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EXPLORATION OF OIL IN BRAZIL DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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The aim of this work is to discuss some important points related to the trajectory of oil exploration in Brazil. In the early twentieth century, the development of research and exploration methods for oil in Brazil was characterized by the presence of international and national private initiatives, such as *Standard Oil*, *Companhia Petróleos do Brazil*, and governmental efforts, such as *Comissão Geográfica e Geológica de São Paulo* and *Serviço Geológico e Mineralógico do Brasil*, which contributed to research and future prospecting in the country. In the first decades, many of the surveys carried out were related to the demand for coal. In 1917, the deep drilling came to be directly related to oil and the companies responsible for carry out these works were the *Empresa Paulista de Petróleo* and the *Serviço Geológico e Mineralógico do Brasil*. In 1938, the National Petroleum Council (*Conselho Nacional do Petróleo – CNP*) was created in order to find oil and to control activities related to its production in Brazilian territory. In the following year, the first petroleum fields were found at the region of Lobato, Bahia State, changing the policy for oil in Brazil. This discovery resulted in a surge for the industry and for its related activities. On October 3rd, 1953, the *Brazilian Company of Oil S. A.* (*Petrobras*) was created; a mixed joint-stock corporation responsible for the State monopoly of oil. The company gradually absorbed the activities and also the problems of the former National Council of Oil (founded in 1938), which were mainly the lack of a specialized work force, the partial lack of geological knowledge about the subsoil, the absence of exploratory expertise, and the consequent need of foreign professionals. For the reasons mentioned, in

1954, *Petrobras* hired the North-American geologist Walter Karl Link (1902 – 1982) to organize the Department of Exploration of the company. Walter Link, between 1954 and 1960, created one of the best exploration programs of the world by that time. He invested in Geophysics, Micropaleontology and in the specialization of the Brazilian work force. Walter Link and his team believed that the possibilities for finding oil in commercial quantities would not increase, even if using the latest drilling techniques and the geological and geophysical knowledge available in those years. Thus, the investments by *Petrobras* should be directed to other areas – such as the Continental Platform and/or in other countries – where the possibilities of finding oil would be more promising. Only in 1968, advances in technological research, mainly geological, launched *Petrobras* to offshore exploration, with the discovery of the first well in the Guaricema Field, Sergipe State, and the first drilling in the Campos Basin, in the Guaricema Field, Rio de Janeiro State. In August 1997, the *Petrobras*' monopoly was broken and the company "opened its doors" to foreign capital. A new exploratory and development phase began.