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SHOCKING
BRAZIL
SEVEN GAMES THAT SHOOK
THE WORLD CUP
FERNANDO DUARTE
FOREWORD BY GILBERTO SILVA

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FERNANDO DUARTE

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To Barbosa, wherever this might find him.

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After almost 20 years of being involved with Brazilian football in a professional capacity, it is a privilege t
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You are my guiding lights.

Fernando Duarte, 20

FOREWORD

Ask any Brazilian footballer and they will undoubtedly say that playing for our national team – the Seleçã as we call it – is the highest professional and personal honour he can aspire too. In over 15 years as professional player, I have been blessed with the opportunity to play 93 matches for my country an represent Brazil in three World Cups. While being part of the 2002 winning side was unquestionably th pinnacle of my career, the two tournaments where we returned home early have never faded from m memory. Those were hurtful experiences, I can tell you, but they also taught me a great deal about life an the game. They showed, above all, how winning a competition like the World Cup is an outcome that reli upon so much more than simply having good players.

Brazil are the team that everybody wants to beat thanks to their outstanding record in the World Cup. B at the same time, I feel this record also poses a grave a threat to Brazilian football, for it serves as a perfe excuse for sticking to the status quo. Even when there are clear and troubling signs that the game in Bra needs an overhaul, many people both abroad and at home are unaware of the serious organisation problems at the heart of Brazilian football that need to be addressed for the benefit of all stakeholders, fro fans to the clubs, if we are to remain as a superpower in the world game.

In this book, Fernando Duarte is not being pessimistic when he focuses on the sad chapters in Brazili football history. Throughout his tour of World Cup defeats he points out mistakes and lessons learned bot on and off the pitch. He also addresses the need for some soul searching as the rest of the world catches u with the Seleção. Like me, Fernando has spent a great deal of his career abroad and from this perspective has been able to observe that Brazil can sometimes be accused of hiding behind its past successes instead looking to build upon them.

In late 2013, a group of Brazilian players returned home to help found a player movement th demanding reforms in the way the game is organised, played and run in my country. We called it F Common Sense. More than simply hailing the good practices we had experienced abroad, we wanted show the need for collective engagement in improving the standards of the whole football experience Brazil. A crucial part of our agenda is to show the world that Brazilian football should not be guided stereotypes and myths and that our problems need to be explained, analysed and understood.

Shocking Brazil aims to do exactly that. Impressive as Brazil's record is, we have to be humble enough accept we can't be the best in the world all the time. Humble enough to accept our mistakes. And humb enough to learn from them. There is no shame in that.

Gilberto Sil

2002 World Cup Winner and a member of the Arsenal 2003/4 'Invincibl

PELÉ. THE 1970 World Cup team. The Beautiful Game. Brazilian football has become synonymou with sporting excellence. Supporters and admirers from every part of the globe are able to recoun recall or refer to joyful tales about Brazil's unmatched achievements, especially the ones relating to Worl Cup glory. Little attention has been paid, however, to the occasions where Brazil failed spectacularly at th sport's blue riband event. Many followers of the sport will be aware of the 'Maracanazo of 1950', in whic Brazil were painfully defeated in the World Cup final by neighbours Uruguay in front of a reported crow of 200,000 in Rio de Janeiro, or the beautifully-flawed team of 1982, whose flamboyant style of play fe short of winning the trophy but still managed to enchant fans and media. There have been many boo about Brazil's golden moments and some interesting accounts of how football achieved a much more inten status in Brazilian society than in many other countries traditionally linked to the game. However, previo narratives generally overlook the crucial transformations undergone by Brazilian football and Brazil itself a result of the Seleção (the most famous nickname for the national team) failures. That all might hav changed after the 2014 World Cup. Not only because Brazil lost but also the way in which the Seleção we unceremoniously destroyed at home by Germany in a World Cup semi-final whose 7-1 result se shockwaves around the planet. Still, few people realise that the hiding they received was as not just the resu of players' performance on the pitch.

The following pages journey through the defeats that changed the face of Brazilian football. Choosi them was far from an easy task, even if an emblematic game such as the 1950 final obviously picked itse Even as the most successful footballing nation in the world, Brazil have obviously lost games. The idea he was to choose occasions where circumstances not simply restricted to the pitch had an impact upon resu and the consequences thereafter. Given the cultural and financial importance that the World Cup holds football's premier tournament, it has been around this competition that the most significant defeats – an the changes that came in their wake – have occurred. *Shocking Brazil* revisits seven World Cup defeats th led to mutations in Brazilian football, for better or for worse, and the fallout from which spread well beyon the sporting sphere. The 1950 World Cup final once again rears its head as the classic example: that defe had such a deep impact on the national psyche that it led to the Seleção ditching the colours of their kit in a attempt to exorcise the awful spectre of that match from the nation's conscience. But that game also result in one the most regrettable chapters in Brazil's struggles against racism, as shall be discussed.

Considered by many the finest XI ever to have graced a football pitch, the Brazilian 1970 World Cu team has earned a reputation of iconic proportions, especially in the United Kingdom. What few peop know is that Pelé, Jairzinho and Carlos Alberto played that entire tournament under immense pressure fro the public and a media who feared a repeat of Brazil's humiliating first round exit in England four yea earlier, when even Pelé could not avert disaster for his team. While the defeat by Italy in Barcelona in 198 became almost more famous than the final, Brazil's failure to win it 'beautifully' sparked a crisis of identit in Brazilian football at a time of hardship for most of the country's population.

The losing stories are a significant source of untapped information on the development of the game in th nation that the football world has learned to both admire and fear. Through a focus on Brazil's bigge World Cup defeats, this book will help explain Brazilian football in a wider perspective. The practitioners o the 'Beautiful Game' are still owed an account that demolishes certain long-established myths and address events that have never been fully explored.

These games hide narratives of racism, corruption, authoritarianism and corporate power still oblivious

many observers of Brazilian football. Through anecdotes, data and observation, this book intends to sho
Brazilian football in a different light. It is an account aimed squarely at football fans willing to go beyond t
cyclical information about Brazilian football regularly fed to them by mainstream media. And I really ho
you'll enjoy the ride as much as I did.

Fernando Duarte, 20

1950

ONE

1950
THE BIG SILENCE

PARIS' STADE DE FRANCE was packed to the rafters on the night of 20 May 2004. To celebra the 100th anniversary of the founding of FIFA, football's governing body had organised a friend between world champions Brazil and European champions France. It was a gala affair which a record 79,34 crowd had come to witness.

To make the most of the 'retro' spirit of the fixture, both teams would play the first half wearing replic of their original uniforms. The French, led by Zinedine Zidane, entered the pitch wearing blue shirts wi white collars and long cream shorts with red socks – the outfit they had worn for their first internation outing in 1904. Brazil, with Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos and Cafu, donned what for many people looked like surprising combination of white shirts and shorts with blue socks. Only people with a strong interest in t history of Brazilian football would know that the team that became famous in bright yellow had actual originally worn white when, in 1914, the newly formed Seleção Brasileira (Brazilian Selection) played Exet City on 20 August in Rio de Janeiro. Thirty-six years later that white shirt would become so tarnished b events at the 1950 World Cup that it became a symbol that would haunt the national psyche in Braz Unthinkable elsewhere, with the exception perhaps of Germany, where Nazi revisionism and the partition the country for almost 40 years led to changes in the Mannschaft uniform, Brazil's ditching of white was reaction to what renowned anthropologist Roberto da Matta described as the biggest modern tragedy in country plagued by natural disasters and the great conflicts of the 20th century. Even if they hadn't bee born by 1950, there is no Brazilian football fan who feels untouched by the ghosts of the 'Maracanazo'.

On the morning of 16 July 1950, Obdulio Jacinto Varela, like many of his Uruguay team-mates, was tryi to steady his nerves while time seemed to drag on and on at Paysandu Hotel, the five-storied art de building located in Rio de Janeiro's noble Flamengo neighbourhood.

Having checked in two days before, the team were doing their best to steer clear of the carniv atmosphere that had taken over the then Brazilian capital. With its brand new Maracanã stadium, Rio w host to the final of the fourth FIFA World Cup, in which the highly unfancied Uruguayans would lo horns with hosts Brazil – an occasion that had raised patriotic fervour to manic levels around the countr With newspapers desperate to cash in on the deluge of interest in the tournament, the Seleção were fro page news on a daily basis.

For all the expectation being placed on the shoulders of the home team, Uruguay remained dangero opposition. Not only had they lifted the first World Cup in 1930, they had also won the gold medal in bo the Paris and Amsterdam Olympics of 1924 and 1928 at a time when the Games was the only internation

football tournament. Those feats had led to Uruguay being nicknamed the 'Olympic Celestials', in reference to their blue shirts. Their status as Olympic champions was instrumental in securing the hostin rights for the first-ever World Cup, which coincided with the 100th anniversary of the country's firs constitution – hence the name 'Centenário' given to the new ground they built for the tournament. Urugu beat rival bids from Italy, Sweden, Holland and Spain and the decision to take the tournament to Sou America did not please some of FIFA's European core. As a consequence, several countries from th continent refused to take part in the tournament, many citing travel costs as the primary obstacle to the involvement. In fact, by February 1930 no European team had actually confirmed their attendance. FIFA president, Jules Rimet, then cut a deal whereby the Uruguayan government would help pay expenses f interested teams and that action convinced Belgium, France, Romania and Yugoslavia to cross the Atlanti In total, 13 teams played in the tournament; seven were from South America, including Brazil. The final w a local derby: Uruguay came from 2-1 down to beat Argentina 4-2. Despite the European boycott, it interesting to note that the same two teams had played the gold medal match in the 1928 Olympics bronze winners Italy were the tournament's most noticeable absence.

Incensed at the European snub, Uruguay called for a South American boycott in 1934, when Italy hoste the tournament, but both Brazil and Argentina defied this suggestion and attended. Four years later, FIFA decision to award the tournament to France would result in another Uruguayan absence, as they argued th a South American country should have been selected. This time, only Brazil did not adhere to the Sou American boycott.

So it was that, absent from the international arena for all these years, Uruguay were something of forgotten power by 1950. Between 1929 and 1949, they had won only two out of ten South Americ championships. Still, for a country whose population was a mere 2.2 million in 1950, and whose territo only measures 177,000 km2, Uruguay had punched remarkably above its weight throughout its footballi history. Obdulio Jacinto Varela and his team-mates, however, were aware that his country's heroics were no restricted to football pitches.

Geopolitical instability in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century had seen breakaway movements the colonies in South America. In 1811 the region known as Eastern Bank, in the River Plate basin, revolt against Spanish colonial rule, and later formed a confederacy with the neighbouring provinces of Santa and Entre Rios. The Portuguese crown, which feared that the revolutionary winds could reach Rio Grande do Sul, the most southern province in Brazil, which at the time was considered Portugal's mo important colony, ordered the invasion of the Eastern Bank in 1816. Four years later the region became annexe to Brazil and was renamed the Cisplatine Province, establishing a foothold for Portugal into th River Plate's main port, Montevideo, which was a key trading channel.

Just two years later, in 1822, Brazil itself broke free from Portugal in very peculiar terms – it became empire headed by Pedro I, King John VI of Portugal's son – and Cisplatine was subsumed into Brazilia territory. The province sent representatives to Brazil's first constitutional assembly in 1823, and wa rewarded with a considerable degree of autonomy in the 1824 Brazilian Constitution. Historically, there ha been affinities between those in the Cisplatine Province and the Southern Brazilians, such as the importan played by cattle-raising for their respective economies and the gaucho (cowboy) folklore. Practicall however, there were significant differences, starting with the fact that Brazil was the only Portugues speaking country in a region dominated by Spanish. It didn't, therefore, take long for an uprising to occur.

In 1825, Cisplatine declared independence from Brazil, backed by the United Provinces of River Plate the embryonic Argentina. War broke out and Brazil tried to make use of its naval power to suffocate th

rebellion but it lacked a strong enough army to make a concerted territorial push overland. Both sides faile to achieve major gains and by 1828 a stalemate forced a compromise. Faced with unrest in Brazil due to th financial costs of the war (at a time when the country was still consolidating its independence process), Pedr I accepted the Cisplatine independence and signed the British-intermediated Montevideo Treaty. In 183 the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a name inspired by the indigenous-named South American river, w formally born.

Independence in the newly formed Uruguay was quickly followed by a wave of European immigratio helping to build a nation whose population at the time was estimated at only 75,000 people. That influ included British subjects, and although far from a majority group, their arrival had a major bearing on t development of sport – and in particular football – among the nation-builders. In 1901, a friendly mat between Uruguay and Argentina became the first international ever to be played outside the Unit Kingdom. Different to the style developed (and developing) in neighbours Brazil and Argentina, Uruguaya football was marked by diversity thanks to a melting pot of influences that included the arrival of Itali coaches looking for work, and in 1916 the country fielded two black players for the first time at the Sou American championship decider, when the Uruguayans hammered Chile 4-0. The Chileans would lat protest about the inclusion of 'slave' descendants in the team, much to Uruguayan dismay.

In the 1924 Olympics, midfielder Leandro Andrade, who was indeed the son of a slave originally broug from West Africa to Southern Brazil, became Uruguayan football's first hero, leading the side to gold glory. At the time Obdulio Varela was only six years old, but was certainly aware of his country achievement. Also of African ancestry – as well as Spanish and Greek lineage – Varela, born in Montevide had joined first division Montevideo Wanderers in 1938, a year before he was first called up by Urugua His international debut took place at the 1939 Copa America, when he came on as a substitute in a victo over Chile. Uruguay lost the title to hosts Peru but in Varela they had found a leader who would later b known as 'El Jefe Negro' (the Black Chief). In 1943, Varela joined Peñarol, Uruguay's most famous clu where he would win three national titles in the 1940s. There, he would also play alongside eight oth players who would be selected for the 1950 World Cup squad.

It was hardly surprising that their own feelings of nationalistic fervour and pride were swirling strong around the hearts and minds of the Uruguayan players at the Paysandu Hotel on 16 July. They originate from a country historically proud of its underdog struggles and its victories against the odds. In the 19 World Cup, Uruguay, for the first time in 20 years, were locking horns at the highest level and they ha once again made it to the final, defying all the odds. While the football world seemed to have moved o since Uruguay's golden days of the 1920s and 1930s, and there had been a fear among the media and fa back home that the team would struggle to be competitive, the players had rallied against all expectations.

'We grew up with the tradition that we would have to always turn into lions while wearing the Urugu shirt,' recalled winger Alcydes Gighhia, a name that would become intrinsically linked to that competitio 'We would have to fight with our hearts. It always seemed to fire us up when everything was against u especially the crowds.'

So it was that Manuel Caballero, Uruguayan honorary consul in Rio de Janeiro, knew precisely what was doing when he arrived at the Paysandu with 20 copies of newspaper *O Mundo*. On the cover was picture of the Brazilian XI. The use of that image was nothing unusual given the frenzy that the tourname had been causing in the country and the way the newspapers had been exploiting the interest in the team, b the picture was placed under the headline: 'Here Are The World Champions'.

'My commiserations to you, gentlemen,' said Caballero as he put the newspapers on the table in front

Varela, the captain. ‘It seems you are already beaten.’

Varela read the headline in silence and then stood. He picked up the stack of newspapers and stalked acro the restaurant to the men’s room. A few minutes later he emerged empty-handed.

‘Go,’ he instructed his watching team-mates, with a nod of his head towards the men’s room.

As the players filed in they found that Varela had decorated the urinals with the front page of *O Mund* Scrawled in chalk on the mirrors, Varela had written a message: ‘*Pisen y orinen en el diário*’. The captain w ordering his troops to step up and show exactly what they thought of the newspaper’s crowin pronouncement.

But for all the bravado of *O Mundo*’s headline, the surge of confidence that was washing through th country could hardly be simplified as arrogance. On the contrary. In 1950, Brazil was no place for a optimist. It was a country still stuck in second gear: half of its 51.7 million population could neither re nor write and life expectancy stood at just 46 years. The Brazilian economy was still largely dependent upo agriculture and its industry was severely hampered by infrastructural challenges, such as the absence of an major highways. While the economy grew an average of 7 per cent between 1946 and 1950, inflation w rife.

Politically, Brazil was a volatile country; in 1945 a military coup had deposed dictator Getúlio Vargas an called for free elections, but the regime change had failed to foster any national unity as the politic landscape had simply switched from one dictatorship to another, the main change being that the Commun Party, ferociously pursued under Vargas, was no longer outlawed. It was in this scenario that electe president Eurico Gaspar Dutra was presented with the idea of a Brazilian bid for the 1950 World Cup. Th Brazilian interest in the competition wasn’t new – the country had presented a proposal to FIFA in 193 during the World Cup in France in the hope that they would be awarded the 1942 event. Germany, Braz and Argentina had contacted FIFA, and although the German proposition looked better prepared, the Sou Americans argued it was time the competition crossed the Atlantic again after it had been held in Euro twice in a row.

Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939 suspended the discussions and the Second World War led to th cancellation of both the 1942 and 1946 tournaments. By the time FIFA reconvened in July 1946, the tabl had turned significantly. No European country could possibly organise the competition in the middle o post-war reconstruction, which reinforced the Brazilian case. FIFA were also worried that failure to resun the World Cup could dent interest in the event. So Brazil were awarded the tournament and the Dut government saw an opportunity not only to score popularity points domestically at a time when his party defeat in the 1950 elections was deemed a certainty, but also a chance to showcase Brazil’s push fo modernity to the international community. Besides, football had increasingly grown in importance Brazilians since the first World Cup and the country’s relationship with the sport had evolved from puzzled interest to a fundamental expression of the way Brazilians perceived themselves. To understand why it is necessary to look back to the 19th century.

It is common to define 1894 as Year Zero in Brazilian football. On 18 February, among the passenge disembarking at the port of Santos was Charles Miller. Miller was the Brazilian-born son of a Scotsman wh had emigrated to Brazil to work in the booming railway construction business. When he was aged te Miller had been sent by his parents to Britain for his secondary studies. Now 19, he had returned to Brazil start work for São Paulo Railway. Bannister Court School, in Southampton, was hardly an academic star i

the British educational system but it was there that young Charles had been sent – and, most crucially, it w
there~~ that he had been introduced to football. When he boarded the ship to Brazil in 1894 he had~~ packe
two footballs, a pairs of boots, a couple of used kits and a pump among his belongings.

A year later, under Miller's guidance, a game between workers from the Gas Company of São Paulo an
São Paulo Railway took place on a common in the Bras neighbourhood; São Paulo Railway won 4-
Historians have often referred to this match as the first to take place in Brazil under the organised rules
the Football Association. There are documents referring to football games in Brazil as early as 1864, 30 yea
before Miller's arrival, usually kickabouts organised by off-duty British sailors in the vicinities of Brazilia
ports – there is also evidence that it was used a recreational tool in religious schools around the country.
Rio's Gloria neighbourhood, a piece of land opposite the residence of Princess Isabel (Brazil was a monarch
until 1889) is described as a place for local games for workers from British companies. All those initiative
however, had in common the absence of local participation. It was under Charles Miller's guidance that Sã
Paulo Athletic Club (SPAC), founded by cricket-mad British expats, assembled one of the first footba
squads in Brazil. Miller was also behind the organisation of the first tournament in Brazil, in 1899, which l
to the creation of the São Paulo Football League, two years later.

Another priceless contribution from Miller was his preference for dribbling. His footballing skills had be
nurtured in the south of England, where a quicker game was played in comparison to the more laboure
passing game popular in the north, and this had a major influence on the construction of the Brazilian styl
Miller would play for SPAC until 1910 when he retired having helped the side win back-to-back titles fro
1902 to 1904; he was the top scorer in both 1902 and 1904. Much more skilled than many of his fello
athletes, Miller even managed to create a dribble – a deft flick of the ball with the heel – that would becon
known as a 'Chaleira' in tribute to him. He was also instrumental in promoting Brazil as a destination fo
touring English teams and after a visit from London side Corinthian Football Club he suggested that
group of railway workers set up the Sport Club Corinthians Paulista, which would become one of th
powerhouses of Brazilian football in years to come. Rio de Janeiro would soon have its own league in 190
but unlike the proliferation of working-class clubs in England, Brazilian football was dominated by the whi
and rich elite.

One of the last countries in the world to formally abolish slavery, in 1888, Brazil entered the 20th centu
with a huge mass of freed slaves that increasingly headed from the countryside to urban centres in search
work. It was natural that the working classes would come into contact with football sooner rather than late
but the leading clubs would turn down non-white players and working-class teams were actually bann
from playing in the Rio and São Paulo leagues. In a country that was rife with poverty and raci
discrimination, football was claimed by the white elite as 'their' game. To tip the balance still further i
favour of the wealthy, football equipment in early 20th-century Brazil was expensive. It did not preve
workers' teams from improvising, playing barefoot, with old balls or even improvised ones made fro
alternative materials in the absence of the real thing. But the rules of staunch amateurism also kept the gam
'free' from the poor. It is a curious fact that the racial resistance that so subsumed the fabric of Brazilia
football should be broken by the success of Brazil's mixed-race talent.

Arthur Friedenreich was born in 1892, the son of a white German businessman who immigrated to Bra
and fell in love with a black Brazilian washerwoman who was the daughter of free slaves. The genet
combination resulted in a tall boy with brown skin, curly hair and green eyes. Although technical
vulnerable to the widespread prejudice in Brazilian society, Friedenreich had a world of opportunities
front of him thanks to his father's elevated position. One of these was football. His father, Osca
Friedenreich, was a member of SC Germania, a club founded in São Paulo in 1899 by German immigran
and one of the earliest adopters of football in the country. In 1909, at the age of 17, Arthur was selected fo

the Germania squad and became the first non-white to join a league in Brazil. He played for a succession São Paulo club sides before joining Paulistano in 1916 and was one of the first mixed-race players t represent the national team – which he did with some style, becoming the undisputed star of the 1919 Sou American championship.

The importance of this tournament in Brazilian football cannot be overstated. Only five years aft putting together a team to play against Exeter City, Brazil were hosting their first international competitio With only Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile taking part, the round-robin tournament was playe exclusively at Fluminense Football Club's Laranjeiras Stadium which, although only built in 1905, had bee renovated for the tournament, with the capacity expanded from 5,000 to 19,000. In May 1919, the gan between Brazil and Chile kicked off the tournament and the first goal was scored by Friedenreic Fluminense had historically been one of the bastions against racial diversity in football and even their fi black star, Carlos Alberto, signed from America FC in 1914, resorted to 'whiting up' with rice powd before taking to the pitch, fearing a racist backlash from the club's supporters. Friedenreich scored a ha trick in Brazil's 6-0 demolition of the Chileans.

Uruguay, who had won the first two editions of the tournament (1916 and 1917), began their 191 campaign with a 3-2 win over Argentina on 13 May. They went on to beat Chile 2-0 while Brazil overcam Argentina 3-1. Argentina and Chile played a consolation match in the final round, while Brazil and Urugu competed for the title on the 26th. A 2-2 draw meant a play-off was necessary and three days later th returned to the Laranjeiras. A goalless draw required extra-time and after a series of quiet displays followi the Chile game, Friedenreich scored the goal that gave Brazil their first-ever title. It was Brazil's maide victory over Uruguay, having previously been defeated 2-1 and 4-0.

Friedenreich became an idol in Brazil and won plaudits from opponents – he became known in Urugu and Argentina as 'the Tiger' thanks to his powerful stride and rapid movements. Still, as rare pictures of hi show, Friedenreich 'disguised' his non-whiteness by patiently using a combination of paste and hotel towe to flatten his curly hair. Nine times top scorer in the São Paulo league, Friedenreich retired at 39, havi struck 554 goals in 591 games, averaging 0.94 of a goal per game, better than Pelé's 0.93.

Even by the 1920s, when professionalism had crept into the game, Brazilian football clubs still creat entry barriers for the lower classes by demanding, for example, that players be in full employment to eligible to play. In Rio, being able to read and write was another demand, tested by making players sig official match reports – clubs quickly started funding private tuition for poorer athletes in order circumvent the law. 'Football in Brazil became popular almost by sheer force from the lower classe explains Brazilian historian and writer Marcos Guterman. 'It was a symbolic victory over the elite. Most the revolutions in Brazilian history, including the Republican uprising of 1899, had been top-down, with th people pretty much observing rather than participating. With football, a game that was much simpler a easier to play than cricket and rugby, the Brazilians realised they could challenge the hierarchy.'

Friedenreich, however, would become an early case of a wondrous player who would never grace a Wor Cup. By the time of Uruguay 1930 he was still an active player, having been the top scorer in the São Pau league for the previous three seasons, but the tug-of-war between the footballing authorities in Rio and S Paulo for the control of the national team resulted in a 'Paulista' boycott of the Seleção. Friedenreich a other players from São Paulo clubs were forbidden to join the team and Brazil travelled to Uruguay with depleted squad. Having been drawn alongside Yugoslavia and Bolivia, the Seleção lost 2-1 to the Europea and although they beat Bolivia 4-0, it was Yugoslavia who progressed from the group after also winning 4 against Bolivia. The bickering between Rio and São Paulo was so strong that newspapers reported scenes jubilation in the streets of São Paulo when Brazil's elimination was announced.

Four years later, in Italy, another split: this time it was a discussion on amateurism. The Brazilian Spor

Confederation (CBD) faced opposition from the Brazilian Football Federation, a governing body created defend professionalism and which had amassed the support of most of the top Brazilian clubs. An exceptio was Botafogo, and the Rio club ended up providing no fewer than nine players to the Seleção. For the fir time before a World Cup, teams would have to play a qualifying tournament after a total of 32 nations ha shown an interest in taking part in the tournament. Brazil were spared the trouble of qualification aft opponents Peru withdrew from the play-off. This easy qualification was nevertheless followed by som pretty complicated logistics.

The CBD only managed to put the players on a ship two weeks before the competition, which meant th after an 11-day journey across the Atlantic the team had a meagre 72 hours to prepare for their first rou game against Spain. The World Cup would be played in a play-off format from the start, which meant th every game was sudden-death. Although technical staff tried their best to keep the players fit while aboa the ship, their conditioning and focus had been severely hampered by the time they disembarked in Gen and there was only time for one proper training session before they played one of the best teams in t world.

Spain were leading 3-0 after 30 minutes, although Brazil did miss a penalty and Leonidas da Silva pulled goal back in the second half. Predictable as it was in retrospect, the defeat came unexpectedly for the CB directors, who had arranged a string of friendlies for the Seleção against Spanish and Portuguese clubs aft the tournament. A hastily arranged game against Yugoslavia to fill the time in between ended in humiliating 8-4 defeat.

Football was the last stand of the old elite in Brazil; for the first third of the 20th century, agrarian oligarc from the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais had dominated the republic's politics, with their outgoi governors alternating themselves in the presidency. It all started to change in October 1930, when a sta coup led by Rio Grande do Sul politician Getúlio Vargas – a defeated candidate in the presidential electio months before – deposed the still-serving president, Washington Luis. Vargas was sworn in to the presiden in that same month to oversee a transition. His 'provisional government', however, would last 15 yea Under his centralised command, Vargas immediately sought to attract support from the working class order to establish a power base from which he could confront the aristocratic influence.

Vargas did not have a clear plan for Brazil, but he was a charismatic man. The messianic tones he used address the masses irked his opponents but seemed to address the concerns of the common people. It did take long for the new president to notice that sport could be used as an easy channel for dialogue with t masses. It was under Vargas that football was formally professionalised in Brazil and recognised as a form profession in a new set of general labour laws. In his association with sport, Vargas was hardly doi anything new: the 1930s were marked by the utilisation of football for political gain around the world, wi Mussolini's propagandistic use of the 1934 World Cup and Italy's victory in the tournament the mo prominent example. Vargas understood that in a country still torn by strong political and social division li Brazil, football could be one of the few unifying experiences. That football stadiums such as São Januário, Rio de Janeiro, would host presidential ceremonies where Vargas would make long and impassion speeches, was not a coincidence.

But the more formal 'annexation' of football to the political agenda would take place after 1937, the ye that Vargas commanded another coup which essentially turned Brazil into a dictatorial regime. Claimi that his government had unveiled a communist plot to overthrow him, Vargas installed emergency la conveniently just before the 1938 presidential elections. Every sphere of Brazilian sport came under sta control and specific legislation was created to limit what the government saw as 'foreign influence'

sporting clubs. Vargas also benefited from the fact that football had experienced a leap in popularity
~~Brazil throughout the 1930s, fuelled by media interest, in particular the growth of radio as a mass mediu~~
Football through the airwaves became a shared experience and a primary source of entertainme
throughout the country. 'Radio was crucial to the growth in popularity of football in Brazil,' explai
Marcos Guterman. 'The match commentary was always epic and tales of heroic feats by individuals, wh
were more and more representative of the socially deprived in Brazil, helped create and reinforce a fanta
around the game.'

Even before the radicalisation of his regime, Vargas had not wasted time associating himself with footba
in 1932, when Brazil defeated Uruguay away for the first time and won the Rio Branco Cup (a challen
trophy the two teams contested from 1931 to 1976), the president hosted the team at the presidential Pala
in Catete. The notion that the Seleção 'was' Brazil became stronger and even defeats were drenched i
patriotism. The team defeated by Argentina in the pitch battle that decided the 1937 South Americ
championships were received like war heroes back home – a marching band played the national anthe
twice and even a cannon salvo greeted the players. This was also the period that first saw discussions on sty
become more frequent. Since the days of Miller, Brazilians had shown an inclination towards dribbling a
trickery and players went into overdrive when it became clear crowds were appreciating the sho
Commentators and even academics raved about 'ginga', the dance-like movements that they claimed only
country with a mixed population like Brazil could provide. Thanks to state control that had finally freed t
Seleção from the internecine bickering that had sabotaged previous campaigns, Brazil put together their b
team for the 1938 World Cup, which featured the star of the moment: Leônidas da Silva.

Born in 1913 in Rio de Janeiro, Leônidas was very different to Friedenreich, even though he was also fro
a mixed-race background – a white Portuguese sailor for a father and black Brazilian cook for a mothe
After a humble childhood where kicking a football in the streets was his only source of fun, Leônidas w
spotted at 17 by São Cristóvão, his neighbourhood club and where decades later a shy kid with an overbi
Ronaldo, would also start his career. In just two years Leônidas was a Brazil regular and it was his goal th
gave Brazil the aforementioned maiden away victory against the Uruguayans. Nicknamed 'the Bla
Diamond' by the media, he was a common user of the scissor kick, although his claim to have invented t
move cannot be verified.

Having sunk with Brazil in Italy '34, Leônidas became the Seleção's main star for the France '3
campaign. But much as recent results had enthused the Brazilians, the Seleção had so far played 270 minut
and two World Cups without yet managing to clear the first hurdle. There would also be another long sa
across the Atlantic, with some players arriving in France with 'extra luggage' around their waistlin
Expectations were lower for this tournament and, just as in 1934, every fixture saw the loser eliminated. B
a much improved Seleção overcame Poland 6-5 in Strasbourg in extra-time after a 4-4 draw in the regul
90 minutes. Leônidas hit a hat-trick that was broadcast across the ocean to Brazilian audiences and tales o
goal scored with his bare foot after he lost a boot in the muddy pitch delighted fans back home.

A week later, the Seleção faced the Czechs and after neither side could break a 1-1 stalemate, a seco
match was played 48 hours later and Brazil advanced to the semi-finals with a 2-1 win, Leônidas scori
twice. The replay, however, had left the players exhausted and Leônidas injured and the Seleção had to fa
world champions Italy without their talismanic player. Brazil fought hard but fell behind to a Gino Colau
goal after 50 minutes. Italy put the match beyond the Seleção's reach on the hour, with Giuseppe Meaz
converting a controversial penalty for a foul committed by Brazilian defender Domingos da Guia on Itali
striker Silvio Piola: irritated by something Piola had said, the Brazilian took down his opponent, but t
incident had taken place outside the box. Nevertheless, the penalty was awarded and the Seleção lost t
game 2-1. Three days later, however, they managed to come back home with a 4-2 win over Sweden in th

third-place play-off – Leônidas was back in the side and scored a brace, finishing the tournament as the to
scorer.

Back in Brazil, the Seleção's games had been followed by fans who would gather en masse around outdo speakers specially installed by public authorities. Several companies and public sector organisations also ga workers a free day on the date of the Italy game, which created a national collective experience around t Seleção.

In France, the local media reacted enthusiastically to the exploits of Leônidas and co, who had arrived f the World Cup as an exotic attraction but had left behind evidence that something exciting was happenin to football south of the Ecuador line. While they had not won the tournament, the team's performanc immediately boosted the country's confidence in their prowess in the sport to the point where argumen that Brazil was 'the land of football' began to spread wildly. It's understandable when one thinks of th combination involving Brazil's huge territorial extension, the populist regime in power and the relati isolationism in relation to Europe.

Hosting the next tournament then became a pet project of the Vargas government. By the time Bra finally had the green light from FIFA to host the 1950 World Cup, another president was in charge. Unli the latter part of Vargas' tenure, there was opposition in place and its voice was made clear by the attem to block the release of funds for the construction of the Maracanã Stadium. Arguments that the money spe on the concrete colossus would be better applied to health projects, alongside proposals for alternative sit were only defeated thanks to the influence of Ary Barroso, a broadcaster and composer who had used h fame to get voted onto the city council – he was a very popular figure even though he never really hid h passionate support for Rio club Flamengo, often refusing to properly narrate attacks against the team in h match broadcasts. Construction work started in August 1948 and although the stadium would be deliver in time for the tournament, work still went on until 1965.

Alongside the Rio arena, another stadium, the Independência, was built in Belo Horizonte – for Engli fans, it would become an emblematic venue. The Pacaembu in São Paulo and the Eucaliptos, in Port Alegre, were rebuilt with public money, while the Ilha do Retiro, in the north-eastern coastal town of Recif got ready for the tournament thanks to building work done by the 'socios' of Sport Club do Recife. Finall another southern stadium, the Durival de Britto, in Curitiba, had been built in 1947 and managed squeeze on to the list of World Cup venues. So Brazil had the arenas, but now they needed the teams to pl in the tournament.

While Europe was still recovering from the aftermath of the Second World War, one of their tradition football powerhouses, Italy, had also been hit by the tragic 1949 Superga air disaster that killed 31 peopl including ten Torino players who were also Azzurri internationals. While Portugal, Scotland and Turkey a withdrew from the tournament, the defending champions were persuaded by FIFA to attend and they we joined by debutants England, Spain, Sweden and Yugoslavia. Withdrawals also took place in South Americ most notably Argentina, Peru and Ecuador, which meant Bolivia, Uruguay and Paraguay qualifie automatically.

Three months before the start of the tournament, there were only 15 teams, which created a curio arrangement, with three groups of four teams and one of three – which featured Uruguay, France an Bolivia. Contrary to the previous two World Cups, the hosts wanted some return from the money invest in infrastructure so insisted on there being more games, which explained the round-robin format adopted f the final round. When the French cancelled their participation, incensed by the fact they would have travel thousands of miles within Brazil for their group games, a farcical situation ensued: Uruguay an

Bolivia would decide a spot in the final four in a single game. India also withdrew and left Sweden, Italy ar
Paraguay fighting for another spot.

These problems did not dampen the spirits in Brazil, though. Just a year before, the Seleção had broken 27-year continental drought by winning the Copa America, which they had also hosted. Although th suffered an unexpected defeat to Paraguay in the final round-robin game, Brazil's goal difference over the si previous matches had put the title beyond doubt: 39 scored and only seven conceded. Ecuador were beat 9-1, Bolivia 10-1 and even Uruguay had been mercilessly despatched, 5-1. While the likes of Leônidas we no longer around, the Seleção boasted talents such as playmakers Zizinho and Jair da Rosa Pinto (wh would later become an Inter Milan legend) alongside striker Ademir.

Most players in the squad were from Rio side Vasco da Gama. At a time when there wasn't a nation championship in Brazil, they had become legendary when they won a South American club competition 1948 by beating the feared River Plate from Argentina to the title – River at the time were still graced wi the presence of a certain Alfredo di Stefano. Vasco had conceded only three goals in six matches and th performance enhanced the credentials of goalkeeper Moacir Barbosa. He was a natural choice for th Seleção number one shirt. At a time of reduced exchanges of information with European football, Barbo differed from other Brazilian goalies through his own hard work and innovation. Hardly a tall keeper (h was 5ft 9in), Barbosa had to compensate by learning to anticipate crosses and long passes. Unlike many of h Brazilian colleagues, Barbosa didn't plant his feet on the goal line or restrict himself to the six-yard box; h roved and roamed, closing down space for strikers with carefully timed advances and the clever use of angl He also resorted to taking his own goal kicks instead of leaving them to defenders. Promoted to the Seleç number one shirt in 1948, he became an uncontested regular in the team managed by Flávio Costa.

Interestingly, Costa was also the Vasco manager. He had been appointed to the Seleção in 1944 aft winning four Rio League titles in six years at Flamengo. In 1947 he was offered the Vasco position and w allowed to combine the job with his Seleção role. A staunch disciplinarian, Costa was a keen observer of th game, having worked alongside Hungarian strategist Izidor 'Dori' Kurschner, a manager who had spent th last four years of his life in Brazil (1937–41) and who had contributed significantly to the development the game in the country by introducing the 'W-M' tactical system to Brazilians. Although the W-M formation had been devised by Arsenal manager Herbert Chapman in the 1920s, it was still alien Brazilians in the late 30s – until the arrival of Kurschner. The W-M system utilised both a deep-lying centre half and a centre-half high up the field, creating a 3-2-2-3 shape.

Unlike his predecessors, Costa made sure that, as the Seleção manager, he would watch foreign tean playing in order to try to keep himself as up-to-date as possible with new tactical trends and with the dange posed by potential World Cup rivals. The manager, however, was far from modern when it came to tean preparations: the Brazilian players spent almost three of the first six months of 1950 at training camps in th spa cities of Araxa and Poços de Caldas. In Araxa, there were 45 days of total isolation and no contact wi relatives, spouses or assorted companions. Even letters players tried to send to their loved ones we confiscated by the technical staff.

In March, Costa called up 37 players – ten of them from Vasco – but a month later this contingent ha already been reduced to 22. In May, Brazil played three matches against Uruguay, losing the first 4-3 bu winning the others 3-2 and 1-0. In hindsight, it was ironic that Costa seemed, according to reports quotin some of his players, obsessed with the English, who would for the first time take part in a World Cup. H had seen England and Spain matches during a study tour to Europe and was particularly impressed wi Walter Winterbottom's team. Costa kept telling the players they would need to neutralise England if the wanted to win the tournament.

But there were more pressing matters for the Seleção. The Brazilians were drawn alongside Mexic

Switzerland and Yugoslavia, a group that was fraught with danger. On 24 June, they opened their campaig ~~against Mexico in front of 150,000 people at the Maracanã. On a sunny Saturday afternoon, the~~ Seleç won 4-0, with an Ademir brace and goals from Jair and Baltazar.

They then travelled to São Paulo to lock horns with Switzerland. Far from pushovers, the European sic had reached the quarter-finals in the last two World Cups and their feared 'bolt defence' had caused its fa share of problems for previous opposition. Costa, however, gave more attention to the appeasement of th São Paulo crowds than to tactical intuition. Although the hostilities that had divided the Seleção in the 193 were much milder by 1950, Costa was still accused of favouring Rio-based players at the expense of tho from São Paulo. The manager's answer was to play to the gallery: on 28 June, Brazil came on to th Pacaembu pitch with a whole midfield line-up of 'Paulista' players – but it was an XI that had never actuall played together, even in training. The PR attempt backfired horrendously, as Brazil could only manage a 2 2 draw and the team were booed from the pitch.

Having beaten the Swiss 3-0 and the Mexicans 4-1, Yugoslavia led the group and would qualify for th final round at the expense of the host nation with a simple draw in the last game. Yugoslavia were formidable side that had finished with the silver medal in the London Olympics two years before. So, on July, 142,000 people were biting their nails at the Maracanã and the players, as if the situation wasn't tens enough, were forced to listen to a speech by Rio mayor, Mendes de Morais, in which he piled on th pressure: 'The battle for the world championship has two parts. By constructing the stadium, Rio de Janeir did theirs. Now you have to do yours.'

The Seleção were at least able to welcome the returning Jair, who had missed the Switzerland matc through injury, and Zizinho, who had hurt his left knee just before the tournament and had sat out the fir two games. Ademir, played out of position in the previous match, was back to the centre of the attack. B the biggest smile from Lady Luck to the Seleção had actually come before kick-off: as the teams crossed th tunnel to enter the pitch, Yugoslav striker Rajko Mitić hit his head on a metal rim, part of the unfinishe Maracanã works. Bleeding profusely, Mitić missed the first 20 minutes of the match while receiving medic attention – and with these being the days before substitutions were allowed, Yugoslavia were forced to pla with ten men while he was stitched and bandaged up. With a one-man advantage, Brazil launched forwa and it took just three minutes for Ademir to fire them ahead.

Zizinho, who could barely walk before the game, seemed to have forgotten the pain as the match went o and looked to have settled matters for Brazil with a strike just after half-time only for Welsh refer Benjamin Griffiths to disallow it for offside. On the 69th minute, however, 'Master Ziza' capped a great ru on the right side with a thunderous shot past the keeper. The moment was so cathartic that even Brazilia reporters watching the match on the sidelines invaded the pitch to celebrate. Brazil had survived and th dream of their maiden world title was still alive.

In the other groups, Spain had cruised through with three victories in three games, including a 1-0 defe of an England team still shell-shocked by their surprise defeat to an amateur USA side – although it must b noted the Spaniards left fair play aside and after they had taken the lead spent much of the rest of the matc booting balls into the three-metre-deep moat that separated the stands from the Maracanã pitch. Swede qualified with a 3-2 win over Italy and a 2-2 draw against Paraguay. Uruguay, after basically training an watching the World Cup for the first week, qualified with an 8-0 demolition of Bolivia, the only game the needed to play to secure a place in the final four.

The schedule was paused for a week to allow the surviving four teams to attend a series of commemorativ events and dinners and another draw was made to decide the order of the games. Brazil would face Swede Spain and Uruguay in that order and thanks to much lobbying from the CBD with the organisin committee, it was decided that all Seleção games would take place at the Maracanã – the boos in São Pau

still haunted Costa and the players.

On 9 July, a massive operation was put in place to allow supporters to arrive swiftly at the Maracanã f
Brazil v Sweden, which included a special tram service. A crowd of 138,886 witnessed the finest display
the Seleção in the tournament so far. Brazil went 3-0 up after 39 minutes, with an Ademir brace and a Chi
goal. Ademir completed his hat-trick in the 50th minute and five minutes later he became the first and on
Brazilian to score four goals in a World Cup game. Maneca scored the sixth on 85 minutes, even though
had hurt his thigh at the beginning of the second half, and then Chico made it seven. A penalty by Anderss
gave the Swedes a consolation goal. The 7-1 score still stands as Brazil's biggest win in a World Cup match.

On that same day in São Paulo, under torrential rain, Spain and Uruguay had a very different game. Th
South Americans drew first blood in the 29th minute, with Ghiggia beating the legendary Spain a
Barcelona goalkeeper Antoni Ramallets by squeezing the ball round the near post after a dashing run on t
right. Basora, however, scored a brace in two minutes and Spain led 2-1 at half-time. After 71 minut
Obdulio Varela, in a rare forward foray, equalised for the Uruguayans. The result could not have bee
better for Brazil.

Four days later, the Seleção hosted the Spaniards at the Maracanã and what happened on that afterno
became an unforgettable chapter in Brazilian football. In front of 153,000 spectators, Brazil humbled t
Spaniards with an astonishing display of flair and attacking football. After opening the scoring in the 15
minute thanks to a Parra own goal, the Seleção went 6-0 up with Jair, Chico (2), Ademir and Zizin
netting before Igoa pulled one back. The crowd, though, had been celebrating since the third goal, wavi
white handkerchiefs, setting off fireworks and singing their hearts out.

During the second half, the 'ole' chants led to an impromptu singalong of 'Bullfighting in Madrid',
cheeky carnival song recorded in 1937 and whose composer, Braguinha, was at the stadium – legend is th
he started weeping with joy. After the final whistle, supporters partied on the streets of Rio as if Brazil h
already won the tournament.

Technically, they had reasons to be cheerful: in São Paulo, Sweden were leading Uruguay 2-1 and even a
equaliser by Miguez in the 77th minute meant Brazil would enter the final game against their Sou
American counterparts as virtual world champions given their immense goal difference. With five minut
left, however, Miguez scored a winner that gave Uruguay something to fight for on 16 July, although the
would take to the Maracanã pitch knowing that only a victory would suffice.

The Seleção's headquarters throughout the tournament was a mansion on the Joa hills, a place that to th
day remains reasonably detached from the madness in Rio but that in 1950 was as secluded as a Tibet
monastery. Costa had intentionally looked to isolate his players from the madness and hype that wou
surround them in the city. So removed were they from the effervescence downtown, players would oft
lose track of time. 'We would only snap out of it on match days, where we just wanted to play a good gam
and then come back to chill, sometimes even with a glass of wine,' said Barbosa in a TV interview in t
1990s. It would all change radically in the first hours of 14 July.

The players were woken up with orders to pack up and hop on the team bus, for they were moving bas
The peaceful Joa would give way to lodgings at São Januário, the Vasco stadium, much more convenient
located for the festival of visitors, dignitaries and celebrities who were desperate to see the Seleção. Not on
were the players now reachable, they would also struggle with noise and the noxious fumes of a nearby pai
factory. 'At five in the morning we would listen to the whistle calling up workers to their shifts,' recalle
defender Bigode.

Costa, however, argued that the training logistics were improved thanks to the location of a training pit

adjacent to the players' rooms, which they did not have at Joa. Trouble, however, was brewing among th
players.

The Seleção's blistering campaign had attracted the interest of a series of benefactors who began to offe
gifts to the players. The treats ranged in diversity from a suit to a piece of land, but it soon became appare
that the playmakers and strikers were receiving more attention than their team-mates.

Media access was suddenly as invasive as it could get and national magazine O Cruzeiro had eve
approached the players to arrange exclusive deals for articles on the day after the Uruguay match, in order
'show how a world champion lived'.

Striker Ademir was taken to a hospital in order to 'bless' a boy who would undergo surgery the day befo
the final. The player would later confess the whole experience had left him shaken. The boy's father ha
simply wandered into the Brazil camp before convincing the manager to release Ademir for the bizarre tri
Ademir reportedly arrived at the operating room and the 14-year-old simply gave the striker a kiss befo
telling the surgeon to start the procedure. 'After I got back to the hotel I couldn't sleep,' Ademir would late
admit. 'I spent the night thinking of what happened and why that boy was treating me like a saint.'

Things would get even more hectic when politicians invaded the team headquarters looking for pho
opportunities with the celebrated players. It was a year of general elections and the parade of candidates w
overlooked by manager Costa, himself aiming to get voted onto the Rio City Council after the World Cu

The players posed endlessly for pictures, including one for a brand of beer, in which they wore celebrato
ribbons – the same that would make the front page of *O Mundo*. 'I had never seen so many people in
team's camp before an important game,' said Barbosa. 'Every five minutes there would be cars, lorries an
buses stopping and spilling out people who wanted to talk to us and "congratulate the world champions
We had to talk to everybody, sign every autograph. My right arm actually went numb after a while. It was
party atmosphere instead of a place for us to rest and focus.'

At 10 pm on 15 July, Costa finally gave orders for the players to go to sleep. Unfortunately, no
everybody obeyed. A group of players too wired to go to bed ended up playing cards for another couple
hours, while midfielder Juvenal went further and spent the night drinking and partying in Central Ri
returning to São Januário only on the morning of the game, apparently reeking of booze.

While Costa had mellowed significantly since the beginning of the campaign and allowed 'conjugal visit
to married players during the week before the final game, and actually allowed Juvenal a couple of hou
out, he was furious to see the midfielder break the curfew and arrive with a hangover that was so bad
vomited in front of the team. Juvenal then threatened to leave the team hotel when addressed by an incens
Costa, which resulted in a diplomatic effort to avoid even more drama.

The players were then rounded up and taken to Rio's famous Capuchinhos Church for a Mass celebratin
the launch of a radio station. At the church the players were mobbed by fans looking for autographs a
handshakes. And it would still get even more surreal: at 11 am, when the players were getting ready f
lunch, the entourage of presidential candidate Cristiano Machado dropped in at São Januário a
interrupted procedures so that he could make a speech hailing their heroics. Then came fellow candidate a
governor of São Paulo, Adhemar de Barros, who also spoke and promised grants and assorted treats to t
Seleção.

Zizinho finally snapped. 'So the game is over already?' he asked sarcastically, only to be reprimanded o
the spot by the manager.

Curiously, Getúlio Vargas, also running for president – he would in fact win the election by a landslide
stayed clear from São Januário, in a change of approach from the men who had previously tried so intense
to use football for their causes.

But eventually, even Costa grew tired of the bazaar atmosphere and decided to have the team travel ear

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