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# The Many Coups in Brazil

The Current Condition of State Violence

Acacio Augusto

February 8, 2017

The main agent of violence in modern societies is the State. Through violence, it defines and maintains itself. Contrary to popular belief Brazil is an extremely violent country, despite the popular stereotype of football and carnival. This violence is directly connected to the high level of police lethality. In 2015 alone, 58,383 people were murdered, 160 killed each day, according to official government data compiled by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security in 2016. 3,345 of these deaths are attributed directly to the police, but a number of factors that link other deaths indirectly to police action must be considered. In general, the vast majority of the population applaud the police action.

Besides the violent and predatory colonial history of Brazil and the fact that it was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, recent factors contribute to this extreme lethality. In 1964 the country suffered a civil-military coup that inaugurated the series of coups in South America with US intervention as a way to secure the zone of influence in the context of the Cold War. However, when the civil-military regime ended in 1985, the so-called “slow, gradual and safe transition” did not extirpate from public life the

various social sectors that sustained and benefited from the period of exception: from large media communication groups to sectors of regional rural oligarchies. The so-called political opening was the result of a pact among the elites. It met the demands of so-called civil society, which corresponded to the new planetary guidelines synthesized by the UN in the context of the collapse of the Soviet world.

In the XXth century, Brazil had a cycle of so-called progressive governments, inaugurated by two mandates of a sociologist of Marxist tendencies, linked to the “Social Democrat” party, of neo-liberal policies; followed by a former union leader and a former guerrilla woman connected to the fight against the civil-military dictatorship, both belonging to the PT (Worker’s Party), which boasts of being the largest party of the masses in the Americas. This sequence of governments in a formal democracy without military interference in political life ushered in a cycle of prosperity, arousing strong hopes both internally and externally: a country that would finally “work.” The recent impeachment process, completed in the second half of 2016, which overthrew the second term of the president by direct vote seems to have halted this cycle. This causes many in Brazil, especially the sectors close to the former government to proclaim the process a coup!

In fact, the process that toppled the president was fraught with legal maneuvering, games with public opinion, and petty interests of representatives of the legislature. Added to this was an intensification of conservative and even fascist positions in society, both in the middle and lower classes. In the last decade, and along with historical State racism in Brazil, the hatred of the different has gained ground in the country, and is amplified in digital social networks and has found political representatives that use this discourse. However, it would be wrong, or even simplistic, to attribute the impeachment of the president as the culmination of an authoritarian escalation in the country. As if, after the so-called coup, democracy would have been undermined. From an anarchist per-

called left government and we still during the new governmental conformation of the neo-liberal rationality that announces a conservative adjustment in all planet. Our work is of the craftsman in the construction of a different life, in the transformation of the self, in the fight against what we are and in war to the State and Society.

spective, what is happening today in Brazil is a logical consequence of a representative state democratic regime that is only maintained by an extreme judicialization of life and politics and a government practice that is increasingly reduced to hyperbolic security production, in spite of any other political and social value, even democracy. This did not begin with the deposition of the president. Even if the consummation of this fact has generated, in the language of the constitutionalists, a legal insecurity and has legitimized conservative sectors that saw in PT government a communist threat, no matter how absurd it is.

The 13-year PT government brags about having achieved a number of goals set by international institutions such as the UN. The main one would be the eradication of misery by means of income assistance to the poorest. In addition, it advertises a number of social policies related to the expansion of retail credit, popular housing programs, and student credit programs. In short, the democratic government of the left in Brazil promoted a politics that included consumption and produced a mass of new debt. This is something that the banks, state and private sector, appreciate. Not only that. This government has been at the forefront of developmental mega-projects, such as the construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant, with damage to indigenous and riparian peoples. And like every social democracy in the post-Berlin Wall world, it invested heavily in security. It created a new repressive police in 2004, the National Security Force. It carried out a program of mass incarceration that began in the previous government and poured rivers of money into the pacification policy of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, the UPP (Pacifying Police Units), the cross-border face of MINUSTAH, a UN military intervention in Haiti led by the Brazilian army. One of the last acts of the president was the creation of an Anti-Terrorism Law that opens brutal legal precedents for the criminalization of social movements.

The point of no return for politics and social contestation in Brazil were the days of June 2013, which witnessed unprecedented and spectacular demonstrations across the country. Initiated in São Paulo, amid the protests against the increase in the collective transportation fare, these demonstrations put in question the narrative of great Brazil and the country that finally succeeded. This would be confirmed by the reception of planetary mega-events such as the UN's RIO+20, the FIFA World Cup, and the IOC Olympics, scheduled, respectively, for the years 2012, 2014 and 2016. Many of those who went to the streets warned that in this large Brazil, poor, black and indigenous were still being murdered by the State; historical inequalities continued to be reinforced; the former persecutors of the sociological president, the syndicalist president and the guerrilla president, are now the allies of government. The emergence of the ungovernable on the streets in June 2013 exposed its intolerance to any government, the insufficiency of democracy, and opened a rift for manifestation of anti-political revolts that did not fit into the plans and papers of the current misery managers in the country.

The government, even if it was anointed as progressive, left and democratic, acted as any state would act: it severely repressed the protests. Promptly, the press and a number of political (left and right) analysts produced a flurry of "analyses," differentiating "peaceful" demonstrators from "vandals," the latter identified among anarchists, autonomists that were not connected to any party or social movements aligned with the government, and especially practitioners of black bloc tactics. With the vandals expelled from the streets by police bombs and clubs, the so-called peaceful demonstrators were gradually occupying these streets. But this time, dressed in the Brazilian flag and asking for greater morality of the rulers, greater punishment to offenders of high and low politics, and with demands that went from the impeachment of the then president to the requests for new intervention of the military. Finally, the centrality of the State and its violence was restored, af-

ter brutal repression to the ungovernable and a troubled electoral process in October of 2014.

From an anarchist perspective, there is nothing to be regretted about this process, except to continue to fight against State violence and the exploitations of capitalism. However, if today, January 2017, the country faces a president who was not directly elected by vote, the scary growth of hate speech against blacks, gays, women and all manner of manifestation of difference and political protest, and violent manifestations spread from police in street demonstrations to beheadings inside prisons, this is due to the fact that, at the moment when State violence was put on the streets, the Left who then occupied the government did everything to restore its centrality.

Call it a coup or impeachment, the current political situation of instability in Brazil is the sequence of historical blows perpetrated here by oligarchs, military and political leaders / managers who never hesitate to restore and reaffirm the centrality and violence of the State. Despite extremely worrying economic issues, Brazil continues, as before, with the world's most deadly police. And as any anarchist knows, the police are the permanent coup d'état.

There is no solution or salvation for the present situation, but the continuous fight or the small war, as recalled Proudhon. There is the rebel struggle against the misery of State's wars, waged beyond the borders and against those declared enemies within. Since June 2013, autonomous struggles have grown in Brazil, as well as interest in anarchy. Nonetheless, a conservative movement has also emerged and, unlike other moments in this country's history, has taken the streets and organized itself in the shape of a "social movement". These groups, from the elected-president's impeachment, managed to give vent to the conservatism of the Brazilian society. Anarchists continue their struggles while the institutional left fight for hegemony. We remain on the streets with black flags and the black blocs, at the universities with our researches and publications that defy the order. We refused the order during the so-