided. The full labor court structure did not begin to function until the early 1940s, and it quickly became irrelevant when workers and employers chose instead to bargain directly with each other on wage and other issues. And, the Ministry of Labor itself had little or no impact outside the federal district.

### The Ministry of Labor and the Absence of Federal Authority

Lindolfo Collor and his successors soon discovered that making the Ministry of Labor an effective instrument of federal labor policy was no simple task. Collor first staffed this new ministry with legal scholars and bureaucrats who had been in the National Labor Council and National Labor Department. They turned their attention to writing a set of national labor laws. The new *Boletim do Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria e Comércio* tracked this process, often reporting on how Brazil's proposed laws and regulations compared to those of other countries. The ministry's bureaucrats reasoned that once they guaranteed workers' right to organize and provided basic legal protections, Brazil's working people would flock to the new *sindicatos*. They did not create any departments within the ministry to handle worker recruitment, nor did they attempt to recruit unionists who were popular among the rank and file. Those who had been popular were seen as more interested in their local unions' affairs than in

supporting the regime's agenda. Further, the bureaucratic, highly regulated labor structure—along with an official ideology that praised the figure of Vargas for all of labor's gains—was not intended to operate with charismatic local union leaders. These unionists were to be bureaucrats who were well versed in the intricacies of the new labor laws and government procedures.<sup>21</sup>

The ministry was also limited at this time by the tiny budget it received, so the labor bureaucrats concentrated on their modest objective of writing laws and regulations.<sup>22</sup> Even this goal was considered highly controversial in the early 1930s. The political tensions Vargas's provisional government created within the bureaucracy itself—especially between the *tenentes* organized around the *Clube 3 de Outubro* and more conservative elements, including those recruited from the *Frente Única Gaúcha* (FUG)—paralyzed the ministry's initial attempts to fashion a comprehensive labor code for the country. The slow, deliberate work necessary to write national labor laws was nearly impossible within the highly charged political atmosphere of these years. Indeed, in São Paulo João Alberto Lins de Barros, the *tenente* Interventor, initiated his own set of labor policies for *paulista* workers. João Alberto also personally mediated strikes in São Paulo, without dealing with the new Ministry of Labor in Rio.<sup>23</sup>

Vargas was forced to expel many *tenentes* and other more radical elements in his government in the wake of the 1932 Civil War between São Paulo state and the federal government. The details of the civil war do not concern us here, but the larger significance of the uprising does.<sup>24</sup> Although Vargas prevailed in that conflict, he understood well the meaning of such opposition from the elite of Brazil's largest and most prosperous state. In less than two years, he had managed to alienate the *paulistas* with his attempts to centralize nearly all political authority in Rio. After the war, he attempted to placate the *paulistas* by lessening Rio's power over the states and turning over control of federal institutions in São Paulo to state authorities. In July 1933 he granted the São Paulo state Department of Labor control over Ministry of Labor functions in the state. Indeed, state governments throughout Brazil administered federal labor laws—often at their own discretion—throughout these years. Vargas granted the state departments of labor such authority not only to calm regional fears of Rio's growing power, but also because he was not willing to fund the Ministry of Labor well enough to allow it to work throughout Brazil. The ministry was so focused on Rio during the 1930–1945 period that its bureaucrats referred to the rest of the country as “*o interior*” in their writings.<sup>25</sup>

This arrangement had a generally negative impact on Brazilian workers. In São Paulo, for example, the state Department of Labor was run by Jorge Street, an industrialist. Bureaucrats throughout the rest of Brazil were known to lack either the political power to challenge local industrialists or the skill to enforce the various regulations.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, when workers attempted to contact the Ministry of Labor directly with a complaint about work conditions, their petitions were returned to the state departments of labor. This bureaucratic course was particularly disastrous for those workers who had written to the ministry in Rio specifically to denounce their state department of labor.<sup>27</sup>

The end of Vargas's “provisional government” brought with it the beginning of dictatorial politics. Although he declared the *Estado Novo* in 1937, Vargas's government began its offensive against independent labor leaders in 1935, in the wake of the Communist party's disastrous *Intentona*. In March 1936 Vargas pushed Congress to declare a “state of war” for all Brazil; local police forces throughout the country used

this declaration to justify the arrests of hundreds of labor activists who were not working closely with their state departments of labor.<sup>28</sup> From this time through the early 1940s, the Ministry of Labor's main function was to coordinate a series of rather repressive policies geared to foster labor peace; it surely did not act as a workers' advocate within the federal bureaucracy.

Even the repressive aspects of the ministry should not be overemphasized. It is important to remember that few federal bureaucracies at this time were well run or effective instruments of policy making. When he came to power in 1930 Vargas moved to professionalize the bureaucracy, but he had little success. His administrative reforms were targeted at only a few agencies, and the success within those was limited.<sup>29</sup> In 1938, for example, a Brazilian legal scholar noted that the labor ministry was like some sort of "monster: with an enormous head, and with almost no body," because it operated only in Rio. He went on to note that the São Paulo department of labor, likewise, only functioned in the state capital and had little or no functions throughout the rest of São Paulo.<sup>30</sup>

As Vargas contemplated staying in power through electoral means—especially as he considered the opening that the end of World War II would force on him—he looked to the Ministry of Labor to organize popular support for his regime. Vargas and labor minister Alexander Marcondes Filho realized, however, that the long neglected labor bureaucracy was so poorly funded, understaffed, and generally ineffective that it could do little to muster support for the regime.<sup>31</sup> Vargas and Marcondes Filho tried to change this with a series of measures to strengthen the ministry institutionally and to bring more workers into the *sindicatos*, but even this change in course had little impact. Major shifts in policy take some time to become effective, and the labor ministry's generally weak bureaucratic structure and its years of ignoring all areas outside of Rio were significant drags on Vargas's plan. Moreover, the ministry and state departments of labor had been enforcing a series of wartime regulations that kept workers' wages low and made work conditions particularly harsh. Given these factors, along with the past decade of repressive measures against them, workers had no reason to suddenly embrace Vargas or his new pro-labor policies in 1945.<sup>32</sup>

### Wither the Labor Courts?

The concept behind them, their structure, and how they operated make the labor courts a near perfect example of Vargas's industrial relations system. As noted above, the courts were supposed to institutionalize class struggle through tripartite conciliation boards. The salient feature of the courts' make up is that the power rested with the government representative. The industry representative would not likely rule against a fellow factory owner and unionists would not quickly abandon their role of speaking for workers' interests.<sup>33</sup> The deciding vote on the court, more often than not, would fall to the government official. Accordingly, the outcome of many cases reflected government policies.<sup>34</sup>

For most of the 1930–1945 period, these courts barely functioned. The conciliation commissions had been established in May 1932 in São Paulo, but rarely settled disputes. Industrialists throughout Brazil objected to how they might operate and lobbied Rio to abandon the project. Like other aspects of Vargas's industrial relations system industrialists opposed, the commissions remained little more than an empty façade.<sup>35</sup>

In the early 1940s the federal government put in place the formal labor court structure, but again not to workers' advantage. In 1941, the courts in São Paulo refused to hear most cases; in 1942 the courts ruled consistently on behalf of employers: 55.25 percent of the cases handled by the São Paulo Regional Labor Courts were decided in favor of industry and 26.49 percent were simply thrown out of court (i.e., 81.74 percent of the cases left employer policies intact). Only 13.24 percent of the cases were decided in favor of workers, the remaining 5.02 percent were settled through some sort of accord.<sup>36</sup> Again, the important factor to remember is that the courts operated in support of government policies, and during the *Estado Novo*—and especially after Brazil's entry into the war—Vargas attempted to maintain social peace to foster increased industrial output. Given such policies, workers in the industrial heartland of São Paulo experienced a sharp decline in real wages and increasingly difficult conditions at work.<sup>37</sup>

When Vargas moved to garner working-class support for his regime in 1945, the labor courts did begin to rule on behalf of workers. More claims were judged in favor of workers in 1945 than in any previous year; but again, this was too little and too late to convince workers to fight to keep Vargas in power.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as Vargas reduced the authoritarian controls over industrial relations in 1944 and 1945, workers throughout Brazil pushed for increased wages (after years of declining incomes). They did so through direct negotiations with their employers. As soon as the government permitted it, workers avoided the labor courts and other aspects of the state industrial relations structure in order to settle their disputes quickly. According to a U.S. diplomat in São Paulo in early 1945, the strikers "almost invariably ignore the Labor Department and the police, and are going directly to the employers; in some cases, through impromptu committees; in others, en masse."<sup>39</sup> In this case, both the workers and employers understood that the corporatist structure was ineffective and easily avoided. And, without the threat of government retribution, workers operated outside the state-sanctioned *sindicatos* with procedures that were not only beyond the labor laws, but a direct challenge to them, for the government played no role in these direct employee-employer negotiations.

### Unions without Members: The *Estado Novo Sindicatos*

The issue of unionization and the state not only captured the imagination of the framers of Vargas's labor policies, it continues to fascinate scholars. The central question related to this issue is how the corporatist system affected rank-and-file workers. There are two basic answers offered: 1) the Vargas system robbed workers of their independence and made unions instruments of the state, or 2) the system ended up empowering the labor movement by granting it state legitimacy and making the state its ally. As in many debates, these two positions share certain assumptions and each makes sense in certain cases at certain times. One important assumption that both positions share is that the post-1930s unions were an important building block in the complex corporatist system. Workers are seen as operating in these unions; the debate revolves around the questions of what they did within the unions and what those actions signify.<sup>40</sup>

A more basic question needs to be asked, however: Did workers actually join Vargas's *sindicatos*? Significantly, the answer is that the vast majority of industrial workers



(i.e., the very individuals targeted for unionization) did not become *sindicalizado/a* in the 1930–1945 period. Vargas and Marcondes Filho understood this well and tried to come up with ways to make the unions more popular. Vargas, however, did not establish institutions to increase union membership until the 1943 unionization campaign—twelve years after coming to power. Institutional changes alone had no immediate impact, for the *sindicatos* had become accustomed to operating with few members. Indeed, the federal government had to resort to making cash payments to union leaders who managed to increase their membership.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to recognize that there were quite a few impediments to union membership in these years. Until 1939 only Brazilian citizens could join the *sindicatos*. Thus the large urban immigrant populations in the southern states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul were denied access to the unions; Rio de Janeiro also had a sizable immigrant contingent among its working class, especially on the docks and in the transportation sector. It is also hard to know what impact this restriction had on the children of immigrants who were the majority of the work force in some industrial locations, such as São Paulo. What is remarkable about this is that the federal government *restricted* access to the unions throughout the 1930s.

The Ministry of Labor further limited membership in the unions by intervening in the *sindicatos* and installing leaders not chosen by the rank-and-file. This process began in 1935, and the ministry and/or state departments of labor intervened in unions throughout Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s. Beginning in 1935 the government instituted a wide variety of measures to discourage opposition to its hand-picked unionists. Representatives of the ministry or state department of labor attended all union meetings; police officers were also frequently present. And, when a member spoke, his or her identity card would be checked by a government official.<sup>42</sup> These measures were taken to ensure that unions fulfilled their roles as instruments of state policy, but they also dissuaded workers from joining the *sindicatos*.

The very organization of the unions also served to limit their membership. The 1939 establishment of the union tax, for example, created a financial incentive for union leaders to keep their *sindicatos* small. All the workers in a given industry within a municipality paid the yearly tax of one day's wages. This did not, however, make them union members; they had to pay a small additional dues to become *sindicalizado/a*. This arrangement created a disincentive for a union leader to attempt to increase his *sindicato's* membership. Unionists who had gained office through elections within these small *sindicatos* could use funds from the union tax (made up of contributions from all workers) to provide benefits for their members (usually a tiny minority of their industry's workers). Providing vacation colonies, soccer teams, a subsidized bar in the headquarters, along with more traditional benefits such as food cooperatives and medical clinics kept these leaders' supporters within the *sindicato* happy and thus likely to reelect them to the directorate. Increasing the membership without substantially increasing the union's budget would force a leader to restrict spending on benefits.<sup>43</sup> Further, the 1937 constitution forbade strikes and other forms of popular mobilization, so a government unionist had no need for a large or active membership.

There were ideological impediments to large-scale unionization as well. Much has been written about the *Estado Novo's* labor discourses, but the regime's gender perspectives have received little scholarly analysis. Vargas's program attempted to garner popular support by appealing to "traditional" gender ideologies that envisioned women as homemakers and men as breadwinners. The government tried to foster

such a household division of labor through education programs and specific regulations on work.<sup>44</sup> Although this gendered aspect of Vargas's program did not seek to exclude women from the *sindicatos*, it certainly discouraged them from active participation. The regime's labor discourse portrayed union membership and work as distinctly male domains. As a result, men were much more heavily unionized than women. A 1944 study of labor in Brazil concluded, for example, that "the slow increase in membership of workers' syndicates [in the wake of the 1943 unionization campaign] may possibly be due to the lack of interest shown by women. In 1940, of the 166,744 members of employees' syndicates in the Federal Capital, women constituted only seven percent." The situation in São Paulo was even worse, for women dominated certain industrial enterprises there (e.g., textiles) but made up well under ten percent of union members.<sup>45</sup> Ideologically, Vargas did smooth the way for more black Brazilians to participate. The Law of the Two Thirds and other nationalistic measures appealed to blacks. It is unclear, however, if this helped increase union membership overall.<sup>46</sup>

The operation of small, unrepresentative *sindicatos* led to the creation of a type of government unionist the rank-and-file derided as *pelegos*. A *pelego* is literally a type of blanket used as a saddle; thus, workers made the analogy of themselves as the horse, the industrialist as the rider, and the unionist as the mechanism that smoothes the ride. This term, which is still used, reveals the level of popular discontent with many unionists. Although there has not been a great deal of research on the structure and operation of individual unions during the 1930–1945 years, the work done demonstrates quite convincingly that worker discontent with unionists and the government industrial relations structure in general during the first Vargas administration kept workers from joining the *sindicatos*.

In the city of São Paulo, Brazil's leading industrial center, the unions for two of the country's most important manufacturing sectors were practically devoid of members. The Textile Workers' Union enrolled consistently fewer than 3 percent of the city's mill workers; the Metalworkers' Union had slightly more success, but still failed to gain substantially more than 5 percent of the city's *metalúrgicos* as members.<sup>47</sup> One report on São Paulo from early 1945 noted that although membership in the *sindicatos* had increased with the 1943 unionization campaign and the general opening of politics, workers continued to distrust the state system: "The fact that probably not more than one-fifth of the working men in São Paulo are members of the syndicates is chiefly because even the small dues are beyond their abilities and in part because they regard the syndicates as mere government agencies [that are] without any capacity to represent sincerely or effectively the interests of working men [and this] indicates the unimportance of the official syndicates."<sup>48</sup>

In the city of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, the *sindicatos* were practically empty until Vargas's 1943 unionization campaign, and throughout the 1930–1945 period workers understood that the unions were more tools of the state than representatives of their class.<sup>49</sup> One case where a seemingly strong and representative union did operate during these years was in Nova Lima, Minas Gerais. Local Communist party militants dominated the Morro Velho Miners' Union, which remained intact during the first Vargas administration. Government labor regulations actually helped these unionists develop a strong *sindicato* that would go on to be a thorn in the side of management after 1945.<sup>50</sup> So, even where a strong union survived the intervention of the Vargas years, it maintained its independence from the Ministry of Labor and Vargas's overall

framework for unions in the *Estado Novo*. The Morro Velho unionists did not enter into a coalition with Vargas; quite the contrary, they kept their distance from him politically.

Rio de Janeiro was the only locality during these years in which the labor ministry operated and thus promoted unionization. In the late 1930s, for example, there were more union members in Rio alone than in the rest of Brazil. Throughout the 1930–1945 period, Rio had a much greater number of unions *and* of union members than any other city in Brazil. With Vargas's unionization campaign, unions in the rest of Brazil gained members, but bureaucrats in the Ministry of Labor continued to lament the small numbers of *sindicalizados* overall.<sup>51</sup> Rio's high rate of unionization reflected the role the Ministry of Labor played there—as well as the role it might have played in the rest of the country had it been better funded and had it not ceded power to the state departments of labor—as well as Rio's unique labor history. Unlike other cities, Rio had had a tradition of labor and left activism in politics that predated Vargas. That is, while many cities' labor organizations in the 1910s and 1920s had had an anarchist orientation that later helped workers question Vargas's state-centered program, *carioca* unions often had acted as voluntary associations and this tradition fit in well with the new state role in industrial relations.<sup>52</sup> In Brazil, as elsewhere, all politics are local. Local conditions shaped patterns of unionization and the operation of the industrial relations system. And, in the final analysis, the Ministry of Labor had little impact throughout most of Brazil; the unions Vargas had planned as the cornerstone of his corporatist structure turned out to be a weak foundation indeed.<sup>53</sup>

#### Reflections on the 1930–1945 Corporatist System

In 1944 and 1945, government officials and foreign observers alike noted that the elaborate corporatist structure had failed to attract many of Brazil's working people.<sup>54</sup> This failure had an immediate impact on Vargas's political future, for he could not turn to a grateful and organized working class to help keep him in power in October 1945. Although many Brazilian elites feared that Vargas would be able to mobilize the popular classes to support his regime, as Juan Perón had earlier in October, there was barely a murmur when Generals Góes Monteiro and Eurico Dutra forced him from office on 30 October 1945. The *queremista* (for “we want Getúlio”) campaign was organized by a handful of Vargas supporters and it failed to attract much of a following even in Rio; the movement did not even exist in São Paulo and other industrial locations.<sup>55</sup> This absence of a large-scale popular mobilization on behalf of Vargas contrasted sharply with the great Peronist mobilization on 17 October 1945.<sup>56</sup>

If workers were not closely tied to Vargas and the Ministry of Labor, what then explains their seemingly quiescent attitude during the *Estado Novo*? In July 1945, the U.S. labor attaché in Brazil considered this very question and concluded: “Recent experiences... seem to indicate that repression under the dictatorial regime was perhaps more a factor in preventing strikes than was the elaborate mechanism of reconciliation.”<sup>57</sup> Brazilian officials also noted that violence had been the key to labor peace.<sup>58</sup> The importance of repression over co-optation was revealed when Vargas loosened the authoritarian control over labor relations in 1945. Workers did not rush to have wage disputes settled by the labor courts, they initiated wide-spread wildcat strikes (i.e., often without the knowledge or cooperation of the government unionists) throughout the

country, but especially in São Paulo and Rio. Strikers and employers negotiated directly with each other—again ignoring the well defined legal mechanisms for settling disputes that had been spelled out in the detailed Consolidated Labor Laws (CLT) of 1943.<sup>59</sup>

Later admissions by Vargas and his supporters about the nature of the *Estado Novo* unions are also quite revealing. In his May Day 1952 speech, Vargas openly criticized the *pelegos* who dominated the unions and apologized for his past role in sanctioning Ministry of Labor actions to support the corrupt unionists. In October 1952, Vargas's Minister of Labor, José de Segadas Vianna, told the newspaper *Última Hora* that he would fight to clean up the unions that everybody had known to be corrupt since the *Estado Novo*.<sup>60</sup> That these appeals may just be more cynical rhetoric from politicians is unimportant. What is significant is that Vargas and his Minister of Labor knew that the *Estado Novo* era state-sponsored unions were so unpopular that deriding them would appeal to rank-and-file workers.

The failure of Vargas's *sindicatos* to attract large numbers of workers had important implications for Brazilian politics. Workers in Brazil maintained more independence from political parties than their counterparts in other Latin American societies, particularly Mexico and Argentina.<sup>61</sup> This independence has had long-term implications for Brazil. Although workers were willing to use the *sindicatos* during later periods when the federal government lessened ministerial control and encouraged wage increases, they continued to avoid the sort of incorporation that characterized Mexican and Argentine unions. Indeed, the repressive features of Vargas's original labor code, many aspects of which he abandoned during his 1951–1954 presidency, were most thoroughly applied by the 1964–1985 military dictatorship. Although the military regimes could utilize a much more developed federal labor bureaucracy, they too relied on violence and the threat of violence to maintain labor peace throughout most of the dictatorship.<sup>62</sup>

In the final analysis, Vargas's legacy in labor relations is complex and contradictory. Throughout the 1930–1945 period, Vargas and his Ministers of Labor spoke of the importance of workers to Brazil and, in their rhetoric at least, elevated the position of the industrial worker. For the first time in Brazilian history the president publicly praised the popular classes and sought to incorporate them into national politics. There can be no doubt that this aspect of Vargas's program was new and innovative for Brazil. The question remains, however, if this discourse of workers' rights and responsibilities (i.e., a discourse of citizenship based on participation in the corporatist structure) was empowering to Brazilian workers.<sup>63</sup> Looking over the long term, it seems as though Vargas's legacy in labor relations was more one of creating institutions and writing laws than of establishing an empowering popular discourse. Workers used the labor laws to their advantage when they could, but there seems to have been little lasting appeal in Vargas's rhetoric. (Indeed, he himself changed course during his 1951–1954 administration.) After all, at the same time that workers heard Vargas and his Ministers of Labor praise them and their place in society, they also faced a rapidly rising cost of living, stagnant wage rates, harsh work conditions, and authoritarian control by the unions.<sup>64</sup> Vargas's state-centered labor discourse was not a particularly tangible or valuable commodity in this environment. Another way of looking at this discourse, then, is as a series of broken promises and empty rhetoric from a politician.<sup>65</sup>

When we look back at Vargas's legacy, we can see that he created extraordinarily important institutions and laws that would shape Brazilian labor relations for half a century. But, we can also see that he did not bring Brazilian workers into his

state-centered system voluntarily. In fact, Vargas even had problems attracting large numbers of workers to his labor-oriented political party (the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro, PTB). The PTB did not have a solid or lasting popular base of support, in large measure because it was organized around the unpopular corporatist structure. The PTB's successes in Rio, for example, were limited to working with established unions and Ministry of Labor officials.<sup>66</sup> In Rio Grande do Sul, Vargas' home state, the party absorbed the old FUG, rather than energizing new cadres. Moreover, the PTB's success in *gaucho* politics was more a reflection of Vargas's and then João Goulart's personal popularity than of its ability to organize and/or mobilize the *gaucho* working class.<sup>67</sup> The PTB's greatest failure was in São Paulo, Brazil's industrial heartland. The party had great difficulty attracting workers and was renowned for its disorganization.<sup>68</sup> Once we recognize that Vargas's statist labor discourse was not widely accepted, we can begin to understand why the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) policies that oppose state intervention and call for union independence are so popular among industrial laborers. The PT's perspective is deeply rooted in the Brazilian experience and not just the product of a recent political conjuncture. Vargas's legacy in this realm, paradoxically, is that he helped foster ideas about autonomy *from* the state when he sought to use labor incorporation to build state autonomy.<sup>69</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert J. Alexander, *Labor Relations in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "Le Prolétariat Brésilien. Situation et comportement social," *Sociologie du Travail* 3:4 (1961): 362–377; Leôncio Martins Rodrigues, *Sindicalismo e Conflito Industrial no Brasil* (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1966); Rodrigues, "Sindicalismo e Classe Operária, 1930–1964," In *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, ed. Boris Fausto, vol. 10 (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1986): 507–555; Hobart A. Spalding Jr., *Organized Labor in Latin America: Historical Case Studies of Workers in Dependent Societies* (New York: Harper, 1977); Alain Touraine, "Industrialisation et Conscience Ouvrière à São Paulo," *Sociologie du Travail* 3:4 (1961): 389–407; and Youssef Cohen, *The Manipulation of Consent: The State and Working-Class Consciousness in Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup>Antônio Carlos Bernardo, *Tutela e Autonomia Sindical: Brasil, 1930–1945* (São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, 1982); Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Kenneth Paul Erickson, "Populism and Political Control of the Working Class in Brazil," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin America Studies* 4 (1975): 117–144; Timothy Harding, "The Political History of Organized Labor Movement in Brazil," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1973); José Álvaro Moisés, *Lições de Liberdade e de Opressão: Os Trabalhadores e a Luta pela Democracia* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982); Francisco C. Weffort, "Sindicatos e Política," (Tese de Livre-Docência, Universidade de São Paulo, 1972); Weffort, *O Populismo na Política Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>John D. French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern São Paulo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 50–151; French, "The Origin of Corporatist State Intervention in Brazilian Industrial Relations," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 28:2 (1991): 13–26.

<sup>4</sup>For an analysis of the tripartite conciliation commissions and later Labor Courts, see Kenneth S. Mericle, "Conflict Resolution in the Brazilian Industrial Relations System," (Ph.D., University

of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974). On the minimum wage see João Saboia, *Salário Mínimo; A Experiência Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: L & PM, 1985).

<sup>5</sup>For useful analytical descriptions of corporatism as it operated in Latin America see Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State," in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, ed. James M. Malloy (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977): 47–87; and Philippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *Review of Politics* 36:1 (January 1974): 85–131.

<sup>6</sup>One of the clearest descriptions of how this system was supposed to work is provided in a long memorandum from Lindolfo Collor, the first Minister of Labor, to Vargas. See Memo from Collor to Vargas on Regulating Professional Organizations, Arquivo Lindolfo Collor 31.03.06, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação (hereinafter CPDOC), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (hereinafter FGV). Reliance on conciliation also appealed to Brazilians' national myth that they alone among Latin Americans eschewed violent social conflict in favor of a tradition of *conciliação*. On this myth see José Honório Rodrigues, *Conciliação e Reforma no Brasil: Uma Desafio Histórico-Cultural* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965); and Emília Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

<sup>7</sup>The creation of the Ministry of Labor, therefore, would play a role in Vargas's plans to increase the federal government's power vis-à-vis the state governments. In social science terms, he would increase the central state's "autonomy." On this aspect of Vargas's program see Robert Rowland, "Classe Operária e Estado de Compromisso," *Estudos CEBRAP* 8 (1974); Rosa Maria Barbosa de Araújo, *O Batismo do Trabalho: A Experiência de Lindolfo Collor* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1981), 48–51; and Barbara Geddes, "Building 'State' Autonomy in Brazil, 1930–1964," *Comparative Politics* 22:2(1990): 217–235.

<sup>8</sup>It is worth noting that Vargas and his supporters viewed these plans as the modern and progressive ways to organize a newly industrializing society. They looked with some envy not only at the order Franco and Mussolini had brought to their societies, but also at the ways Franklin Roosevelt increasingly used the federal government in the United States to mediate industrial disputes. It was not by mistake that Vargas termed his dictatorship the *Estado Novo*, or New State. One of the best analyses of Vargas's ideology during the era is Alcir Lenharo, *A Sacralização da Política* (Campinas: Papirus, 1986). On the far-reaching U.S. political and cultural influence on Brazil at this time see Frank D. McCann, *The Brazilian-American Alliance, 1937–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); and Gerson Moura, *Tio Sam Chega ao Brasil; A Penetração Cultural Americana* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984).

<sup>9</sup>*Boletim do Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria, e Comércio* (hereinafter *BMTIC*) 88 (December 1941), 82. See also *BMTIC* 112 (December 1943), 151; and Lenharo, *A Sacralização da Política*, 34–38.

<sup>10</sup>George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 147.

<sup>11</sup>Rio de Janeiro to London, "Annual Report for 1932," 13 March 1933, Foreign Office 371/16553, Public Record Office.

<sup>12</sup>A thorough description of how the labor courts operate is provided in Mericle, "Conflict Resolution..." Moreover, a decision reached by a local court (*Tribunal Regional do Trabalho*, Regional Labor Court) could be appealed to the Supreme Labor Court (*Tribunal Superior do Trabalho*) in Rio.

<sup>13</sup>This new ministry, established by Vargas in 1931, has always been associated with labor issues, but it also sought to coordinate industrial and commercial policy. Although scholars continue to note the importance of this government institution, we do not yet have a thorough history of it. A good starting point for the early years, however, is Araújo, *O Batismo do Trabalho*.

<sup>14</sup>On the creation of the National Department of Labor by Epiácio da Silva Pessoa in 1923 see Joel Wolfe, "Worker Mobilization, Repression, and the Rise of the Authoritarian State: São Paulo, 1914–1924" (Paper presented to the 56 Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, New Orleans, November 1990). This institution, which prefigured Vargas's corporatist system in many ways, only operated in Rio. On this and the National Labor Council, which also only operated in Rio, see Michael L. Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil: The Rise of Populism, 1925–1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 46–47.

<sup>15</sup>Industrialists' associations became formal "employers' unions," which were also termed *sindicatos*. On the little studied impact of Vargas's labor policies on the rural sector see Clifford Andrew Welch, "Rural Labor and the Brazilian Revolution in São Paulo, 1930–1964," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1990).

<sup>16</sup>The best work on the structure of these unions remains Evaristo de Moraes Filho, *O Problema do Sindicato Único no Brasil; Seus Fundamentos Sociológicos* (2d ed. São Paulo: Alfa-Omega, 1978). See also Mericle, "Conflict Resolution...."

<sup>17</sup>Workers in São Paulo did maintain their own factory commissions that often operated in opposition to the formal unions during the 1930–1945 period. See Joel Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men: São Paulo and the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900–1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 62–69, 77–85, 89–93, 101–124.

<sup>18</sup>The union tax (one day's wages) was automatically deducted from each worker's salary once a year in March. Payment was compulsory and did not make one a union member. The worker had to pay an additional dues—usually less than the tax—directly to the union in order to become a member (i.e., to be *sindicalizado/a*).

<sup>19</sup>The issue of popular class incorporation within Latin American regimes has recently received a great deal of attention. One of the best analyses of Brazil and Mexico can be found in Ruth Berins Collier, "Popular Sector Incorporation and Political Supremacy: Regime Evolution in Brazil and Mexico," in *Brazil and Mexico: Patterns in Late Development*, ed. Silvia Ann Hewlitt and Richard S. Weinert. (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1982). For an analysis of all of Latin America see Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*. For a comparison of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile for an earlier period see Jeremy Adelman, "Capitalist Development, the State, and Working-Class Formation in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1916–1922" (Paper presented to the Tenth Annual Latin American Labor History Conference, Durham, NC, April 1993).

<sup>20</sup>Ângela Maria de Castro Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo* (Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ/Vértice, 1988), 288–314.

<sup>21</sup>On the rise of bureaucratic union functionaries under this system see José Albertino Rodrigues, *Sindicato e Desenvolvimento no Brasil* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1968), 146–151; and Mericle, "Conflict Resolution....," 137.

<sup>22</sup>In 1931 and 1932, for example, the Ministry of Labor's budget was only 0.93% of the national budget. At the same time, the Finance Ministry received 24.9%, Justice 5.74%, Education 5.14%, and Agriculture 2.84%. Araújo, *O Batismo do Trabalho*, 71. As late as 1937, the Ministry of Labor was receiving only 1% of the federal budget for all its operations. See Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil*, 92.

<sup>23</sup>On the *tenentes* see Michael L. Conniff, "The *Tenentes* in Power: A New Perspective on the Brazilian Revolution of 1930," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 10 (1978): 61–82. For an analysis of the importance of the *gaucho* element in staffing Vargas's provisional government see Maria Helena de Magalhães Castro, "O Rio Grande do Sul no pós-30: De Protagonista a Coadjuvante," in Ângela Maria de Castro Gomes et al, eds. *Regionalismo e Centralização Política; Partidos e Constituinte nos Anos 30* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1980): 41–131. For an analysis of industrialists' meddling in the process of writing the labor laws see Ângela Maria de Castro Gomes,

*Burguesia e Trabalho: Política e Legislação Social no Brasil, 1917–1937* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1979), 199–306. On João Alberto in São Paulo see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 51–54.

<sup>24</sup>For details on the civil war see Stanley E. Hilton, *1932: A Guerra Civil Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1982).

<sup>25</sup>The state departments of labor in São Paulo and Minas Gerais gained authority over the industrial relations system through federal decrees. In São Paulo, state control of the federal domain lasted until mid-1951. The other states' departments of labor also ran the industrial relations system, but without the sort of formal agreement São Paulo and Minas had struck with Rio. See Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil*, 92; Gomes, *Burguesia e Trabalho*, 237.

<sup>26</sup>R. Paulo Lopes, "Social Problems and Legislation in Brazil," *International Labour Review* 44:4 (November 1941): 493–537.

<sup>27</sup>See Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 109–119.

<sup>28</sup>On this crackdown in general see Boris Koval, *História do Proletariado Brasileiro, 1857–1967* Translated by Claric Lima (São Paulo: Alfa-Omega, 1982), 326–35; John W. F. Dulles, *Brazilian Communism, 1935–1945: Repression During World Upheaval* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 7–42; and Edgard Carone, *A República Velha: Instituições e Classes Sociais* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1970), 342–50. For details of these moves on unions in São Paulo see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 74–85.

<sup>29</sup>One scholar has noted that "by 1935, after five years of trying to systematize buying supplies and impose price as the criterion for choosing suppliers, the Vargas government had succeeded in routinizing the purchase of office supplies, primarily paper and printed forms for government use, but nothing else." See Geddes, "Building 'State' Autonomy in Brazil," 219.

<sup>30</sup>The quote is from *Legislação do Trabalho*, 2:14 (June 1938), 201. It is reproduced in Azis Simão, *Sindicato e Estado: Suas Relações na Formação do Proletariado de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Ática, 1981), 82.

<sup>31</sup>Marcondes Filho discussed these shortcomings and put forward a plan to strengthen the ministry in a long 1943 memo to Vargas. See GV 43.00.00/3, Arquivo Getúlio Vargas, CPDOC, FGV. For a detailed analysis of Vargas's plans to strengthen the ministry see Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo*, 229–77.

<sup>32</sup>On wartime regulations and conditions see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 97–108. As will be discussed below, workers also experienced a decline in real wages over this period.

<sup>33</sup>Apart from the fact that industrialists in a given region usually had shared interests on work issues, it is important to note that the industrialists' *sindicatos* were the sort of horizontal organization that workers' *sindicatos* were expressly forbidden to form. The São Paulo State Federation of Industries (FIESP) is perhaps the most obvious example of this. Thus, the industry representative on the labor court would likely be a member of the same industrialist group as the factory owner being challenged in court. On the labor side, unionists had few opportunities in these years to demonstrate a steady allegiance to rank-and-file interests, so they would be eager to rule on behalf of workers in the courts in order to gain some legitimacy among workers.

<sup>34</sup>Interviews with unionists who served on the labor courts confirmed the notion that the tripartite panels' decisions often relied on the changing political perspective of the government official. Interviews by the author with Alcy Nogueira and Elpídio Ribeiro dos Santos Filho (respectively, the former president and secretary general of the Federation of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers of the State of São Paulo), 1 October 1987, São Paulo, S.P.

<sup>35</sup>See Gomes, *Burguesia e Trabalho*, 235–237 on the conciliation commissions. Gomes' thesis in this study is that the federal government in the 1920s and 1930s often promulgated laws and regulations that industrialists objected to, but that those industrialists managed to either alter the laws before they went into effect, or ignore them without facing enforcement from the state.



<sup>36</sup>Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo, Minutes of Weekly Meeting for 14 April 1943.

<sup>37</sup>This is detailed throughout Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, chapters 3 & 4.

<sup>38</sup>On this shift toward the workers see Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo*, 308–314; and Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 120–121. Vargas's failure to enlist popular support in 1945 is discussed below.

<sup>39</sup>Cross, São Paulo, to Berle, Rio, 28 February 1945, SP Post 850.4, Record Group (RG) 84, U.S. National Archives (NA). See also Jules Henry, "Developments in Brazilian Labor Since V.J. Day," *Monthly Labor Review* 64:3 (March 1947), 435–436; Ricardo Maranhão, *Sindicato e Democratização: Brasil, 1945–1950* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1979), 39–57; and Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 120–123, 127–130.

<sup>40</sup>For works that frame their analyses of Brazilian labor around this question, see notes 1, 2, and 3 above.

<sup>41</sup>Memo from Marcondes Filho to Vargas, Arquivo de Alexandre de Marcondes Filho to Getúlio Vargas, AMF 45.01.00, CPDOC; Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria, e Comércio, *Relatório*, 1944; and Centro das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo/Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo, *Circular*, 59/43, 7 April 1943.

<sup>42</sup>These measures are detailed in Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 74–85.

<sup>43</sup>My thanks to Antônio Toschi, the former president of the Metalworkers' Union of Osasco, São Paulo, for clarifying this point. Toschi and other unionists in the Central Única dos Trabalhadores worked throughout the 1980s to abrogate the union tax. The national Partido dos Trabalhadores' platform called for its abolition as well. Fernando Collor de Mello, in a rare move that brought approval from the left, ended the union tax in 1990. For an analysis of the use and misuse of funds from the union tax by labor leaders in São Paulo, see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, chapters 3 & 4. John D. French (*The Brazilian Workers' ABC*, 88–91) has argued that this tax greatly aided the unions in the ABC suburbs of São Paulo. French, however, provides no details on union membership. Money from the tax no doubt helped to fund the unions, but the question remains, who was in the unions and how did they interact with the rank-and-file?

<sup>44</sup>Vargas and his supporters saw this division of labor as both "traditional" and "natural," but it was really an idealized version of a sort of bourgeois family that had little in common with most urban Brazilian households in which women more often than not worked outside the home. On the *Estado Novo* ideology and its romantic view of the past see Lenharo, *A Sacralização da Política*. Although ultimately an opponent of the regime, Plínio Salgado (the leader of the Integralist movement) had an intellectual impact on the creation of this ideology. See Marilena Chauí, "Apontamentos para uma Crítica da Ação Integralista Brasileira," in Chauí ed. *Ideologia e Mobilização Popular* (2d ed. Rio de Janeiro: CEDEC/Paz e Terra, 1978). For a discussion of gender ideologies and anxieties and the unions in São Paulo during this period see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, chapters 2, 3, and 4.

<sup>45</sup>The quote is from Albert Berman, "Industrial Labor in Brazil" (Report of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, December 1944), 33–34. On São Paulo see Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, passim. One study by the Ministry of Labor found that in the late 1930s men made up over 90 percent of Brazil's union members. See *BMTIC* 68 (April 1940), 96.

<sup>46</sup>George Reid Andrews has detailed the early discrimination blacks faced in unions and also analyzes Vargas's turn toward the black population. He could not locate sources on union membership by race, but found anecdotal evidence that black union membership increased beginning in the 1930s. See Andrews, *Black and Whites*, 61–65, 186–187.

<sup>47</sup>Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 77–85.

<sup>48</sup>Cross, São Paulo, to Berle, Rio, 28 February 1945, SP Post 859.4, RG 84, NA. The report's claim of nearly twenty percent of workers in unions exaggerates membership figures. Moreover, under the terms of the 1943 Consolidated Labor Laws (CLT) workers did not become fully *sindicalizado/a* until they had been dues-paying members for at least twenty six months. In addition to the probationary twenty six months, a worker had to be at least eighteen years old, have two years of experience in their trade, be able to read and write, and maintain their dues payments to be fully *sindicalizado/a*. These requirements were not always used, but they are curious additional examples of impediments to participation within the corporatist structure. See "Labor Conditions in the São Paulo Consular District," October 1950, 17 November 1950, SP Post 560, RG 84, NA.

<sup>49</sup>Maria Andréa Loyola, *Os Sindicatos e o PTB; Estudo de um Caso em Minas Gerais* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1980), 51–57.

<sup>50</sup>That is not to say that the union did not have to obey government regulations, etc. Rather, these regulations had little impact on the union's politics. The union was also at once a local and an umbrella labor organization, because there were no other industries in the area. For a detailed history of this union see Yonne de Souza Grossi, *Mina de Morro Velho: A Extração do Homen; Uma História de Experiência Operária* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981), esp. 84–142. The Nova Lima experience was unique in a number of ways. First, it was a mining enclave, so class formation and cohesion were quite different in this location from urban industrial areas such as Rio and São Paulo. Moreover, there was a single, foreign employer, the British St. John d'el Rey Mining Company. For more details see Marshall C. Eakin, *British Enterprise in Brazil: The St. John d'el Rey Mining Company and the Morro Velho Gold Mine, 1830–1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

<sup>51</sup>In 1936–37 Rio had 161,554 union members, the rest of Brazil 147,657. Research conducted in 1938 turned up similar results. See Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo*, 269–76.

<sup>52</sup>On voluntary associations in Rio see Michael L. Conniff, "Voluntary Associations in Rio de Janeiro, 1870–1945; A New Approach to Urban Social Dynamics," *Journal of Interamerican Studies* 17 (1975):64–81. On *canioca* politics and labor and their connections to Vargas's program see Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil*, 35–134; and Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo*, 35–175. On the different receptions of Vargas's program in Rio and São Paulo see Ricardo Antunes, *Classe Operária, Sindicatos, e Partido no Brasil: Da Revolução de 30 até a Aliança Libertadora* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1982), 89–93.

<sup>53</sup>Maria Célia Paoli chides historians of Brazil for ignoring the country's great heterogeneity and size in analyzing its diverse labor histories. See Maria Célia Paoli, "Os Trabalhadores Urbanos na Fala dos Outros, Tempo, Espaço e Classe na História Operária Brasileira," In *Cultura e Identidade Operária; Aspectos da Cultura da Classe Trabalhadora*, ed. José Sérgio Leite Lopes. (São Paulo: Marco Zero/UFRJ, 1987). José Sérgio Leite Lopes also highlights the ways in which local politics in Pernambuco greatly influenced how the union at the Paulista mill (in the outskirts of Recife) reacted to the government's labor policies. See Lopes, *A Tecelagem dos Conflitos de Classe na Cidade das Chaminés* (São Paulo: Marco Zero/Universidade de Brasília, 1988). Like the case of the Morro Velho mine, the mill Leite Lopes studied was the single employer in a region. The unions in these two cases dealt directly with one employer, unlike urban areas such as São Paulo and Rio where the unions had dealings with literally hundreds of employers, but were forbidden from establishing shopfloor levels of organization. These differences should encourage scholars to put their analyses of labor relations for this period in the context of local politics—especially given the role of the state departments of labor—as well as in the context of the organization of the industries (or individual firms) studied.

<sup>54</sup>See for example Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria, e Comércio, draft of *Relatório 1944*, AGV 45.01(?)00, CPDOC, FGV; and Berman, "Industrial Labor in Brazil," 33–38.

<sup>55</sup>There is some debate over whether or not Vargas could have mobilized workers in Rio for the *queremista* campaign. John W. F. Dulles (*Vargas of Brazil: A Political Biography*. Austin: University

of Texas Press, 1967), 266–274, points out that the Labor Ministry did manage to coordinate a few large-scale rallies on behalf of Vargas. After carefully researching Vargas's and his advisers' archives, Michael Conniff concludes that Vargas did not energize support through the ministry's staged rallies and was not ultimately willing to mobilize workers in ways that might have allowed him to stay in power in 1945. See Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil*, 168–173.

<sup>56</sup>On Brazilian fears that Vargas might be able to reproduce Perón's mobilization see Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930–1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 50–53. On Perón see Daniel James, "October 17th and 18th, 1945: Mass Protest, Peronism and the Argentine Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 21 (1988): 441–461; and David Rock, *Argentina, 1516–1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 249–261.

<sup>57</sup>Cross, São Paulo, to Washington, D.C., "The Machinery for Settling Disputes Between Capital and Labor in São Paulo," 20 July 1945, RG 84, São Paulo Post Records 850.4, NA.

<sup>58</sup>Letter, Feigo Machado (of the São Paulo political police) to Vargas, 31 December 1946, AGV 46.12.31, CPDOC; see also the interviews with Abelardo de Araújo Jurema (an ally of Vargas) and José Bonifácio and José Américo (opponents of the *Estado Novo*) in Valentia da Rocha Lima, ed. *Getúlio: Uma História Oral* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1986), 136–139.

<sup>59</sup>On these strikes see Maranhão, *Sindicato e Democratização*, and Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, 121–123, 127–130.

<sup>60</sup>See Harding, "The Political History of Organized Labor," 251; and *Última Hora*, 8 October 1952.

<sup>61</sup>This point is detailed in Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*.

<sup>62</sup>On the maintenance of the corporatist labor structure during the dictatorship see Maria Helena Moreira Alves, *State and Opposition in Military Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Thomas E. Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964–1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Margaret E. Keck, *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>63</sup>With the adoption of broadly post-structuralist analytical categories by many social scientists, a focus on discourse has begun to influence—directly and indirectly—many scholars of Brazil. One work that takes a strong post-structuralist line is Maria Emília A. T. Lima, *A Construção Discursiva do Povo Brasileira: Os Discursos de Primeiro de Maio de Getúlio Vargas* (Campinas: UNICAMP, 1990). Other works that concentrate on discourse rather than praxis (or on a combination of the two) include Gomes, *A Invenção do Trabalhismo*; Lopes, *A Tecelagem dos Conflitos de Classe*; and French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC*. On the tendency of such scholarship to become "reductionist up" (i.e., on valuing only the "superstructure" of ideas, rhetoric, and so on) see "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," Lawrence Grossberg, ed., *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10:2 (Summer 1986): 45–60.

<sup>64</sup>Berman, "Industrial Labor in Brazil," 24–32.

<sup>65</sup>In thinking about state-centered labor discourses in the 1930s and 1940s, it is important to remember that Vargas's political project for the popular classes did not have anything like the lasting appeal of Peronism. Indeed, throughout the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, the PT has been highly critical of Vargas's and the PTB's views on labor and the state. This rejection of Vargas by later labor leaders contrasts sharply with the extensive use of peronism made by labor and political leaders of various perspectives in post-1955 Argentina. See Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>66</sup>On the PTB's general unpopularity due to its ties to the unions see Maria Celina Soares D'Araújo, "Partidos Trabalhistas no Brasil: Reflexões Atuais," *Estudos Históricos* 3:6 (1990):

196–206. For an analysis of the party in Rio politics see D'Araújo, "O PTB na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1945–1955," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Políticos* 74/75 (January–July 1992): 183–231.

<sup>67</sup>On Rio Grande do Sul see Miguel Bodea, *Trabalhismo e Populismo no Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade Federal, 1992).

<sup>68</sup>For details on the PTB in São Paulo see Maria Victória Benevides, *O PTB e o Trabalhismo; Partido e Sindicato em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1989).

<sup>69</sup>On the ways in which rank-and-file workers manipulated Vargas's state-oriented labor discourse and turned it into a discourse of workers' rights and state responsibilities, see Joel Wolfe, "'Father of the Poor' or 'Mother of the Rich'?: Getúlio Vargas, Industrial Workers, and Constructions of Class, Gender, and Populism in São Paulo, 1930–1954," *Radical History Review* 58 (January 1994): 81–111.