

My Kingdom for a Horse: Brazilian Nuclear Ambitions and Natural Abundance

Dr. Jennifer Eaglin (FRIAS/Columbus)

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Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



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In 1975, Brazilian military president Ernesto Geisel partnered with West Germany to obtain the technology to develop a domestic nuclear energy industry. While the American company, Westinghouse, was already under contract to set up the country's first commercial plant, the US government's refusal to ensure domestic enrichment processing possibilities led the Brazilian government toward the West German option and away from continued cooperation with the US through Westinghouse's commercial reactors. The new multi-billion-dollar agreement proposed to set up eight new nuclear plants across the country plus a uranium enrichment plant using their new jet-nozzle technology. Both the American and German plans relied heavily on Brazil's natural resources. While diplomatic attention, and thereafter scholarly attention, has often focused on Brazil's uranium deposits, water also played a pivotal role in Brazil's nuclear aspirations. Jennifer Eaglin explores how both the nuclear power plant and enrichment plant relied heavily on Brazilian water resources. These decisions, Eaglin argues, reflect dominant assumptions about natural resource abundance that underwrote the Brazilian military's quest to obtain international technological prowess in the 1970s and 1980s.



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Historisches Seminar

Forschungskolloquium der Professur für Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Umweltgeschichte
(Prof. Dr. Melanie Arndt)