

SOUTH AMERICAN BATTLESHIPS 1908-59 : BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, AND CHILES GREAT DREADNOUGHT RACE PDF, EPUB, EBOOK



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The Argentine delegation rejected all of the bids twice, each time recycling the best technical aspects of the tendered designs when crafting new bidding requirements. We may assume that the British battleships embody good ideas and good practice—in all probability the very best. These cannot fail, in a greater or less degree, to become part of the design which the British shipbuilder first submits to the Argentine Government.

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The Argentine contract included an option for a third dreadnought in case the Brazilian government adhered to its contractual obligations to order a third dreadnought. Two newspapers, *La Prensa* and *La Argentina* , heavily advocated for a third ship; the latter even started a petition to raise money for a new battleship. Sherrill, cabled back to the United States that "this newspaper rivalry promises the early conclusion of a movement which means a third battleship whether by public subscription or by Government funds. Money for a naval building program was allocated in The Chilean Navy had cultivated extensive ties with the United Kingdom's Royal Navy since the s, when Chilean naval officers were given places on British ships to receive training and experience they could bring back to their country.

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The British purchased the incomplete hulk on 28 February for conversion to an aircraft carrier , as *Almirante Cochrane* was the only large and fast hull which was immediately available and capable of being modified into a carrier without major reconstruction. Low priority and quarrels with shipyard workers slowed completion of the ship; it was commissioned into the Royal Navy as *Eagle* in After the first Brazilian dreadnought, *Minas Geraes* , was launched, the Brazilian government began an extended campaign to remove the third dreadnought from the contract because of political—backlash from the Revolt of the Lash coupled with warming relations with Argentina—and economic reasons.

After much negotiating and attempts from Armstrong to hold the Brazilian government to the contract, the Brazilians relented, due in part to lower bond rates that made it possible for the government to borrow the necessary money. Rio de Janeiro was laid down for the first time in March By May, the Brazilian government asked Armstrong to stop work on the new warship and to submit new designs which took in the most recent advance in naval technology, super-dreadnoughts.

Eustace Tennyson-d'Eyncourt served as Armstrong's liaison to Brazil. The many requests made by the Brazilian Navy for minor changes delayed the contract signing until 10 October , and the battleship's keel laying was delayed further by a labor dispute with the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights , which led to a lockout. D'Eyncourt, who had departed Brazil in October immediately after the contract was signed, returned in March to display the various design options available to the Brazilian Navy. Armstrong evidently thought the second faction would prevail, so he also took with him everything needed to close a deal on Bacellar's design.

Most importantly, he had to deal with the fallout from a large naval revolt in November the Revolt of the Lash , which had seen three of the new vessels just purchased by the navy, along with one older coast-defense ship, mutiny against the use of corporal punishment in the navy. To make

matters worse, the dreadnoughts' expense combined with loan payments and a worsening economy led to growing government debt compounded by budget deficits. It did not fully recover until after the First World War. When I assumed office, I found that my predecessor had signed a contract for the building of the battleship Rio de Janeiro, a vessel of 32,000 tons, with an armament of 10-inch guns. Considerations of every kind pointed to the inconvenience of acquiring such a vessel and to the revision of the contract in the sense of reducing the tonnage. This was done, and we shall possess a powerful unit which will not be built on exaggerated lines such as have not as yet stood the time of experience.

D'Eyncourt probably avoided proposing any design with 10-inch guns when he saw the political situation. Author David Toppliss attributes this to political necessity, as he believed the Minister of the Navy could not validate purchasing a seemingly less-powerful dreadnought than the Minas Geraes class: with larger guns ruled out, the only remaining choice was a larger number of guns. It did not take long for the Brazilian government to reconsider their decision again; by mid-1907, battleships with 10-inch guns were under construction, and suddenly it seemed that Rio de Janeiro would be outclassed upon completion. This coincided with a collapse in Brazil's coffee and rubber exports, the latter due to the loss of the Brazilian rubber monopoly to British plantations in the Far East. The price of coffee declined by 20 percent and Brazilian exports of it dropped. Armstrong studied whether replacing the 10-inch guns with seven-inch guns would be feasible, but Brazil was probably already attempting to sell the ship.

In the tension building up to the First World War, many countries, including Russia, Italy, and the two participants in the Greco—Ottoman dreadnought race, were interested in purchasing the ship. While Russia quickly dropped out, the Italians seemed close to purchasing the ship until the French government decided to back the Greeks—rather than allow the Italians, who were the principal naval rivals of the French, to obtain the ship. The Brazilian government would only accept a monetary offer. Lacking this, the Ottomans were forced to find a loan. After selling Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian government asked Armstrong and Vickers to prepare designs for a new battleship, something strongly supported by the Navy League of Brazil Liga Maritima. They replied with at least fourteen designs, six from Vickers December through March and eight from Armstrong February. Vickers' designs varied between eight and ten-inch and eight-inch guns, with speeds between 22 and 25 knots the lower-end ships having mixed firing, the higher using oil, and displacements between 26,000 tonnes, 26,000 tons and 30,000 tonnes, 30,000 tons.

Armstrong took two basic designs, one with eight and the other with ten-inch guns, and varied their speed and firing. While most secondary sources do not mention that Brazil ordered a battleship, with the ship's entry in the warship encyclopedia Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships even remarking that "Brazil had not selected from the four design variations," the Brazilian government chose what was labeled as Design 1, the first of the eight-inch designs tendered by Armstrong, which also shared characteristics with the Queen Elizabeth and Revenge classes then being built for the United Kingdom. Riachuelo was officially suspended on 14 January and canceled on 13 May, although at least one contemporary source stated that there was a "temporarily suspended" contract for the fourth dreadnought still out as of late November, a large naval revolt, later named the Revolt of the Lash, broke out in Rio de Janeiro. Ex-slaves and the sons of slaves make up our ships' crews, most of them dark-skinned or dark-skinned mulattos.

This kind of impressment, combined with the heavy use of corporal punishment for even minor offenses, meant that relations between the black crews and white officers was tepid at best. Crewmen aboard Minas Geraes began planning for a revolt. The mutiny was delayed several times by disagreements among the participants. In a major meeting on 13 November, some of the revolutionaries expressed a desire to revolt when the president would be inaugurated 15 November, but another leader, Francisco Dias Martins, talked them out of the idea, insisting that their demands would be overshadowed by a perceived rebellion against the political system as a whole.

The immediate catalyst for their revolt came on 21 November, when an Afro-Brazilian sailor, Marcelino Rodrigues Menezes, was brutally flogged for insubordination. The revolt began aboard Minas Geraes at around 10 pm on 22 November; the ship's commander and several loyal crewmen were murdered in the process. Deodoro was twelve years old and had recently undergone a refit. The crews of the smaller warships made up only two percent of the mutineers, and some moved to the largest ships after the revolt began. Their crews were in a state of flux at the time: with nearly half of the navy's enlisted men in Rio at that time in open revolt, naval officers were suspicious of even those who remained loyal to the government. These suspicions were perhaps well-placed, given that radio operators on loyal ships passed on operational plans to the mutineers.

Enlisted men on ships that remained in government hands were reduced wherever possible, and officers took over all of the positions that would be involved in direct combat. Further complicating matters were weapon supplies, such as the destroyer's torpedoes. These could not be fired without firing caps, yet the caps were not where they were supposed to be. When they were located and delivered, they did not fit the newer torpedoes on board the destroyers. The correct caps were fitted only 48 hours after the rebellion began.

Felisberto and his fellow sailors demanded an end to what they called the "slavery" being practiced by the navy, most notably the continued use of whipping despite its ban in every other Western nation. Though navy officers and the president were staunchly opposed to any sort of amnesty and made plans to attack the rebel-held ships, many legislators were supportive. Over the next three days, both houses of the Brazilian National Congress, led by the influential senator Ruy Barbosa, passed a general bill granting amnesty to all involved and ending the use of corporal punishment. In the aftermath of the revolt, the two Brazilian dreadnoughts were disarmed by the removal of their guns' breechblocks. The revolt and consequent state of the navy, which was essentially unable to operate for fear of another rebellion, caused many leading Brazilians, including the president, prominent politicians like Barbosa and the Baron of Rio Branco, and the editor of the most respected newspaper in Brazil, *Jornal do Commercio*, to question the use of the new ships and support their sale to a foreign country.

Haggard, was ecstatic at Rio Branco's about-face, saying "This is indeed a wonderful surrender on the part of the man who was answerable for the purchase and who looked upon them as the most cherished offspring of his policy. Let me, in conclusion, point out two profound lessons of the bitter situation in which we find ourselves.

The first is that a military government is not one whit more able to save the country from the vicissitudes of war nor any braver or resourceful in meeting them than a civil government. The second is that the policy of great armaments has no place on the American continent. At least on our part and the part of the nations which surround us, the policy which we ought to follow with joy and hope is that of drawing closer international ties

through the development of commercial relations, the peace and friendship of all the peoples who inhabit the countries of America. The experience of Brazil in this respect is decisive.

All of the forces employed for twenty years in the perfecting of the means of our national defense have served, after all, to turn upon our own breasts these successive attempts at revolt. International war has not yet come to the doors of our republic. Civil war has come many times, armed by these very weapons which we have so vainly prepared for our defense against a foreign enemy. Let us do away with these ridiculous and perilous great armaments, securing international peace by means rather of just and equitable relations with our neighbors.

On the American continent, at least, it is not necessary to maintain a 'peace armada'; that hideous cancer which is devouring continuously the vitals of the nations of Europe. In the end, the president and cabinet decided against selling the ships because they feared it would hurt them politically. This came despite a consensus agreeing that the ships should be disposed of, possibly to fund smaller warships capable of traversing Brazil's many rivers. Although the Minas Geraes class remained in Brazilian hands, the mutiny had a clear detrimental effect on the navy's readiness: by , an Armstrong agent stated that the ships were in terrible condition, with rust already forming on turrets and boilers. After Rio de Janeiro was purchased by the Ottoman Empire, the Argentine government bowed to popular demand and began to seek a buyer for their two dreadnoughts.

The money received in return would have been devoted to internal improvements. Three bills directing that the battleships be sold were introduced into the Argentine National Congress in mid, but all were defeated. Still, the British and Germans expressed worries that the ships could be sold to a belligerent nation, while the Russian, Austrian, Ottoman, Italian, and Greek governments were all reportedly interested in buying both ships. The Greek government, embroiled in a dreadnought race with the Ottoman Empire , was particularly keen to acquire one of the South American dreadnoughts.

To oppose them, Greece would only have Salamis , scheduled for completion months afterwards March , and two utterly obsolete pre-dreadnoughts, Kilkis and Lemnos , purchased from the United States in May to avert what seemed to be an imminent war. The United States, worried that its neutrality would not be respected and its technology would be released for study to a foreign country, put diplomatic pressure on the Argentine government to keep the ships, which it eventually did. In each of the countries involved in the South American dreadnought arms race, movements arose that advocated the sale of the dreadnoughts to redirect the substantial amounts of money involved toward what they viewed as more worthy pursuits. After the Minas Geraes class was ordered, a Brazilian newspaper equated the initial purchase cost for the original three ships as equaling 3, miles of railroad tracks or 30, homesteads.

Massie rounded the figure to a full quarter of each government's annual income. In addition, the nationalistic sentiments that exacerbated the naval arms race gave way to slowing economies and negative public opinions which came to support investing inside the country instead. The First World War effectively ended the dreadnought race, as all three countries suddenly found themselves unable to acquire additional warships. With repairs, though, both participated in the war as part of Brazil's main naval contribution to the conflict. The Brazilian Navy also made plans to acquire additional ships in the s and 30s, but both were sharply reduced from the original proposals. In , they contemplated constructing a relatively modest number of warships, including a heavy cruiser, five destroyers, and five submarines.

In the same year, the newly arrived American naval mission, led by Rear Admiral Carl Theodore Vogelgesang , tendered a naval expansion plan of , tons, divided between battleships 70, , cruisers 60, , destroyers 15, , and submarines 6, The United States' State Department, led by Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes and fresh from negotiating the Washington Naval Treaty , was not keen on seeing another dreadnought race, so Hughes quickly moved to thwart the efforts of the mission. By the s, the international community believed that the bulk of the Brazilian Navy was "obsolete" and were old enough to no longer be "considered effective". The Brazilians eventually contracted for six destroyers from the United Kingdom. Though both programs required foreign assistance and were consequently delayed by the war, all nine ships were completed by In the s, nearly all of the major warships of the Argentine Navy were obsolete; aside from Rivadavia and Moreno , the newest major warship had been constructed at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Argentine government recognized this, and as part of holding on to their naval superiority in the region, they sent Rivadavia and Moreno to the United States in and to be modernized. In addition, in the Argentine Congress allotted 75 million gold pesos for a naval building program. Chile began to seek additional ships to bolster its fleet in , and the United Kingdom eagerly offered many of its surplus warships. This action worried nearby nations, who feared that a Chilean attempt to become the region's most powerful navy would destabilize the area and start another naval arms race. Over the next several years, the Chileans continued to acquire more ships from the British, like six destroyers the Serrano class and three submarines the Capitan O'Brien class. A second plan to acquire two small cruisers was dropped with the beginning of the Second World War. During the Second World War, the three major South American navies found themselves unable to acquire major warships; they were only able to do so again after the conflict, when the United States and United Kingdom had many unnecessary or surplus warships.

The war had proved the obsolete status of battleships, so the South American navies were seeking cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, yet they ran into political difficulties in acquiring anything larger than Flower-class corvettes and River-class frigates. They were only able to acquire them when the Red Scare began to strongly affect American and international politics. While this bolstered the navies of important South American allies of the United States, which would be treaty-bound to assist the United States in any war, naval historian Robert Scheina argues that the American government also used the opportunity to significantly affect the traditional naval rivalry among the three countries.

The warships sold unilaterally changed the naval outlook of all three nations, leading them to accept parity as opposed to the Argentine pre-war stipulation that its fleet be equal to Brazil's and Chile's combined. The venerable dreadnoughts of South America soldiered on for a short time after the war. The Brazilian Navy was the first to dispose of its dreadnoughts, the oldest in the world by that time. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Naval arms race between Argentina, Brazil, and Chile in the early s. South American dreadnoughts. Main article: Argentine—Chilean naval arms race. Statistics compiled from Scheina, Naval History, 46—51, — The dates refer to when they were launched , still incomplete. Main article: Minas Geraes -class battleship.

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He saw it as "an embodiment of national vanity, combined with personal motives of a pecuniary character. At the same time, the American government under Theodore Roosevelt tried using diplomatic means to coerce the Brazilians into canceling their ships, but the attempts were dismissed. The Baron of Rio Branco remarked that caving to the American demands would render Brazil as powerless as Cuba, whose new constitution allowed the American government to intervene in Cuban affairs.

In an early address to the National Congress of Brazil, he stated that the ships were necessary to replace the antiquated vessels composing the current navy and a battleship which had unexpectedly blown up earlier that year. After construction began on Brazil's three new small battleships, a new presidential administration took office and the Brazilian government proceeded to reconsider their order and chosen battleship design something that would happen several more times during the construction of Rio de Janeiro in This was wrought by the debut of the United Kingdom's new dreadnought concept, which was represented by the surprisingly fast construction and commissioning of the eponymous ship in The hallmark of this new warship type was its "all-big-gun" armament, which utilized many more heavy-caliber weapons than previous battleships, and it rendered the Brazilian ships obsolete before they were completed.

The Brazilian order for what contemporary commentators called "the most powerful battleship[s] in the world" came at a time when few countries in the world had contracted for such armament. This meant that Brazil was in line to have a dreadnought before many of the world's perceived powers, like France , the German Empire , the Russian Empire , and the Empire of Japan. Newspapers and journals around the world speculated that Brazil was acting as a proxy for a stronger country which would take possession of the two dreadnoughts soon after completion, as they did not believe that a previously insignificant geopolitical power would contract for such armament. The question that is puzzling diplomats the world over is why Brazil should want ferocious leviathans of such size and armament and speed as to place them ten to fifteen years in advance of any other nation besides Great Britain.

England, no matter how many Dreadnoughts she has, would be compelled to buy them to keep them from some lesser power. They bring a new question into international politics. They may be leaders of a great fleet which minor government are said to be preparing to build; or, to put it more accurately, to stand sponsors for. Some Machiavellian hand may be at work in this new game of international politics and the British Admiralty is suspected. But every statesmen and naval student may make his own guess. On the other side of the Atlantic, in the midst of the Anglo—German naval arms race , members of the British House of Commons fretted over the battleships' possible destinations, though the Admiralty consistently stated that they did not believe any sale would occur.

In mid-July and September , the Commons discussed purchasing the ships to bolster the Royal Navy and ensure they would not be sold to a foreign rival, which would disrupt the British naval plan set in place by the " two-power standard ," though in March and late July , the Brazilian government officially denied any sale was planned. Naturally, the subject of purchasing the Brazilian dreadnoughts already being built was brought up, and McKenna had to officially deny that the government was planning to tender an offer for the warships. Despite the plethora of rumors, the Brazilian government was not planning to sell their ships. Dreadnoughts formed an important role in Rio Branco's goal of raising Brazil's international status:. Brazil begins to feel the importance of her great position, the part she may play in the world, and is taking measures in a beginner's degree commensurate with that realization.

Her battle-ship-building is one with her attitude at The Hague, and these together are but part and parcel, not of a vainglorious striving after position, but of a just conception of her future. Ruy Barboza did not oppose the details of representation on the international arbitral tribunal out of antipathy to the United States, but because he believed that the sovereignty of Brazil was at least equal to that of any other sovereign nation, and because he was convinced that unequal representation on that tribunal would result in the establishment of 'categories of sovereignty'—a thing utterly opposed to the philosophy of equal sovereign rights. Argentina was highly alarmed by the Brazilian move, and they quickly moved to nullify the remaining months of the naval-limiting restrictions in the pact with Chile.

The Argentine government's alarm continued under de Oca's successor, Estanislao Zeballos. In June, Zeballos presented a plan to the Argentine Congress where they would offer the Brazilian government a chance to give one of their two unfinished dreadnoughts to Argentina. This would allow the two countries a chance to enjoy relative naval parity. Should the Brazilians refuse, Zeballos planned to issue an ultimatum: if they did not comply in eight days, the mobilized Argentine Army would invade what the army and navy ministers claimed was a defenseless Rio de Janeiro. Unfortunately for Zeballos, his plan was leaked to the media, and the resulting public outcry—Argentine citizens happened to not be in favor of their government borrowing large sums of money to mobilize the army and go to war—ensured his resignation.

The Argentine government was also deeply concerned with the possible effect on the country's large export trade, as a Brazilian blockade of the entrance to the River Plate would cripple the Argentine economy. The acquisition of dreadnoughts to maintain an equal footing with Brazil would, in the words of the Argentine admiral overseeing his country's dreadnoughts while they were being constructed, avoid a "preponderance of power on the other side, where a sudden gust of popular feeling or injured pride might make [a blockade] a dangerous weapon against us. Both countries faced difficulty in financing their own dreadnoughts. Although in Argentina the ruling National Autonomist Party supported the purchases, they initially faced public resistance for such expensive acquisitions.

The Brazilian government replied with reasoning similar to Pena's speech in 1890, in that they believed the ships were necessary to replace the antiquated equipment left by the long-term neglect of the Brazilian Navy, and they repeatedly insisted that the ships were not meant for use against Argentina. In August, a bill authorizing the Argentine Navy to acquire three dreadnoughts was passed by the Chamber of Deputies seventy-two to thirteen. After the Argentine government sent a naval delegation to Europe to solicit and evaluate armament companies' offers, [23] they received tenders from fifteen shipyards in five countries: the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy, and conducted a drawn-out bidding process. The Argentine delegation rejected all of the bids twice, each time recycling the best technical aspects of the tendered designs when crafting new bidding requirements.

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the battleship's keel laying was delayed further by a labor dispute with the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights , which led to a lockout.

D'Eyncourt, who had departed Brazil in October immediately after the contract was signed, returned in March to display the various design options available to the Brazilian Navy. Armstrong evidently thought the second faction would prevail, so he also took with him everything needed to close a deal on Bacellar's design. Most importantly, he had to deal with the fallout from a large naval revolt in November the Revolt of the Lash , which had seen three of the new vessels just purchased by the navy, along with one older coast-defense ship, mutiny against the use of corporal punishment in the navy. To make matters worse, the dreadnoughts' expense combined with loan payments and a worsening economy led to growing government debt compounded by budget deficits.

It did not fully recover until after the First World War. When I assumed office, I found that my predecessor had signed a contract for the building of the battleship Rio de Janeiro , a vessel of 32, tons, with an armament of inch guns. Considerations of every kind pointed to the inconvenience of acquiring such a vessel and to the revision of the contract in the sense of reducing the tonnage. This was done, and we shall possess a powerful unit which will not be built on exaggerated lines such as have not as yet stood the time of experience. D'Eyncourt probably avoided proposing any design with inch guns when he saw the political situation. Author David Topliss attributes this to political necessity, as he believed the Minister of the Navy could not validate purchasing a seemingly less-powerful dreadnought than the Minas Geraes class: with larger guns ruled out, the only remaining choice was a larger number of guns. It did not take long for the Brazilian government to reconsider their decision again; [] by mid, battleships with inch guns were under construction, and suddenly it seemed that Rio de Janeiro would be outclassed upon completion.

This coincided with a collapse in Brazil's coffee and rubber exports, the latter due to the loss of the Brazilian rubber monopoly to British plantations in the Far East. The price of coffee declined by 20 percent and Brazilian exports of it dropped Armstrong studied whether replacing the inch guns with seven inch guns would be feasible, but Brazil was probably already attempting to sell the ship. In the tension building up to the First World War, many countries, including Russia, Italy, and the two participants in the Greco—Ottoman dreadnought race , were interested in purchasing the ship. While Russia quickly dropped out, the Italians seemed close to purchasing the ship until the French government decided to back the Greeks —rather than allow the Italians, who were the principal naval rivals of the French, to obtain the ship.

South American dreadnought race - Wikipedia

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