

= Brazilian battleship Minas Geraes =

Minas Geraes , spelled Minas Gerais in some sources , was a dreadnought battleship of the Brazilian Navy . Named in honor of the state of Minas Gerais , the ship was laid down in April 1907 as the lead ship of its class , making the country the third to have a dreadnought under construction and igniting a naval arms race between Brazil , Argentina , and Chile .

Two months after its completion in January 1910 , Minas Geraes was featured in Scientific American , which described it as " the last word in heavy battleship design and the ... most powerfully armed warship afloat " . In November 1910 , Minas Geraes was the focal point of the Revolt of the Lash . The mutiny spread from Minas Geraes to other ships in the Navy , including its sister São Paulo , the elderly coastal defense ship Deodoro , and the recently commissioned cruiser Bahia . Led by the " Black Admiral " João Cândido Felisberto , the mutineers threatened to bombard the Brazilian capital of Rio de Janeiro if their demands were not met . As it was not possible to end the situation militarily ? the only loyal troops nearby being small torpedo boats and army troops confined to land ? the National Congress of Brazil gave in and the rebels disbanded .

When Brazil entered the First World War in 1917 , Britain 's Royal Navy declined Brazil 's offer of Minas Geraes for duty with the Grand Fleet because the ship was outdated ; it had not been refitted since entering service , so range @-@ finders and a fire @-@ control system had not been added . São Paulo underwent modernization in the United States in 1920 ; in 1921 , Minas Geraes received the same treatment . A year later , Minas Geraes sailed to counter the first of the Tenente revolts . São Paulo shelled the rebels ' fort , and they surrendered shortly thereafter ; Minas Geraes did not fire its guns . In 1924 , mutineers seized São Paulo and attempted to persuade the crews of Minas Geraes and several other ships to join them , but were unsuccessful .

Minas Geraes was modernized at the Rio de Janeiro Naval Yard in the 1930s , and underwent further refitting from 1939 to 1943 . During the Second World War , the ship was anchored in Salvador as the main defense of the port , as it was too old to play an active part in the war . For the last nine years of its service life , Minas Geraes remained largely inactive , and was towed to Italy for scrapping in March 1954 .

= = Background = =

Beginning in the late 1880s , Brazil 's navy fell into obsolescence , helped along by an 1889 revolution , which deposed Emperor Dom Pedro II , and naval revolts in 1891 and 1893 ? 94 . By the turn of the 20th century it was lagging behind the Chilean and Argentine navies in quality and total tonnage , despite Brazil having nearly three times the population of Argentina and almost five times the population of Chile .

At the turn of the twentieth century , soaring demand for coffee and rubber brought prosperity to the Brazilian economy . The government of Brazil used some of the extra money from this economic growth to finance a large naval building program in 1904 , which authorized the construction of a large number of warships , including three battleships . The Minister of the Navy , Admiral Júlio César de Noronha , signed a contract with Armstrong Whitworth for three battleships on 23 July 1906 . While the first designs for these ships were derived from the Norwegian coastal defense ship Norge and the British (originally Chilean) Swiftsure class , the contracted ships were to follow Armstrong Whitworth 's Design 439 (Design 188 in Vickers ' files) . They would displace 11 @,@ 800 long tons (12 @,@ 000 tonnes) , have a speed of 19 knots (22 mph ; 35 km / h) , and be protected by belt armor of 9 inches (23 cm) and deck armor of 1 @.@ 5 in (3 @.@ 8 cm) . Each ship would be armed with twelve 10 @-@ inch (25 cm) guns mounted in six twin turrets . These turrets would be mounted in a hexagonal configuration , similar to the later German Nassau @-@ class battleships .

Two of these ships were laid down by Armstrong in Elswick (Minas Geraes and Rio de Janeiro) , while the other was subcontracted out to Vickers in Barrow (São Paulo) . The new dreadnought concept , which premiered in December 1906 upon the completion of the namesake ship in December 1906 , rendered the Brazilian ships obsolete . The money authorized for naval expansion

was redirected by new Minister of the Navy , Rear Admiral Alexandrino Fario de Alencar , to building two dreadnoughts , with plans for a third dreadnought after the first was completed , two scout cruisers (which became the Bahia class) , ten destroyers (the Pará class) , and three submarines . The three battleships on which construction had just begun were demolished beginning on 7 January 1907 , and the design of the new dreadnoughts was approved by the Brazilians on 20 February 1907 .

Even though the greater cost of these ships meant that only two ships could begin immediately , plans went ahead . Minas Geraes , the lead ship , was laid down by Armstrong on 17 April 1907 , while São Paulo followed thirteen days later at Vickers . The news shocked Brazil 's neighbors , especially Argentina , whose Minister of Foreign Affairs remarked that either Minas Geraes or São Paulo could destroy the entire Argentine and Chilean fleets . In addition , Brazil 's order meant that they had laid down a dreadnought before many of the other major maritime powers , such as Germany , France or Russia , and the two ships made Brazil just the third country to have dreadnoughts under construction , behind the United Kingdom and the United States . In particular , the United States now actively attempted to court Brazil as an ally ; caught up in the spirit , U.S. naval journals began using terms like " Pan Americanism " and " Hemispheric Cooperation " . Newspapers and journals around the world , particularly in Britain and Germany , speculated that Brazil was acting as a proxy for a naval power 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 powerful armament .

= = Early career = =

Minas Geraes was christened by Senhora Regis de Oliveira , the wife of the Brazilian minister to Great Britain , and launched at Newcastle @-@ on @-@ Tyne on 10 September 1908 . During fitting @-@ out , it was moved to Vickers ' Walker Yard , and thousands turned out to see the incomplete ship squeeze barely underneath and through overhead and swing bridges . After completion , Minas Geraes was handed over by Armstrong on 5 January to the Brazilian Commission on behalf of the Brazilian government , while the ship 's company was mustered on deck . The British Royal Navy carried out its gunnery trials at the request of Armstrong 's and with the agreement of the Brazilian government . Although the idea of having superfiring turrets was not new ? the American South Carolina @-@ class battleships were also designed and built in this fashion around the same time ? the trials attracted interest from a few nations , who sent representatives to observe . They wanted to resolve two major questions : the effect that firing the upper superfiring turrets would have on the crewmen in the lower guns , and whether smoke from the discharge of the lower guns would hinder the targeting capabilities of the upper turret . The tests resolved both questions satisfactorily .

Minas Geraes left the Tyne on 5 February 1910 and traveled to Plymouth before beginning a voyage to the United States on 8 February . When the ship reached Norfolk , Virginia , it escorted the American armored cruiser North Carolina , which was carrying the body of the former Brazilian ambassador to the United States Joaquim Nabuco (who had died in Washington , D.C. on 17 January) to Rio de Janeiro . The two ships set sail on 17 March 1910 and reached Rio de Janeiro one month later , where Minas Geraes was commissioned into the Brazilian Navy on 18 April .

Soon after Minas Geraes ' arrival in Brazil , the country 's prosperity began to wane , and a severe depression hit the Brazilian economy . The economic hardship , the racism prevalent in all branches of the Brazilian armed forces , and the severe discipline enforced on all navy ships spawned a mutiny known as the Revolt of the Lash , or Revolta da Chibata , among sailors on the most powerful ships .

= = = Revolt of the Lash = = =

The initial spark was provided on 16 November 1910 when Afro @-@ Brazilian sailor Marcelino Rodrigues Menezes was brutally flogged 250 times for insubordination . The sailor 's back was later

described by José Carlos de Carvalho , a retired navy captain assigned to be the Brazilian government 's representative to the mutineers , as " a mullet sliced open for salting . " Many Afro @-@ Brazilian sailors were sons of former slaves , or were former slaves freed under the Lei Áurea (abolition) but forced to enter the navy . They had been planning a revolt for some time , and Menezes became the catalyst . 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 . Soon after , São Paulo , the new cruiser Bahia , the coast @-@ defense ship Deodoro , the minelayer República , the training ship Benjamin Constant , and the torpedo boats Tamoio and Timbira all revolted with relatively little violence . The first four ships represented the newest and strongest ships in the navy ; Minas Geraes , São Paulo , and Bahia had been completed and commissioned only months before . 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 .

The ships were well @-@ supplied with foodstuffs , ammunition , and coal , and the only demand of mutineers ? led by João Cândido Felisberto ? was the abolition of what they called slavery : they objected to low pay , long hours , inadequate training , and punishments including bolo (being struck on the hand with a ferrule) and the use of whips or lashes (chibata) , which eventually became a symbol of the revolt . By the 23rd , the National Congress had begun discussing the possibility of a general amnesty for the sailors . Senator Ruy Barbosa , long an opponent of slavery , lent a large amount of support , and the measure unanimously passed the Federal Senate on 24 November . The measure was then sent to the Chamber of Deputies .

Humiliated by the revolt , naval officers and the president of Brazil were staunchly opposed to amnesty , so they quickly began planning to assault the rebel ships . The officers believed such an action was necessary to restore the service 's honor . The rebels , believing an attack was imminent , sailed their ships out of Guanabara Bay and spent the night of 23 ? 24 November at sea , only returning during daylight . Late on the 24th , the President ordered the naval officers to attack the mutineers . Officers crewed some smaller warships and the cruiser Rio Grande do Sul , Bahia 's sister ship with ten 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch guns . They planned to attack on the morning of the 25th , when the government expected the mutineers would return to Guanabara Bay . When they did not return and the amnesty measure neared passage in the Chamber of Deputies , the order was rescinded . After the bill passed 125 ? 23 and the president signed it into law , the mutineers stood down on the 26th .

During the revolt , the ships were noted by many observers to be well handled , despite a previous belief that the Brazilian Navy was incapable of effectively operating the ships even before being split by a rebellion . João Cândido Felisberto ordered all liquor thrown overboard , and discipline on the ships was recognized as exemplary . The 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch guns were often used for shots over the city , but the 12 @-@ inch guns were not , which led to a suspicion among the naval officers that the rebels were incapable of using the weapons . Later research and interviews indicate that Minas Geraes ' guns were fully operational , and while São Paulo 's could not be turned after salt water contaminated the hydraulic system , British engineers still on board the ship after the voyage from the United Kingdom were working on the problem . Still , historians have never ascertained how well the mutineers could handle the ships .

The crews of the torpedo boats remained loyal to the government , and army troops moved to the presidential palace and the coastline , but neither group could stop the mutineers ; a major problem for the authorities was that many of the men who manned Rio de Janeiro 's harbor defenses were sympathetic to the mutineers ' cause . The additional possibility of the capital being bombarded forced the National Congress of Brazil to give in to the rebels ' demands . The demands included the abolition of flogging , improved living conditions , and the granting of amnesty to all mutineers . The government also issued official pardons and a statement of regret . Its submission resulted in the rebellion 's end on 26 November , when control of the four ships was handed back to the navy .

In 1913 , Minas Geraes took the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs , Lauro Müller , to the United States , reciprocating the visit U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root had paid to Brazil seven years earlier .

= = First World War = =

Even though the First World War did not touch Brazilian soil , it had crushing effects on Brazil 's economy . Prices for rubber and coffee plummeted ; the war had only a small need for rubber , and Britain allowed no coffee into Europe as space on merchant ships was reserved for " essential items " . In addition , coffee was declared to be contraband , so every Brazilian shipment to the Central Powers was subject to search and seizure ; even shipments to some neutral countries were barred to ensure that no coffee would get through . Despite these restrictions , neutral Brazil was pro @-@ Allied for the first three years of the war because of its sizable merchant fleet ; as merchantmen from Allied countries were sunk , Brazilian ships were able to take over routes that had been vacated . This policy exposed them to attack by German submarines , and after the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 , several Brazilian ships were sunk , driving the country closer to declaring war on the Central Powers .

Brazil revoked its neutrality in the war between the United States and Germany on 1 June 1917 , but did not declare war . At the same time , all German merchant ships interned in Brazilian harbors , 45 in all , were boarded and seized ; most were unusable due to neglect or sabotage . On 28 June , Brazil revoked its neutrality between all of the Allied and Central Powers but again stopped short of declaring war ; this move allowed Brazilian merchantmen to travel in Allied convoys .

The Brazilian Navy was sent out to patrol the South Atlantic with French , British and American naval units , even though none of its ships had anti @-@ submarine capabilities and , not being at war with the Central Powers , its ships were not supposed to engage any threat outside territorial waters . Another Brazilian merchant ship , Macao , was sunk by German submarine U @-@ 93 off Spain on 18 October , and eight days later Brazil declared war .

Brazil offered to send Minas Geraes and São Paulo to serve with the British Grand Fleet , but this offer was declined because both ships were in poor condition and lacked modern fire @-@ control systems . Neither of the two dreadnoughts had undergone any form of refitting since their original construction in Britain . Indicative of their poor condition , fourteen of São Paulo 's eighteen boilers failed when voyaging to New York in June 1918 for a modernization .

= = Inter @-@ war period = =

São Paulo 's refit was finished on 17 January 1920 and it returned to Brazil ; on 15 July Minas Geraes departed for New York for its own refit . Beginning on 22 August , the day it arrived , and finishing on 4 October 1921 , the battleship was dramatically modernized , with Sperry fire @-@ control equipment and Bausch and Lomb range @-@ finders for the two superfiring turrets fore and aft . A vertical armor bulkhead was fitted inside the main turrets , and the secondary battery of 4 @. @ 7 in (120 mm) guns was reduced from 22 to 12 ; five guns in casemates were removed from each side . A few modern AA guns were fitted : two 3 " / 50 caliber guns from Bethlehem Steel were added on the aft superstructure , 37 mm (1 @. @ 5 in) guns were added near each turret , and 3 @-@ pounder guns were removed from the tops of turrets .

In July 1922 , Minas Geraes joined São Paulo in helping to quash the first of the Revolução Tenentista (English : Tenente revolts) , in which the garrison of Rio de Janeiro 's Fort Copacabana rebelled and began bombarding the city . São Paulo shelled the fort , and the rebels surrendered shortly thereafter ; Minas Geraes did not fire its guns .

In 1924 , Minas Geraes was involved in another mutiny , but remained on the side of the government . First Lieutenant Hercolino Cascardo , seven second lieutenants and others commandeered São Paulo in Rio de Janeiro 's harbor on 4 November 1924 . Their goal was to force the government to release prisoners who had participated in the 1922 Tenente revolts from confinement aboard the prison ship Cuibaba ; the mutineers ' demands were not met . São Paulo 's boilers were then fired , and the ship " steamed menacingly " around Minas Geraes in an attempt to entice its and other ships to join the rebellion . São Paulo was only able to sway the crew of one old torpedo boat to its cause. its crew , angry that Minas Geraes would not join them , shot a six @-@

pounder at Minas Geraes , wounding a cook . The mutineers then sailed out of the harbor , exchanging shots with forts at the entrance along the way , and set course for Montevideo , Uruguay . The condensers failed along the way , and they reached Montevideo on 10 November making only 9 knots (10 mph ; 17 km / h) . The rebellious members of the crew disembarked and were granted asylum , while the remainder re @-@ hoisted the colors of Brazil .

Between June 1931 and April 1938 , Minas Geraes was totally reconstructed and modernized at the Rio de Janeiro Naval Yard . It was converted from its old coal ? oil combination to all @-@ oil firing . All eighteen of the original Babcock & Wilcox boilers were removed in favor of six new John I. Thornycroft & Company boilers . The former No. 1 boiler room and all twelve of the side coal bunkers were converted to fuel oil storage tanks ; the upper coal bunkers were removed . In addition , Minas Geraes ' dynamos were replaced with new turbogenerators . The most striking aesthetic change was the trunking of the boiler uptakes into a single funnel . The fire @-@ control systems that had been fitted after the First World War were also modernized in favor of Zeiss range @-@ finders . The guns were overhauled ; two extra 4 @.@ 7 in (120 mm) guns were added (making 14 total) , and six 20 mm (0 @.@ 79 in) Madsen guns were installed , including two on the top of ' X ' turret . The maximum elevation of the 12 @-@ inch guns was upped from 13 ° to 18 ° .

= = Second World War and later career = =

As in the First World War , Brazil was neutral during the early years of the Second World War . German attacks on Brazilian merchant ships pushed the country into war on the Allied side ; Brazil declared war on 21 August 1942 , taking effect on 31 August .

Apart from three destroyers launched in 1940 and four submarines from the inter @-@ war years , Brazil 's warships were old and mostly obsolete pre @-@ First World War vessels . The mainstays of the fleet , Minas Geraes , São Paulo , Bahia , and Rio Grande do Sul , were all over thirty years old . Although Minas Geraes had been further refitted from 1939 to 1943 , the ship was still too old and in too poor a condition for any active role in the Second World War ; instead , the dreadnought was anchored as a floating battery in the port of Salvador for the duration of the war .

Minas Geraes was inactive for much of the rest of its career . Decommissioned on 16 May 1952 , it was used as a stationary headquarters for the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Brazilian Navy until 17 December of that year . The ship was removed from the naval register on 31 December , and sold to the Italian ship breaking company SA Cantiere Navale de Santa Maria . Minas Geraes was taken under tow on 1 March 1954 and arrived in Genoa on 22 April ; the old dreadnought , which had been in service for more than forty years , was broken up for scrap later that year .

= = Endnotes = =