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THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIME AT THE CROSSROADS: THE BRAZILIAN CASE

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ABSTRACT

The Authoritarian Regime at the Crossroads:
The Brazilian Case

Following a brief discussion of recent literature concerning authoritarianism, the paper examines the dynamics of Brazil's authoritarian regime "after culmination of the integrationist industrializing model." Beginning in 1968, a regime with a "conservative-liberal" ideology of modernization gave way to a new hybrid regime--one which established the institutions of a bureaucratic-authoritarian state but which did not, or could not, eliminate the institutions proposed by the earlier "conservative-liberal" model of post-1964 authoritarianism (including a congress, parties, and ritual elections, as well as the principle of political competition).

Initially, this division among the dominant forces--between those elements favoring conservative restricted democracy and those favoring authoritarian repression--was obscured by the "miraculous" functioning of the Brazilian economy and the authoritarian road's successes in integrating Brazil into the international capitalist development process. When the global commercial and energy crises of the 1970s brought on economic decline, however, conciliation and accommodation among the divergent elites gave way to new tensions. Utilizing the openings which the regime's hybrid nature provided for "internal protest," the spokesmen for "conservative-liberal" ideology gained ground. There then followed the "decompression" effort, the movement toward "controlled liberalization," and a general attempt to transform the authoritarian order in the direction of a restricted democracy with ultra-conservative political bases (rather than toward a democracy of the masses).

Finally, the paper addresses the dilemmas which the present situation offers--a situation in which an authoritarian regime is endeavoring to "liberalize" politically, while at the same time maintaining solid political and social control, all in the face of continuing economic problems. It concludes by questioning whether a controlled and restricted "opening" will be able to "contain" emerging political pressures or the process of social struggle.

THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIME AT THE CROSSROADS: THE BRAZILIAN CASE

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Introduction

Much has recently been written about modern authoritarianism. From Friedrich and Brzezinski's ideologically compromised book on Totalitarian Dictatorship and Totalitarianism[1] to Linz's characterization of Spain,[2] a literary avalanche was released dealing with the "new authoritarianism," "bureaucratic authoritarianism," authoritarian corporatism, and so forth. More recently, the emergent "authoritarian-modernizing" Latin American states, which have been analyzed with increasing diligence by political scientists, have been added to the "classic" cases of European authoritarianism (some with clearly fascist leanings, even if they were not openly fascist in the beginning).

The literature is characterized by conceptual confusion and the use of adjectives which impress more than they clarify. Nevertheless, there has been an advance in characterizing the transformations which the state has undergone in some of the principal Latin American countries. This advance has been significant in two major ways: there has been a characterization of the mechanisms of corporatist relations between classes and the state as well as among the classes themselves,[3] and there has been a fruitful debate over the "bureaucratic-authoritarian" state.[4]

This is not the place for a critical examination of the literature on this subject. I merely want to refer to the principal conclusions of the debate in order to move immediately on to questions concerning the impasses of authoritarian regimes and the processes which dislocate them, questions which now interest me.

With regard to the existing state of discussion on the authoritarian state, it seems to me--taking great liberties in my selection of what I see as most important--that the ideas which were reasonably clarified and the limits which were imposed on the proposed paradigm were the following:

1. The corporatist phenomenon[5] is an ancient one in Latin America and some authors even try to derive it from the characteristics of "Hispanic-Catholic" culture. However, a redefinition is

involved when it is conceived, not as an isolated trait which characterizes the relationship between segments of the society,[6] but as a mechanism which regulates the basic relations of the state itself.[7]

2. There seems to be a consensus that what has been called the "bureaucratic-authoritarian" state reinforces corporatist-type bonds, even though it cannot be equated with corporatism as a characteristic of the state.

3. In the specific characterization of bureaucratic-authoritarian states, the emphasis has been placed on the task of economic-social transformation which should occur, thus assuring, in O'Donnell's terminology, the "deepening" of the economy (that is, the continuation of the internal economic integration process through the advancement of the sectors which manufacture production goods and the continuation of the internationalization of the local economy on new foundations).

4. Similarly, the emergence of this form of state was seen as a response to the challenges of the social and economic crisis brought about by the advancement of capitalist-based, industrial-urban society. These challenges threatened the domination of populist or more traditional forms of liberal-bourgeois state organization.

5. As a result of the above, this form of state is both socially and politically repressive, on the one hand, and economically dynamic on the other.

6. The economic dynamism comes from the link which is established through the state's intermediary action between large international capital and the local economy which in turn results from the expansion of state economic activity.

7. The state apparatus expands and becomes even more involved in the economy while emphasizing bureaucratic forms of social, political, and economic control.

8. In addition, the "modernizing" and productive functions which the society in general and the economy in particular have now respectively assumed, demand the application of formal, rational criteria, which requires increasing technical competence from the agents of the state.

In characterizing recent forms of authoritarian domination, some authors point out the integrative character of some of these regimes. Stepan does this in his analysis of Peru and so does Lowenthal, although he does not use this terminology.[8] Others, however--especially those who look at Brazil and the Southern Cone--insist on the exclusionary character of bureaucratic-authoritarian forms and even limit the concept to exclusionary regimes.

The principal criticisms of the concept of bureaucratic-authoritarianism can also be summarized briefly:

1. Some critics, such as Florestan Fernandes,[9] revolt against the idea of authoritarianism itself because they think that it is ideologically compromised to the extent that it would necessarily involve acceptance, ipso facto, of the democracy-authoritarianism-totalitarianism continuum. This latter concept is formal, does not distinguish between different socio-economic systems (capitalism-socialism-communism), and does not relate political regimes to social classes.

2. Other authors, notably Jose Serra,[10] question the possible "economicism" of the following scheme: "profundización--estado burocrático-autoritário."

3. Others call attention to the need for a greater emphasis on the relation between class domination and the form of the regime, theoretically distinguishing the state from the political regime.[11]

4. There also are those who do not want to reject the analytical advances which bureaucratic-authoritarianism has made and accept the anti-economicist precautions. However, they do not want to fail to emphasize the military character of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, nor to fail to insist that a class dynamic exists which affects the regime,[12] in spite of this type of regime's rigidity, repressive capacity, and the limitation which it places on civil society.

These and other criticisms (sometimes self-criticisms) are being incorporated into successive reformulations of the characterizations of the Argentinian, Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan regimes. In this way, what has been important is not just a definition, but rather the characterization of the process from 1964 to the present by which a few Latin American countries, with different democratic traditions and in different phases of their economic evolutions, ended up subject to dictatorial and military-based political regimes. In each of the cases referred to above, the regime has looked for ways of becoming integrated into the international capitalist economy; it has increased state intervention in all spheres of social life, especially the economic; and it has repressed workers and opposition groups. Wage earners are marginalized from political decision-making throughout this process, and the regime looks for bases of support among entrepreneurs and the upper middle class.

This, I think, is where the substantive analogies end. Neither the political institutions nor the economic policies of the military regimes are similar in the above-mentioned cases.

In fact, and without discussing the question in more detail here, while in Brazil a controlled political-party system continued to function and the parliament was only temporarily closed, in the other three countries, the military excluded "politics" even symbolically by closing the parliaments and the parties. While there was a "denationalization" (desestatização) of the economy in Chile, the state sector

expanded in Brazil. While the Chilean and Uruguayan economic strategies were oriented toward primary exports, there was an important effort to industrialize in Brazil and an export strategy was not pushed at the expense of the marked expansion of the internal market. In Argentina, at the same time, social and political disequilibria apparently did not permit more consistent advances, in the sense of integration into the world economy through monopolistic industrialization.

With this said, I have justified why I will consider only the Brazilian case in this paper, without attempting to generalize my conclusions. I will only try to indicate the dynamics of a military regime after the culmination of the integrationist industrializing model and the dilemmas which the present situation offers.

The Splendorous Authoritarianism

For present purposes, it is not necessary to repeat the stages through which the Brazilian regime has gone. It is sufficient to allude to the fundamental points so that we can be oriented adequately.

In the first place, one should emphasize that the 1964 coup and the policies which were initially proposed on both the socio-economic and institutional planes were not deliberately intended to lead to a bureaucratic-authoritarian form of state and regime. On the contrary, the anti-Goulart mobilization was explicitly organized in order to reestablish the primacy of a constitutional order which believed itself threatened by the politics which were then called part of the "pelego-comunista." Therefore, from the beginning, those who were victorious in 1964 were committed to the conservative-liberal ideology and to interests of the private sector of the economy for two reasons: the nature of the social base which supported the coup (the whole propertied sector, especially the rural segment, and the majority of the urban middle class), and the type of institutions which mobilized against Goulart (the majority of the Church, the traditional parties with the exception of the PTB, the majority of the armed forces, and the larger press organizations).

The vision of the state and the economic-social policies which gave coherence to the new owners of power could be described in the following manner:

- The bourgeois, democratic political order should be preserved; therefore, it should be updated. It has suffered from two types of risk: the external (because of the Cold War and the international Communist challenge which can be expressed internally through a possible war of subversion), and the internal (which is caused by weak economic development during a phase when expectations are being modernized). This situation would leave the state bastion of bourgeois domination subject to the uncontrollable pressures of the "new barbarians": an ignorant populace, a vindictive peasantry, and a proletariat "manipulated" by the unions and leftist parties.

- The economic order, based on private property and domestic and international competition, has to be reinvigorated. For this to occur, the corrective action of the state should reestablish the conditions for accumulation, control salaries (when necessary destroying the unions and the opposition parties), correct the previous distortions (for example, modifying the subsidized pricing policy), attract foreign capital, control inflation, expand exports, etc.

At no time did the sector which was predominant and victorious in 1964 consider eliminating the party system, enlarging the public sector of the economy, creating permanent mechanisms for the armed forces in public life, organizing permanent repression, or disseminating a fascist-leaning ideology. On the contrary, the rhetoric remained conservative-liberal. And the desired institutions would be the same ones outlined in the 1946 Constitution, purged of the "rotten branches" and reenforced with the necessary modernizing "safeguards."

This "project" collapsed with a crash. This collapse was due both to the coup by "hardliner" segments of the movement (some of whom even went beyond authoritarianism to fascism) and to the resistance of the "ancien regime." The traditional parties continued to exist; the most powerful leaders, such as Kubitschek, threatened to return to power through electoral means; the politicians' appetite could not be satiated (for example, Lacerda's) and they wanted to participate in the pillage of the state, before the surgical effects of 1964 could prune the rotten branches mentioned above, and so forth. In spite of the suspension of some individuals' political rights (cassações), including Kubitschek's, Castello Branco was defeated in the October 1965 elections in Rio and Minas. All of this led to the reinforcement of Institutional Act No. 2, to the dissolution of the parties, to indirect elections, and to the creation of a bi-party system.

In the same way in the economic sphere, Campos' "corrective intervention" led to the salary squeeze, to the dissatisfaction of a private sector which lacked credit, and, contradictorily, to the reestablishment of the state sector's vigor. The latter was due in part to its "privatization," given that the public sector ceased to be thought of in its social dimension (with regard to both its support of subsidized prices and a spoils system and its role as a foundation for the expansion of private sectors which were dependent upon it) and came to be seen as a capitalist enterprise belonging to the state.

For good or ill, when the climate of dissatisfaction and the economic difficulties grew (after Costa e Silva's bloodless coup against castelismo), the "conservative-liberal" modernization plan, expressed in the 1967 Constitution, was no longer viable. It began to be evident that a new political force, with other ideas and a different social base, was establishing itself within the country. The baptism of this new force is marked by the Institutional Act No. 5 of December 1968, while Medici's selection marks its confirmation. Medici's government leads the authoritarian regime to its splendor.

The institutions of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state are established during this period. This appeared shameful since it occurred immediately after the Institutional Act No. 5. Costa e Silva, by now encountering centers of armed resistance, even attempted to reestablish a constitutional agreement through an authoritarian promulgation in September 1969, but he was not strong enough since he was confronting the "new situation."

What "new situation" is this?

The armed forces--imbued with their mission of repression, their ideology which sees Brazil as a great power (and which is unequivocably similar to fascism), and their desire to strengthen the dependent-partner model of development--were the mortar of the regime. Its social base was large business, including the local, state, and multinational segments; its "classes of support" were the military bureaucracy and the civil technocracy; and its ideology was one of national-statist grandeur.

At the time, the "new regime" was understood neither by the opposition nor by the sectors which supported the regime but did not accept its emerging movement towards a bureaucratic-authoritarian order, because none of the above ideas were explicitly presented after 1964. On the contrary, as we have seen, the coup was seen at the time as "corrective" and conservative-liberal. The new regime was introduced slowly and established with many compromises along the way.

Even Medici's "election" demonstrates a contradictory alliance: castelista groups (two of Geisel's--one in the Ministry of War and another in Petrobras) united with the new owners of power. They accepted the new state-developmental goals, were constrained to be silent about the exacerbation of the armed forces' police functions, and eagerly engaged in the developmentalism of the large state and private economic corporations.

For good or ill, however, the regime did not eliminate the institutions proposed by the earlier "conservative-liberal" model of authoritarianism--institutions such as the Congress, the parties created in 1966, and the election ritual. It did not have the force necessary to propose an openly anti-democratic ideology (in spite of its practices: torture, violation of rights, etc.), nor did it totally eliminate the principle of political competition, despite Institutional Act No. 5.

With regard to this last aspect, the perversion of authoritarianism itself was particularly marked. The regime presented itself with enough coherence and completeness to be able to eliminate the pre-1964 popular masses and the opposition which began to take root in the civil society from the institutional game. But it also created internal mechanisms (outside of the parties and the civil society) which gave free rein to the conflict among the groups with power. Not only did the "bureaucratic rings" in the armed forces, in the large councils (which were linked to national security and decisions about

development), and in other places articulate their ideas, but the conflict remained heated. The president (Medici, in this case) had dictatorial powers thanks to Institutional Act No. 5. But in fact, this rule was only applicable "towards the bottom," and not among those who enjoyed power in the bureaucracy and/or oligarchy. The principal groups never totally agreed on the type of institutional order which should be the future norm. There was euphoric agreement on the dependent-partner model of development, agreement on the exponential role of the state sector in the economy, practical adhesion to the repressive practices and to the tactics which plundered the mass of wage earners. But there were also doubts and conflicts about the "political mode," that is, about the regime.

In the "fat cow" period--that is, when the force of integration of the Brazilian economy into the international system of production coincided with strong international commercial expansion (until 1973), and with the existence of a surplus of international capitalists avid for investment opportunities--the "privatistic" orientation of the public sector, the control of salaries, and export-subsidization policies functioned "miraculously." During this period, the conflict among dominant forces was obscured by the authoritarian road's successes in integrating Brazil into the international capitalist development process.

Thanks to this, the regime's repressive, socially plundering, and politically marginalizing aspects under Medici's government remained hidden from the dominant classes. The euphoria provided the tonic for the upper middle and entrepreneurial classes' adhesion. And the "apathy" (that is, the lack of information due to censorship of television, radio, and the press, added to repression through the dismantling of whichever organizations tried to ensure popular participation) provided the tonic in the masses' relations with the state.

Meanwhile, after the objective nexus of economic growth was destroyed, doubts about the institutional model made themselves strongly felt, as we shall see.

Under the guise of contributing to the comparative study of recent authoritarian forms of government in Latin America, it is fitting to emphasize that, unlike the Chilean or Argentinian cases, the Brazilian regime adopted a certain <u>tempo</u> in establishing itself. The first thrust, the 1964 coup, was aimed against the risk that "bourgeois domination" would lose control. In spite of the extent of the "threat," Castello Branco's regime would not fully assume the characteristics of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime (or B.A., in O'Donnell's characterization). When the repressive and bureaucratic aspects of the regime were accentuated after 1968, the threat was not more generalized nor was the "enemy" entrenched in the state apparatus as it had been before 1964. And the economy was already reheated.

Perhaps because of this--because the implantation of the regime unfolded over time, because the enemy was circumscribed, and because some economic growth had occurred--there was a certain margin of

"conciliation" with the values of the conservative-liberal ideology. Conciliation with "values" and not with practices. Conciliation at the level of tolerance for a certain level of dissidence but in the ultra-restricted region of the inner circles of power, under the stipulation that the dissidence must not deepen "towards the bottom," that is, to unite social sectors and opinion groups from the middle class or the popular classes. The fact is that, for this or other reasons, the Brazilian military regime was a hybrid. After the beginning of the process, when President Castello Branco lost control of the succession and the castrense group assumed control with Costa e Silva, the government's maneuver was against Roberto Campos' policy of monetary restriction and had traces of nationalism. When the hardliners' group--the System--began to sketch out its authoritarian profile and to give the armed forces, as a bureaucratic corporation, more control over the state apparatus, malgré Costa e Silva, the castellista sector (with those like Geisel in the lead) looked for strength in the "liberal" inspiration in order to criticize the dissidents. Medici ascended as the result of an accommodation, throwing aside General Albuquerque Lima who was seen at the time as a hardliner and nationalist, and reconciling himself with castellismo after the proper appointment of Orlando Geisel as Minister of War.

This policy of accommodation among divergent elites did not impede repression, censorship, and the whole group of attempts against human rights and a state of law. But it introduced an element of instability at the peak of government, which was not explosive only because among the peculiarities of the regime was the institution of the change of command. The positions of command at all levels were given for a determined period of time. Although the renovation was not democratic (since the "elections" were indirect and controlled), it did permit a circulation of the elite. Bureaucratic politics, the plots, and the enticement of groups provided the tonic. Even more, the peak's maneuvers often corresponded to pseudo-democratic rituals in an effort to "authenticate itself,"--as, for example, the validation of the appointments by the Congress and the local Assemblies or, it can be said, by the parties.

In this way, the regime, which is now military and "bureaucratic-authoritarian," existed alongside the parties, did not disparage the ideal of a state of law on the ideological plane and, therefore, conceived of itself as provisional. The continual prevarications of this ideal were justified by two reasons which had given the regime its origins: repression of "subversives" and economic growth.

Geisel and the "Decompression" ("Distenção")

The political dynamics of Geisel's government unfolded as a result of forces situated in two basic and distinct planes which were not even connected always: the regime's bureaucratic political game and the pressure from forces mobilized by the economic situation which had undergone a drastic transformation during the period.

With regard to the first aspect--the political-bureaucratic game--Geisel's government precipitated a crisis between two groups,

which had existed in latent form under other governments. The first group adopted a position which was favorable to a typically conservative, restricted democratization. The second group was opposed even to this way of institutionalizing the regime, preferring to prolong the "estado de excessão" (arbitrary state). The "decompression policy" was born in this context. Its drawbacks are familiar. The first and principal obstacle was the November 1974 election, when the government party, Arena, was defeated by the opposition, the MDB. The opposition won the elections for the senate in 16 out of 22 states. After this, it became clear that the authoritarian road to conservative democratization would have to get around the obstacle of direct elections. Although Geisel's government did not abandon its controlled liberalization plan, it had to by-pass this basic difficulty and, beyond that, it had to face the "hardliners." In 1975, a repressive period, both internally and externally, with the renewed use of the idea of the "objective enemy," followed the government's recognition of the electoral defeat. The specter of Communist danger was resuscitated and there were more jailings, more torture, and more discharges. This internal crisis only began to be resolved in 1976 when General Geisel deposed an army general because of the excesses which took place under his command (two deaths during torture in one month).

Nevertheless, at the same time, Geisel faced a larger question affecting his enterprise: how to liberalize the press, control the repressive system without dismantling it, and create an institutional system which barred the opposition. In April 1977, the decisive change of course took place under the pretext of not having counted on the opposition's comprehension of the judiciary reform which the government was proposing. Geisel used the dictatorial powers which Institutional Act No. 5 had conferred on him and temporarily closed the congress and modified the constitution. He converted one-third of the elections for the senate and all of the elections for state governors into indirect elections and restricted partisan propaganda during the elections. Later, after the congress had been reestablished with limited rights, he ousted some important opposition leaders and . . . prepared himself for the 1978 elections.

Beneath this tempestuous scene, larger storms were taking place in the economic and social planes. The range of economic options for Geisel's government was diminished by the global commercial crisis, in addition to the petroleum crisis, and even more by the pressure from previous years' growth which required sizeable and continuous imports[13] in order to maintain the rhythm of internal expansion. This domestic growth also led to the internal utilization of local economic factors which produced inflationary pressures.

It was in this environment, with the economic conjuncture of relative decline (since at the beginning of the government, GNP continued to grow rapidly and the industrial sector has continued to expand until the present), that Geisel's government had to maneuver. The objective impossibility of fulfilling the entrepreneurial sectors' high expectations, which had developed during the period of the "miracle," along with greater freedom of expression, made the regime's social base of support less cohesive. The accumulated tensions were

aimed directly against the government, which was a military government presided over by an autocrat, and which had the power to proceed without listening to civil society's protests. The local bourgeoisie rediscovered "statism" as its preferred goal. Geisel was not responsible for the public sector's expansion in the economy. This process came, despite the personalities involved, as a result of the resumption of growth, now under a military regime. But Geisel had been president of Petrobras and was known as a nationalist, although a "modern" one--that is, he was favorable toward joint ventures between state enterprises and multinational corporations. The liberal sector's criticisms of the regime became more open after 1975, focusing on the growing state sector, the bureaucratization which resulted from this, and the related abuses, especially corruption.

While the 1974 elections demonstrated the level of discontent, this became more generalized in 1978 in the economically most advanced states. Opposition candidates received close to 80% of the votes for positions filled by majority vote, versus 20% for the government party. And the distribution of votes by income and educational level demonstrated that the opposition encompassed the whole socio-economic range.

The political crises continued: an internal crisis within the armed establishment immediately after the dismissal of the minister of war, who would eventually be an alternative candidate for the presidency, and who at the time was head of the military office (casa militar) and did not agree with the choice of Figuereido; a political crisis (initially mild) which began with the removal in 1977 of the minister of commerce and industry, who had become the advocate of an economic strategy more nationalistic and more strongly oriented toward internal development; and a military political crisis when a four-star general, recently retired from the high command, decided in 1978 to become an anti-Figuereido candidate in the presidential contest.

And, most importantly, a diffuse social crisis occurred when the regime began to be harrassed, not only by discontented entrepreneurs, military men opposed to the "decompression," and military men who were allied with the opposition, but also by the middle class and later by the workers. The Church, lawyers, intellectuals, students, and journalists began to make their views known after 1977. And in 1978 the metallurgical workers staged an important strike, the first since Institutional Act No. 5 of 1968.

Nevertheless, Geisel's government proceeded with the "decompression," imposing a conservative democratization through authoritarian means. He won militarily against the ultras and managed not only to impose the "April Package," as the group of anti-democratic reforms of April 1977 was known, but also to establish the basis for a dialogue among the core of the ruling elite.

The government did not hesitate to continue with its decompression plan once the opposition's military candidate was defeated due to his supporters' inability to form a "national front" with politico-

military support (since the elections were indirect and the congressmen did not openly vote against Geisel except through a conjuncture of generalized pressures and a military crisis). On the contrary, the government negotiated and imposed various reforms. It:

- absorbed the first segment of the "ousted" politicians with the termination of Institutional Act No. 5 in 1978;
- formalized this termination in December 1978 by eliminating the president's dictatorial powers to close congress, legislate, oust deputies, intervene in the judicial system, etc.,
- reestablished habeas corpus; and
- proposed a reform of the political party system.

These steps were counterbalanced by "constitutional safeguards" which granted the executive a strong capability for "corrective" intervention. Geisel then handed over the government to Figuereido[14] and the latter pledged to pursue the democratization process in this atmosphere of a "new course."

What pertinent conclusions for a comparative analysis can be derived from the "decompression" experience? In the first place, to understand the Brazilian authoritarian regime, one must remember that, as mentioned above, it was a hybrid.[15] Not only did dictatorial forms exist together with democratic rituals, but the conservative-democratic ideology always had spokesmen within the regime. These spokesmen, whose views were articulated by Golberi do Couto e Silva, gained more ground in Geisel's government for various reasons:

a) It was in the name of "opening up" that the bureaucratic group which became part of Geisel's government criticized Medici's government and established a base from which it could unify itself and expand.

b) The United States' human-rights policy was beneficial to the "decompressionist" sector of the regime (and not for the democratic opposition directly).

c) The social dissatisfaction (and the political pressure) affected the upper-middle and entrepreneurial classes because of the already-mentioned economic conditions.

In the second place, the pressure exerted by the renewed civil society suggested the alternative policy of "giving up your rings to save your fingers." This pressure was the consequence of both the hybrid nature of a regime which left openings for "internal protest" and the dynamics themselves of a society which was transforming itself under the impetus of a dependent-partner development process of vast dimensions.

This last factor generates contradictory requirements: economic expansion requires technicians, competence, and certain cultural

sophistication. When this is found in the context of a dependent economy, the society is necessarily open because a current of information, people, and attitudes accompanies the flow of merchandise. It is difficult to culturally "close" a society of this type. There are pressures which are uncontrollable because of this fact. In this way, for example, the growth of the university creates a middle-class base with high expectations, which at the same time is critical and dynamic politically, in spite of the "cultural terror" which did not manage to become generalized. Therefore, the greatest obstacle which accelerated economic growth creates is the rapid formation of a group of urban workers and new middle classes with definite expectations. Pressures are created by the countermarches of the economy along with "controlled liberalization" which are virtually destabilizing for the regime.

In other words: it was not the dynamic of the economic expansion in itself which generated pressures; it was the combination of that factor with "controlled liberalization" and the sudden disenchantment with the successes of the miracle. Nevertheless, these characteristics already indicate differences between this and the Argentinian, Uruguayan, and Chilean processes.

In the third place, in the Brazilian case one is not facing a rupture of the authoritarian order but rather a transformation of it. This transformation has its disadvantages, which will be discussed below, and led to changes in the regime. But until now, it has also led more in the direction of a new order based on the principles (and practices) of a "restricted democracy" with ultra-conservative political bases, rather than toward a democracy of the masses. The Spanish case also began with a gradual process of controlled decompression. However, Spanish civil society's capacity to exert pressure was incomparably greater than in the Brazilian case. The union organizations, the party reorganization, the regional movements, the Church's action, in short, the organized mass of civil society acted more energetically in Spain to break up authoritarianism and move toward political democratization.

Figuereido and the Conservative Fronde

It would be deceiving to think that the decompression policy signified only a nominal change in the regime. The controlled liberalization provided an opportunity for strikes without immediate repression, made human-rights violations more difficult, and returned to parliament its guarantees and functions in the lateral arena of decision-making (or better said: it turned the parliament into a negotiating camp for the preparation of palace decisions, and within this limit expanded its political space).

In order to impose the pattern of controlled liberalization, the central issue in the transition from Geisel's government to Figuereido's was not one of subduing the "System's" hardliners (who had been defeated by Geisel) but rather was one of impeding the formation of an effective bond between discontented sectors within the regime (in the armed forces themselves) and the institutional opposition (represented by the MDB) and extra-institutional opposition

(the Church, middle-class organizations, unions, etc.). This stage of the struggle unfolded in 1978, from the introduction of the candidacies of the "rebel angels" (Magalhães Pinto and Severo Gomes) to the consolidation of General Euler Bentes M. Onteiro's candidacy as the MDB's alternative. This alternative's impetus was greatly limited by the MDB liberal wing's resistance to an alliance with the opposition military men (opposition to the "government," the critics said, and not to the "regime"), the enthusiastic endorsement by the party's most radical wing (the autênticos), and the difficulties in communication between the candidate, a general, and civil society (along with Magalhães Pinto's defection). The restricted and conservative transition was much easier once this risk had been isolated and the Geisel-Figuereido scheme was reestablished before the armed forces (since the risk posed by a general who had let himself become entangled with the most aggressive opposition once again consolidated the conservative-liberal alliance within the regime).

After the October presidential "elections" and the November legislative elections (under the aegis of the "April Package"), the government recomposed its forces and took the lead in directing the political agenda. Instead of being open to the most easily assimilated sectors of the opposition, Figuereido's government reestablished a conservative front: ex-ministers from the Castello, Costa e Silva, Medici, and Geisel governments found themselves once again in Figuereido's cabinet. This "changed the image." From the sober general who was head of the National Information Service, he became the affable "President João," in conformity with the best "political marketing" practices.

With the governors designated in 1978, the indirectly elected senators (so-called bionic), and a scant majority in the house (assured primarily by the representatives from the northeast) as its base, Figuereido's government threw itself into the task of accomplishing a triple assignment:

- to disconcert the opposition by offering new democratic steps (amnesty, reform of the party system, direct elections eventually);
- to guarantee solid control of his political base;
- to face both the same economic problems as before, which now presented themselves in a more acute form, and the increasing social pressures.

It is not difficult to see the incongruities between these goals and the dilemmas which they occasion. The situation became delicate in the social area: strikes (although the right to strike was not guaranteed) and protests are the immediate consequence of a policy of liberalization without a redistribution of income or a rectification of low salary levels. Restrictions on the entrepreneurial sectors are the consequence of a policy of inflationary control which requires credit restraint. As a result of this, the minister of planning (Simonsen) remained in his position and Delfim Neto returned. The latter rekindled

expectations of a new "miracle," although now in a cruelly "agnostic" economic context. Another result was the confrontation with the workers after the beginning of Figuereido's government, which was handled by the regime in a relatively gentle manner.

Given that the room for maneuver is very tight in the socio-economic sphere, the government appears to be concentrating its efforts in the political camp. It proposed and approved a partial amnesty; it discarded the possibility of accepting the convocation of a constitutional assembly (which would only have meaning if the regime effectively moved toward democratization); and it moved to arouse people with a reform of the party system. Apparently, this was the central question through which the extent of the "decompression" would be appraised. The opposition has protested against the reform of the party system, alleging that it was only aimed at liquidating the MDB, and thus fragmenting the political bloc which could offer an alternative. But it also appears certain that the degree of opening (which is one of the regime's undeniable aims) which actually exists makes it difficult for political controversies to be directed through the opened bi-party system.

The opposition's internal metabolism was paralyzed particularly after Euler's candidacy when the politically liberal and socially conservative sectors of the MDB accepted a candidacy imposed by the "autênticos." The MDB, en masse, adopted more contested positions, and at the same time certain major leaders remained marginalized in the party's interior.

After this, a situation was created during the initial phase of the controlled-decompression process which radicalized the MDB positions, given that all of the deputies are required by law to vote with the leadership whenever the leadership closes the question. If the deputies do not comply, they may be expelled. Even though in the past the bi-party system could function with the risk of a confrontation between the MDB and the government, the opposition was numerically weak and the large questions were resolved through Institutional Act No. 5 and not through the congress. After the valorization of the legislative arena, the risks of a strong opposition (motivated even more in this direction by the opposition's extra-party movements which became more frequent and influential) made it more difficult for the government to exercise control. On the other hand, since the moderate sector of the MDB preferred more accommodating behavior and discrete support for the government's decompressionary measures, both this sector and the government came to be influenced by the expectation of a reformulation of the party system.

The return of important leaders from exile and the presence of new leaders, especially the workers who propose a Party of the Workers (which would eventually fuse with the MDB's "autênticos" after the reform of the party system), are new elements which lead toward the reformulation of the party system.

In spite of this (and the character which the reform assumes as a necessary step for democratization), there are many drawbacks.

In the first place, on top of everything else, the government pretends not to lose the political controls inherited from the splendor of authoritarianism. In this sense the reform under discussion seems to be the opposite of that which occurred in Spain. The government's goal does not seem to be to make the state compatible with the regime--an arrangement in which the pact among the dominant classes would be ensured by the armed forces; in which the king, as guarantor of the state, would differentiate himself from the parties; and in which the latter would be organized according to their politico-ideological clarity and to the center-rightist alliance. Rather, what is being attempted is a transformation of the president into the head of a new party.

This point is crucial. In the past the "System," nominally or actually headed by the general-president, guaranteed the state (the pact of domination) and the regime. In the latter, the parties were ornaments and by definition the real conflict unfolded within the bureaucratic organs of the state. It was this, and in this form, which gave the parties their "legitimacy." They now intended to once again give the parties and the congress a role as essential components of the regime. But democratization was feared. The proposed solution introduced the state into the political party game by transforming the chief of state into the party leader. Meanwhile, the chief of state had been chosen bureaucratically, with the military corporation's rubber stamp. Therefore in theory, he would have the option of transforming himself into "king," with sovereign authority, letting the parties play out their games in the sphere of political competition as long as a party or a coalition of the center-rightist type had a possibility of emerging, which would make moderately liberalizing desires compatible with the most profound interests of state order and with economic growth. This does not appear to have been the chosen course: the government initially sought the integration of a new order through a system of parties created in the parliamentary field (through blocs of deputies and senators), assuring a majority ahead of time through the creation of a "president's party." The need to popularize the figure of the president resulted from this, because it was necessary to see if this party, with the state apparatus in hand and with certain publicity of a personalist (semi-folkloric) cast, would assure success in future elections.[16]

This option obliges the government to postpone the municipal elections scheduled for 1980 in order to avoid the risk of a defeat before the reaffirmation of the new system. And it leads to an agenda of even more gradual decompression; only after the new system is tested (in order to see if the opposition becomes fragmented and the government's supporters become unified on new bases) will it be possible to consider the possibility of direct elections for governors and the eventual elimination of the system of indirect senatorial elections.

On the other side, this strategy makes more difficult the moderate MDB sectors' effort to be autonomous. They might venture to create a new party with Arena's "liberal" sectors, stipulating that this new party must be able to compete for and have access to power.

In practice, this strategy transforms the political system into a registry system: it grants labels to groups which are capable of articulating their ideas in the congress; but the creation of parties on any other basis is not permitted. The workers' party itself, which is now proposed autonomously from Brizola's PTB, will have difficulty in being legally sanctioned unless it joins with the MDB's "autênticos" sector.

In the meantime, the transition's difficulties result not only from the traditional horror of broad popular participation which elitist systems have (whether they are authoritarian or not). The process is complicated by other factors which exist within the opposition. From the MDB's point of view, the leading groups (whether autênticos or moderates) prefer to maintain the apparatus and thus complicate the discussion of party reform. They also hamper organic integration of new currents which are linked to popular unions which, as we have seen, reappear within civil society, and of old leaders who are being reintegrated into political life. They defend themselves under a party label which has become very capable of collecting popular votes even though it has not been rooted as a party within the new society.

From the civil society's point of view, the general distrust of the system of merely label-parties and of the politicians who emerged under a closed regime leads many leaders into an accentuated "grass-rootism." It also leads to a break between social movements and the state, and therefore between social movements and the parties which are their links with the state. This attitude is common in the sectors which are linked to social movements motivated by the Church, and it is relatively widespread in the union sector. The clear preference for mobilization around social movements (the fight for amnesty, salary struggles, the fight for land, etc.) and the relative separation from the parties are due both to the uprooting of the MDB, given the politicians' lack of interest in that type of movement under authoritarianism, and to the latent hostility of the civil society's intermediate-level leaders to present and future parties.

In addition, in the debate over reformulation of the party system, the government intends to establish a system of label-parties with a congressional base, supported by the administrative apparatus. All of this would be hidden under the mask of a formal ideological façade, attributing well-thought-out values ranging from "left" to "right" to each of the 4 or 5 parties.[17] On the other hand, the leftist groups want the parties to contain an element of popular participation and to have an ideological orientation. They want to base these parties on the model of European parties whose history goes back to the 19th century. It is doubtful that urban-industrial Brazilian society--which expanded on the basis of an international economy with an oligopolistic base, thus rapidly creating a mass society--will express itself politically in this manner. It is more likely that the new parties (although free and democratic) will tend to organize themselves heterogeneously, with nuclei of the "European class party" type and with sectors like the types of parties which aggregate in the manner of the U.S. Democratic Party.

In this way, although the elite cannot want to continue down the road toward an "ultra-restricted democracy," the most important and ideological sectors of the opposition dream of a system which would allow the classic party game to be reproduced. And, without even being aware of it, half of the professional politicians dream of bureaucratic parties which gather the masses' votes without giving them real room for participation in internal party life.

Conclusions

The narrow synthesis of the authoritarian Brazilian regime's "decompression" strategy shows that it would be more appropriate to say that one is dealing with the transition of an "authoritarian situation," according to Linz's characterization of a regime of "democracy by elites" or restricted democracy. Even this qualification is open to doubt. On the one side, the state bureaucracy's process of expansion (inherent to the specificity of oligopolistic-capitalist expansion in dependent societies), and the necessary limitations on the parliament's functions which result from it, continue. If the party system which is in the process of gestation limits itself to acting in the traditional legislative sphere, the authoritarian elements (with all the corporate connections and the fusion between the state's nuclei of economic decision-making and local and multinational business groups) will constitute very solid mortar which will impede the reanimation of civil society at the expense of what is fundamental for class domination. In this case, one would have the simulation of a restricted democracy (with the system of parties born in congress and perhaps indirect elections added to a system of district voting) operating to control areas of decision-making which are not fundamental. It is true that, even in this case, human rights could be more strongly safeguarded and civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assured.

Nevertheless, how can the social pressures of the wage earners be regulated, especially since those pressures will tend to grow as a consequence both of economic difficulties and of greater freedom of expression and organization?

As a result of the above argument, I do not think that the official strategists' political engineering will, in fact, be able to contain, through "deliberation," the process of social struggle. I do not think that the capacity exists to define the limits of the "opening." In spite of the opposition's (both institutional and extra-party) weaknesses, some of which have been indicated in this paper, it is probable that after the rupture of "pure" authoritarianism--a process which has already occurred--it will be difficult to contain the transforming forces within the narrow limits of an ultra-restricted system of participation.

The Gordian knot is in the party system and in the communication between civil society and the state. The authoritarian Brazilian regime, due to a characteristic inherent in the military-bureaucratic form of authoritarianism, was not a mobilizer and did not rest on the articulation of a party to provide the regime with

support. Once the system was opened to even partial criticism and mobilization, the gap between the state and the nation was not bridged. The regime sought to coopt the "political class" and popularize the president in order to reestablish the bridges. I think that both processes are fragile ways of institutionalizing the political life of an extremely dynamic society.

Under these conditions, it is probable that the authoritarian situation's crisis will unfold over time. A revival of military power may not be necessary, but, on the other hand, D-day for the glorious democratic revolution may not arrive either. Instead, there may be a long war of positions, with workers, middle-class wage earners, and the non-reactionary sectors of the dominant classes molding a more open system in the future.

Meanwhile, I think that this process will depend on the more active presence of popular and labor leaders based in more consistent union, popular, and party organizations. It will also depend on the modernization of these sectors and the radically democratic sector of the opposition's political vision in order for it to be understood that the question of democracy is not exhausted by the establishment of a party system. If the strengthening of the "center-right," instead of the right which has dominated until now, within the conservative wing is added to the above, it will be possible to advance in the direction of democratization of the state itself.

All of this is conditioned on the unfolding of social struggles. It also depends on determining whether, to be effective, an appropriate democratic form for the state will require a social transformation of the state's base. At this time, this change is not very likely, but it continues to be part of the spectrum of many peoples' considerations and desires.

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[1]Carl J. Friederich and Z. K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Totalitarianism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

[2]Juan Linz, "The Case of Spain," in R. Dahl (ed.), Regimes and Oppositions (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

[3]The discussion of corporatism in Latin American politics has become momentous. See especially Philippe C. Schmitter's article, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" in the special issue of Review of Politics, 36:1 (January 1974), as well as in the anthology edited by Fredrick B. Pike and Thomas Stritch, The New Corporatism: Social-Political Structures in the Iberian World (University of Notre Dame Press, 1974). For the study of a significant case, see Alfred Stepan, The State and Society, Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton University Press, 1978).

[4]The most significant contribution to the characterization of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state has been made by Guillermo O'Donnell. O'Donnell published a chapter on "Corporatism and the Question of the State" in James M. Malloy (ed.), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977). Also see especially "Reflexiones sobre las tendencias generales de cambio en el Estado burocrático-autoritário," presented at the Conference on History and the Social Sciences, University of Campinas, São Paulo, June 1975 (Buenos Aires: CEDES, 1975) and "Notas para el estudio de procesos de democratización a partir del Estado Burocrático Autoritário" (mimeo, 1979). Stepan, op. cit., develops another analytical model--the organic-statist--in order to analyze the functioning of certain variations of authoritarian regimes where the idea that the state represents "everything" and has a function of comprehensively intervening in order to integrate the parts (which, in the meanwhile, are recognized as such) becomes salient. Under an organic-statist regime, interests are represented corporatively, but the organic-statist concept is more limited historically: while corporatist forms of representation (in contrast to pluralist or aggregate ones) can exist under fascist, organic-statist, and even more democratic regimes, the organic-statist idea functions as a kind of "abstract model of governance," which is coherent and integrated.

[5]Schmitter, op. cit., explores the various definitions of corporatism. Malloy's article on "Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America," in his collection cited above, characterizes corporatism in the following manner:

> "strong and relatively autonomous governmental structures that seek to impose on the society a system of interest representation based on enforced limited pluralism. These regimes try to eliminate spontaneous interest articulation and establish a limited number of authoritatively recognized groups that interact with the governmental apparatus in defined and regularized ways.

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Moreover, the recognized groups in this type of regime are organized in vertical functional categories rather than horizontal class categories and are obliged to interact with the state through the designated leaders of authoritatively sanctioned interest associations." (p. 4)

[6]See Philippe Schmitter, Interest Conflict and Political Change in Brazil (Stanford University Press, 1971).

[7]See O'Donnell, op. cit., in Malloy (ed.), op. cit.

[8]See Abraham F. Lowenthal (ed.), The Peruvian Experiment: Continuity and Change under Military Rule (Princeton University Press, 1975), chapter 1: "Peru's Ambiguous Revolution."

[9]See F. Fernándes, Apontamentos sobre a teoría do autoritarismo (São Paulo: Editora HUCITEC, 1979).

[10]See J. Serra's chapter in the forthcoming book on authoritarianism in Latin America edited by David Collier for the Social Science Research Council.

[11]A. Hirschman, in ibid.

[12]F. H. Cardoso, in ibid.

[13]In the dependent-partner model, the relatively weak expansion of the sector which produces capital goods requires increasing imports of equipment. In the Brazilian case, the external dependence is even greater because of the scarcity of petroleum and the adoption of a development model which leads to high levels of energy consumption. As long as the international market is expanding, exports should cover the costs of imports. But the commercial balance is disequilibrized when the global market contracts and the prices of exportable products relative to petroleum and equipment are depressed. And the level of imports cannot be reduced without limiting the growth of production (90% of imports are machines and petroleum). If one adds to this the financial costs of foreign "technical assistance" contracts, interest and royalty payments, and so forth, it is clear why the external debt reached a level of $45 billion.

[14]The choice of Figuereido followed the typical unfolding of bureaucratic-palace games. This choice kept control of the state in the hands of a limited group of people and had military support. In contrast to the process of choosing Medici, the "large voters" this time were not the generals but the "palace group." Given the civil society's pressure, the military attrition along with the conservative decompression course allowed the selection of the president to be made in an even more restricted circle, with the agreement of President Geisel.

[15]It should be mentioned that a certain degree of hybridism existed in some other countries, as in Argentina itself. But the "conservative-liberal" group's capacity for exerting pressure seems to have been notably greater in the Brazilian case.

[16]Complementary measures could be adopted in order to guarantee the new political order. Beyond the fragmentation of the institutional opposition, the government could, for example, attempt to establish the district vote and manipulate the composition of the electoral districts.

[17]According to present law (which eventually will be softened), the creation of new parties depends on the support of 10% of the deputies and senators. The senate is now composed of 66 members, of which 22 are "bionic." It is extremely difficult to obtain the adhesion of 7 senators and 42 deputies in order to form a party. In this way, the possible number of parties is limited.