

UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE CAMPINAS
SISTEMA DE BIBLIOTECAS DA UNICAMP
REPOSITÓRIO DA PRODUÇÃO CIENTÍFICA E INTELLECTUAL DA UNICAMP

Versão do arquivo anexado / Version of attached file:

Versão do Editor / Published Version

Mais informações no site da editora / Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/1407>

DOI: 10.1086/708628

Direitos autorais / Publisher's copyright statement:

©2020 by University of Chicago Press. All rights reserved.

DIRETORIA DE TRATAMENTO DA INFORMAÇÃO

Cidade Universitária Zeferino Vaz Barão Geraldo

CEP 13083-970 – Campinas SP

Fone: (19) 3521-6493

<http://www.repositorio.unicamp.br>



CURRENTS: THE RISE OF BRAZILIAN FASCISM

“The revolution we are living”

Gabriel FELTRAN, *Federal University of São Carlos*

This article presents three ethnographic scenes extracted from Brazilian urban life, the earliest dating from 2013. It reflects on the rise of the extreme right in contemporary Brazil, a process that shares similarities with what takes place in many parts of the world. I argue that specific types of militarism, anti-intellectualism, and entrepreneurial monetarism became a part of the daily lives of different social classes as three discursive matrices of a mass movement. Major sectors of the religious world, of the police and military, as well as the professional world and the financial market, offered a political-electoral program for this movement, resulting in Jair Bolsonaro's victory. This movement of the masses aims to destroy the current political system, perceived as degenerate, and substitute for it a new order, which will produce a new man. The social conflict instilled by this program does not fundamentally organize itself as class struggle, although, paradoxically, it creates them under the guise of a “struggle.” Theoretically, I am interested in the role of daily life and daily conflicts in structuring regimes of power.

Keywords: Brazil, Bolsonaro, militarism, anti-intellectualism, monetarism, everyday life, urban conflict

Nothing is more characteristic of the totalitarian movements in general and of the quality of the fame of their leaders in particular than the startling swiftness with which they are forgotten and the startling ease with which they can be replaced.

—Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (1973)

Ethnographies are often deemed unfit to address subjects such as the state or political issues, where the scale of analysis demands that we apprehend a society at the national level. This sort of assessment is particularly harsh when the theme of the ethnography is a country of continental size, such as Brazil. The counterargument to this position can only be historical: not only did ethnography develop a tradition of studying politics but some of the most prominent political thinkers of the twentieth century, among them Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, relied extensively on reflections on their own daily experiences in order to theorize power. This essay, composed of three ethnographic vignettes, aims to identify the three basic discursive matrices (Sader 1988) of this mass movement that bolstered the recent electoral victories of the Far Right in Brazil: police militarism, Evangelical anti-intellectualism, entrepreneurial monetarism. Though these adjectives are especially relevant to the Brazilian case, we find traces of the nouns they qualify as central vectors across the

political debate in many regions of the contemporary world.

In this article I characterize this movement as it manifests in daily life. Evidently, in everyday life, this movement encounters many forms of resistance to its implementation. These forms of resistance are not necessarily related to other coherently formulated political projects but to beliefs and customs that are ingrained in people's lives, such as the split between religion and science, or beliefs about sexual freedom. There is no doubt that this movement faces challenges as it seeks to transform, in practice, these and other ideas—after all, religious freedom is a necessary component of democracy—for it to gain strength. In this sense, I present the vectors, the tendencies for transformation expressed in this movement that fights for hegemony rather than the results of a finalized political process. I thus describe a movement, with totalitarian contours, that is being instituted, and not an established totalitarian regime. This regime might one day exist, but for now it remains an ideal.





Democratic institutions in Brazil continued to function after Jair Bolsonaro was sworn in to office, though they became occupied by members of the armed forces, representatives of organized religions, and people in finance and business, none of whom are in the habit of adhering to the republican tradition. After all, the current minister of justice is determined to look for interpretative loopholes in democratic legislation to enact exceptions. We live under a democratic system; however, we are faced with a militarized offense “against drugs and crime” that further increases police lethality in favelas; the government conducts cuts in funding for public universities and other public institutions as part of its explicit project of general privatization; the government sells oil reserves in the pre-salt layers to foreign capital (reserves that, until recently, had been considered a “laughing stock” by the minister of economy, who had claimed that electric cars will curtail the global need for petrol). The democratic government also enacts the liquidation of public real estate as well as the deregulation of environmental laws that restrict agro-business. Christian groups often understand they can use their religious freedom to propose a Christian Constitution. LGBTI and Indigenous rights are attacked under a democratic government, as are those related to gender and racial relations. Even basic rights regress rapidly, such as programs for the prevention of infant mortality. The police are used to repress grassroots social movements, anti-immigration efforts are reinforced, and there is a proposal for the criminal or administrative judicialization of all those that defend what Bolsonaro’s devotees consider to be “the Left” or “the human rights of criminals.”

The opposition’s fragmented political frailty hardly stands a chance of inhibiting the advances of this movement, which operates outside of argumentative and institutional logic, outside of the traditional political game. The matrices of discourse that constructed a leftist and democratic alternative in the Brazilian public sphere—theology of liberation, the new workers’ unions, and militant Marxism—had already lost their capacity for grassroots mobilization in the 1990s. Over the last two decades, for each one of these original matrices, a reactionary one was installed. *Militarism* counteracted democratic freedom, particularly what related to customs, gender, and sexuality, and to criticisms of the fallacy of “racial democracy” from black rights movements; *entrepreneurship* overpowered the assurance of formal employment, and demonized unions and workers’ movements; *anti-intellectualism* produced a radical reaction

to leftist Marxist intellectuals, and extended the scope of its criticism toward the secular state and scientific discourse, reaching the point of producing very popular pseudointellectuals, such as Olavo de Carvalho—a friend of Steve Bannon—and even believers in flat-Earth theory.

In contemporary Brazil (but not only in Brazil), in families, or social and professional circles, groups previously considered indifferent toward politics are precisely those that lead the political scene today. The idea that distinct socioeconomic groups are conjuncturally associated not by their class interests but by their moral premises, may be a promising hypothesis for understanding contemporary politics in Brazil. The larger problem is that these moral premises are arranged in normative frameworks that seek to dislodge a modern framework for thinking of politics. This dislodgement can change the political meanings of the social transformation that is in progress, bring it closer to a revolution. It is not, it seems, the content of the established order that is in doubt but rather the order itself, the parameters of a political order. Each of the main axes of this new order are addressed below.

Police militarism

The cell phone camera is shaky; the scene is filmed from a window.¹ We are in the district of Sapopemba, in the eastern region of the city of São Paulo, where I have conducted fieldwork for the last fifteen years. Initially, the images in the video show only a paved street, enclosed by self-constructed houses typical of a low-income neighborhood in São Paulo. It is 11 p.m. on the night of May 22, 2016. The street is narrow and almost empty; there are walls painted with graffiti and an open bar, which is practically empty.

We then hear the following phrases shouted out (repeatedly): “I love the police! I love the police! I love the police! I love the police! The police is the shit!”² Though the shouting is very loud, we can still hear the officer: “Say it louder!” The shouting continues until we see who is shouting and those accompanying him. A black boy with short hair, light-colored shorts, a dark hoodie,

1. The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ktv_LvTLUJ4.

2. The original phrasing exalts a specific program of the military police in São Paulo, called Força Tática, which conducts a highly militarized form of street patrol in the state.



and sneakers is walking through the streets, led by a police officer who demands that he shout the phrases we hear. The police officer is part of the Força Tática, an elite branch of the military police in São Paulo, a fortified police force trained to execute tactical actions as part of ostensible policing and for the maintenance of public order.³

The scene continues. The police officer's left arm holds the boy's neck while they walk, showing him off to the community. Beside them, slowly escorting the public display, we see a military police car, a GM Blazer. The officer holds a baton in his right hand. The boy does not stop shouting: "I love the police! I love the police!" The officer then tells him other phrases to shout out: "I am worthless! I am a bum! The police is the shit! I love the police! I am worthless! I am a bum!" The police officer then strikes the boy's face with the baton.

At this moment, the person filming celebrates: "Take that, in the face!" We can hear laughter. The shouting continues. The boy passes by the window from which the scene was being filmed, and we are able to see two other military police officers walking behind the car. At this point, they approach the bar, where a few men still lingered. As they walk by, we hear clapping. One of the men in the bar makes a point of telling the police officers: "That's right! Congratulations!"

This amateur video was shared on social media, and reached an institution that those who filmed it probably never anticipated: the Center for Human Rights in Sapopemba (Centro de Direitos Humanos de Sapopemba; CDHS), an organization created by local militants, and led by Valdênia Paulino (cf. Feltran 2011). CDHS made a formal complaint to the Review Board of the Military Police of the State of São Paulo. Paulino sent the video to me. The video was later shared in various channels on YouTube and other internet sites, in most cases for sadistic entertainment, in others cases with the purpose of providing a moral normative lesson by the police, and in very few cases, with the purpose of condemning police violence.

My goal here is not to discuss torture and public humiliation as strategies used by the police and the military. For those who conduct field research on urban conflict

in São Paulo, particularly in its favelas, this type of action by the police is unsurprising. Humiliation and torture are frequently used, be it for extortion, to bring about forced accusations, or to destroy the reputation of the person being tortured within the universe of crime or before the community of which he or she is a part (Feltran 2011). I am also not interested in discussing the official responses to this case (the Military Police of the State of São Paulo published a condemnation of the police officers' actions and an assurance that careful investigation of the case would be conducted), nor the concrete institutional consequences that followed (I do not know of any measures of reparation or punishment as a consequence of this case).

I am mainly interested in highlighting the laughter and celebrations that this form of violent aggression stirred in local residents. I would like to note the perverse pleasure that was evident in filming the scene, the spontaneous praise of an act of public torture, and the congratulations offered to the police officers for their actions. Exactly fifteen years ago, when I arrived in Sapopemba to begin my fieldwork to study social rights movements in São Paulo favelas, such laughter and applause would have been less likely, though lynching and vigilante justice were common in the region during previous decades (Feltran 2010b).

My argument was that these social movements continued to operate as they did before, but there was no longer a field of social resonance for their discourse. The metaphor I used was that of an outdoor cinema projection: the discourse of democratizing movements continued to resound, the projector continued working, but the images no longer met with a screen on which they could appear to everyone. The potential images of rights for favela dwellers vanished into open space. The expansion of the world of crime in these same São Paulo neighborhoods, particularly of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC; literally First Command of the Capital), a criminal group that gained hegemony in peripheral neighborhoods, was a symptom of this crisis.

There were other actors, besides these criminal groups, installed in peripheral neighborhoods during that time, constituting important normative regimes for its residents (Feltran 2010a). Police militarism is one of these normative regimes. Over the last fifteen years, militarism had ample time to construct its own screens on which to project its film. Its images show an orderly country, not because it respects social rights or upholds freedom for all but because of its military hierarchy. The

3. *Força de patrulha reforçada, treinada para ações táticas de polícia ostensiva e de preservação da ordem pública*; taken from the São Paulo Military Police's official site: <https://www.policiamilitar.sp.gov.br/institucional/forcas-taticas>.



2018 elections were the pinnacle of this development, and represent a new box-office success for the old narrative of militarism. Bolsonaro had managed to secure seven consecutive terms in congress with an electoral base composed of family members and military circles; he was now President of the Republic, dragging along many conservative governors in his wake, in particular in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as well as taking over a good portion of legislative branches at the municipal, state, and federal level. "That's right! Congratulations!"

Evangelical anti-intellectualism

Jadnei is a white, thirty-two-year-old worker who conducts a series of odd jobs to supplement his income, from gardening to selling electronic products smuggled from Paraguay. He likes to go fishing on the weekends. He claims that this is his passion. He changes his profile picture on social media every week, always showing off a fish he caught and then released back into the lake. He fishes for sport. He has been married for over eight years, and wears a thick gold ring on his left hand. He is the man of the house in a nuclear family, with a monthly median income of around four minimum wages, although he hails from a lower social class.

I have known Jadnei and his family for four years. I slowly realized that, having completed middle school and having developed abilities with electronics and machines, Jadnei can offer his daughter a much better life than he had as a kid. He studied up to middle school, and says he would like his daughter to get a college education. Since he knows I am a professor, Jadnei talked to me a couple of times about university, trying to understand how it works. This is a social universe that is very distant for him, but often discussed in his social circles. There are many videos circulating on his WhatsApp groups that portray the university as a pit for perverts, drug users, and communists. He knows I am not religious, and so he asked me if the same is true for everyone at the university. He is always very polite when he inquires about the environment he hopes his daughter might one day join, as it produces socioeconomic ascension; however, he also worries that she might remain in this environment, since it might produce moral degeneration.

I ran into him one afternoon in the neighborhood where I live. Jadnei pulled over his motorcycle and we spoke for a bit. He told me that he had been frightened the previous week. His only daughter, who is six years

old, had suffered what he called a "blackout." The girl had fainted in school, and the family was called to pick her up. She had eaten well. After fainting, Clara was dazed for a few hours, not knowing where she was, and without recognizing all of the people around her. Jadnei's daughter has private health insurance due to her father's job. The parents took her to a hospital in the city where we live, in the rural outskirts of São Paulo. Clara went through a series of exams: encephalogram, MRI, X-ray, Jadnei tells me, unsure of the names of each of the exams.

No diagnosis was provided, but the doctors insisted that further examination would be needed. Appointments with specialists were scheduled over the next two weeks. I offered to speak to my sister, since she is a pediatrician and could help with the diagnosis. Jadnei answered that this wasn't needed, shaking his head and refusing the offer with some vehemence, tempered only by his continued kindness. The problem had been solved. He had followed the advice he had heard from colleagues in church, and took the child to a *benzedeira*.⁴ The *benzedeira* had claimed that the problem stemmed from "roundworms." The "roundworm" had been in the child's stomach and traveled up to her head, causing the problem. However, through a curing ritual she had performed, it was now solved. In fact, the girl did not suffer from any other health issues over the following days.

I was not surprised by the lack of information regarding the possible causes for the girl's health issues. Lack of qualified medical assistance in Brazil is a reality, though the country has one of the best public health systems in Latin America (yet another target of Bolsonaro's attacks). I was also not surprised to hear that Jadnei had sought out other sources of explanation for what took place. Popular beliefs are diverse and there are many paradigms for thinking of health, biology, and life. I was surprised, however, by the tone Jadnei used to attack the doctors, particularly modern medicine. He repeated emphatically, somewhat agitated: "Never again in my life will I take my daughter to a hospital! Of all the places I went seeking for help, the place that least helped out was the doctor's. These people have no understanding of reality. . . . My daughter is doing well, but not thanks to them!"

4. Usually women responsible for giving out blessings and protection through religious practices.



The phrases repeated by Jadnei were not his own. I heard, time and again, in São Paulo's favelas, particularly in Evangelical Churches, accounts of how people, disheartened by doctors' diagnoses of cancer or other incurable diseases, or even those who were already dead, had found in their faith the "miracle of cure," and are today in perfect health (Côrtes 2018). While Jadnei spoke, I noticed that the antiscientism he professed, which had been previously restricted to the outskirts of the unschooled portion of the population, had now intruded into middle-class sectors. In the months that followed, I found these same ideas as well as other forms of anti-intellectualism, during a variety of daily situations with old friends from school and in my own family, which is upper middle class. One of them, a businessman who graduated from one of the best schools in São Paulo and who was forty-three years old, spent days trying to convince me that Nazism was a phenomenon of the Left. He sent me a series of videos and social media accounts that confirmed the fact, for Hitler had used the word *socialism* in the party's name.

Entrepreneurial monetarism

October 29, 2018. Paris, France. A young man, thirty-one years old, black and tall, smiling, greets me in Brazilian Portuguese, during cocktail hour with friends on a veranda of the 18ème. The weather was pleasant. Junior is very nice and he likes to talk. We spoke nonstop for over an hour, in a group with two other people, all basically listening to his stories. The young man was traveling on vacation, visiting tourist points in Europe. This was the third time he had come during the last few years. Junior told us that on his coffee table in his living room in Brazil, in front of his television (with open hands he indicates that this is a huge flat-screen TV), there are replicas of the Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, and the Tower of Pisa, among other souvenirs. He tells us that he traveled on cruises as rewards for his activity at the company where he works. He tells us that when his friends go to his house, they are always impressed. Two of our friends left the table, at this moment, and I continued speaking to the young man.

Until middle school, Junior studied in Rondônia, in the northern region of Brazil. He comes from a lower-middle-class family. He worked until 2014 doing computer maintenance for the Federal Police, a stable job, but with a "low" salary of R\$2,500/month (2.5 monthly minimum wages). At that time, unsatisfied with his sal-

ary, Junior told me he asked God not for a job but an opportunity. An "opportunity is the chance to show your value, and a job is a place where one settles." To ask for a job does not solve anything; God wants you to succeed as a result of your own efforts. His language was clearly marked by the theology of prosperity popular in Brazilian neo-Pentecostal churches, which has recruited more than 30 percent of the Brazilian population. Having made the right choice before God, the opportunity came: Junior began working autonomously as an "independent consultant" for Hinode, a Brazilian cosmetics company.

In between interruptions to speak to Siri on his new Apple watch, and in the midst of various references to the value of the many items in his outfit, Junior told me that he is currently a "Diamond Consultant," and that he earns between R\$20,000 and R\$30,000 per month (20 to 30 monthly minimum wages).⁵ He told me that he then invests his money in the financial market, and not in real estate, as was common in the old days. He also told me that in his current job he can travel, that he sets his own schedule, and that today he has a lot of free time, for he has more than 300 consultants in his network. He is fulfilled. I ask him about the company, and he tells me that it is similar to companies that work with a pyramid structure, such as Amway and others, but that the setup is superior to a pyramid structure. He then immediately corrects himself. It is not a pyramid structure after all; he shows me a video on his iPhone that I do not really find convincing. Junior does not have an employment contract, or any worker's rights associated with his position. He is an autonomous employee, without a contract. However, he has income, one that is much higher than average for Brazilian workers, vastly higher than average for other black employees living in his state. Recently, Junior was able to brag to the girl who had rejected him as a teenager: "Oh, when I had no money you didn't like me, right? Now I am the one who doesn't like you."

Junior had all the characteristics of an entrepreneur, the same that motivate other entrepreneurs, and the excitement of a young black man who had attained

5. Junior was possibly exaggerating the value of his monthly salary during the social event. The company's official site claims that the average monthly salary is of R\$8.5 thousand/month in the "Diamond" stage of a consultant's career, and can reach a maximum of R\$12.5 thousand/month.



the type of social economic mobility that was unthinkable to the majority of his colleagues. What most surprised me during our conversation, however, was that Bolsonaro had won the presidential election exactly the *night before* our conversation. Junior, like any good salesperson, did not speak a word about politics with me, though he seemed to be overjoyed with the prospects for the country's future. His entrepreneurial and financial excitement reminds me of how a civil engineer from São Paulo's elite supported Bolsonaro's proposal for Welfare Reform. Though she had been unemployed for years, she told me that since she can "see from the employer's perspective," she considers that the reform is great. She claims that employers in Brazil pay their employees too much. When a worker who has been unemployed for years chooses to defend the interests of the capitalist class, imagining that she is a member of their circles, we can be sure that we living under the hegemony of the political project that the latter professes.

Conclusions

My campaign was based on a Biblical verse: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." I always dreamed about freeing Brazil from the harmful ideology of the Left. One of my greatest inspirations is standing right beside me, to my right, professor Olavo de Carvalho. He is admired by the youth of Brazil and we owe the *revolutions we are living* today to him. Despite Olavo de Carvalho, Brazil is not an open terrain where we can plan to build things for our people. We must deconstruct many things. Undo many things. So that then we can begin to do things. That I may serve to at least be a point of inflection, makes me already very happy. Our Brazil was going toward socialism, toward communism. It was God's desire, and I understand it to be so because two miracles happened: one is my life, and the other the election. . . . Humbly; we know that when democracy is not working out too great, the Armed Forces has our backs (*laugh-ter*). We always follow the same paths. (Jair Bolsonaro's speech at the Brazilian Embassy in the United States, March 17, 2019; my emphasis)

Militarism, anti-intellectualism, and entrepreneurship are woven together in a single speech, spoken in only two minutes. Traditionally heard in the outskirts of the most impoverished portions of the population,

as well as in its most elite circles, these discursive matrices expanded to the center of the political scene over the last few decades, and, most significantly, after the institutional crises of 2013.

The political conflict that was introduced during the growth of this movement seems best expressed by what E. P. Thompson (1978) called the "class struggle without class," when speaking of English society during the eighteenth century, which is similar to the way Hannah Arendt (1973) described pretotalitarian Germany during the 1920s as a "society without class." The images both authors trace are distinct, but equally important theoretically. Thompson uses a very specific metaphor:

When analyzing gentry-plebs relations one finds not so much an uncompromising ding-dong battle between irreconcilable antagonists as a societal "field of force." I am thinking of a school experiment (which no doubt I have got wrong) in which an electrical current magnetized a plate covered with iron filings. The filings, which were evenly distributed, arranged themselves at one pole or the other, while in between those filings which remained in place aligned themselves sketchily as if directed towards opposing attractive poles. This is very much how I see eighteenth-century society, with, for many purposes, the crowd at one pole, the aristocracy and gentry at the other, and until late in the century, the professional and merchant groups bound down by lines of magnetic dependency to the rulers, or on occasion hiding their faces in common action with the crowd. (Thompson 1978: 151)

There are at least two elements one must grasp from this metaphor to understand contemporary politics. One is that a horizontal division based on social stratification is not enough to explain the dynamism of the current political conflict. This movement in Brazil produced evident political-moral affinities between people from the poorest sectors and factions of the elite, not to mention among professional, military, religious, middle-class, financial, influencer, and entrepreneur groups in general. Second, it is important to grasp that this affinity between gentry and plebe, such as in the case Thompson studied, does not suppress class struggle but emerges outside of institutional channels, outside of the political system in force.

It is clear that unequal categorical pairs (Tilly 1998) such as rich and poor, white and black, men and women, heterosexuals and LGBTIs, continue to operate, but a vertical line of political conflict has started to cut across and tension sectors of the poor, middle class, elite, black



people, white people, women, men, the religious, and so on. Such tension divides these groups, which are meaningful for modern politics, but not at all meaningful for the new movements of the Far Right. There are no black or white people, they claim: only Brazilians. It is as if, during a thunderstorm, lightning cut through the structure of horizontal layers of the soil. The disrupted layers will take time to resettle. Brazil is living through this thunderstorm in the public sphere, but also in daily life. Conflict no longer manifests itself as a clash between projects with distinct content, within a common frame of reference. Rather, recent conflict presents itself within the scope of that which is unthinkable, assumptions that are implausible within these frames (Feltran 2007, 2017). Therefore, one frequently perceives that political adversaries are saying “absurd” things from both sides of the conflict.

Family, ethnic, professional, and friendship groups that were once stable are divided by this political conflict. In fact, this is what characterizes this movement—which institutes conflict—as explicitly totalitarian: it does not allow for a distinction between state, social, and intimate spheres when addressing issues of the community. According to this movement, issues are always essential, moral, and value-based; at the limit they are personal. Politics then abandons debates and takes on the contours of a dogma. “Of course criminals are criminals,” it is self-evident. The movement must, therefore, invade and take over the totality of spaces lost to obscurity, polishing them off and enlightening them: this explains the techniques for massive propaganda and political proselytism, and the insane amount of ready-made and cliché messages, as well as news articles reactive to known facts, exchanged on social media used universally.

Thus, a mass movement is acting on one side (Arendt 1973), offering totalitarian content to social actors previously removed from the political sphere. With the “knowledge” provided by this content, subjects that had previously been uninterested in politics enter public debate.⁶ Rather than republican plurality, therefore, these

movements utilize an “entirely new method of political propaganda” that produces the destruction of public spaces. There is no room for rational counterarguments, for what is stated is far too obvious to require any form of discussion. There is no empathy for diversity: the world has one single direction, a clear direction, and a morality that has already been explained in the Bible.

In Brazil, be it in the lower, middle, or upper classes, this movement has converged with the political-institutional program that it represents. This is the reason why, with or without Bolsonaro, this movement can sustain its discursive matrices in the social realm, and in religious and state institutions. The organic intellectuals of this movement have a clear power and communicative strategy, and they know how to make instrumental use of the existing political party system. Most importantly, however, this movement of the masses has a solid material basis to keep growing, due to the looting of public funds, which have now been reverted to its project, and to billion-dollar revenues from tithes to churches, extortions

based on common interest, into political parties or municipal governments or professional organizations or trade unions. Potentially, they exist in every country and form the majority of those large numbers of neutral, politically indifferent people who never join a party and hardly ever go to the polls. It was characteristic of the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany and of the Communist movements in Europe after 1930 that they recruited their members from this mass of apparently indifferent people whom all other parties had given up as too apathetic or too stupid for their attention. The result was that the majority of their membership consisted of people who never before had appeared on the political scene. This permitted the introduction of entirely new methods into political propaganda, and indifference to the arguments of political opponents; these movements not only placed themselves outside and against the party system as a whole, they found a membership that had never been reached, never been “spoiled” by the party system. Therefore they did not need to refute opposing arguments and consistently preferred methods which ended in death rather than persuasion, which spelled terror rather than conviction. They presented disagreements as invariably originating in deep natural, social, or psychological sources beyond the control of the individual and therefore beyond the power of reason. This would have been a shortcoming only if they had sincerely entered into competition with other parties; it was not if they were sure of dealing with people who had reason to be equally hostile to all parties.” (Arendt 1973: 311–12)

6. “Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who for one reason or another have acquired the appetite for political organization. Masses are not held together by a consciousness of common interest and they lack that specific class articulateness which is expressed in determined, limited, and obtainable goals. The term masses applies only where we deal with people who either because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization



by the militia and private-security companies, not to mention illegal markets that some of its members plunder. Furthermore, they occupy a series of very strategic positions in Brazilian institutions, particularly parts of the judiciary, the military police, and armed forces. Beyond brotherhoods, institutional representatives of this movement have enough political strength to ensure that their key strategies are implemented, all at once, at the level of the federal government.

Key actors from the elite and professional sectors, but also more or less impoverished groups, make up this movement. Together, the above-mentioned key figures represent the basis not only of a political project, but also of a lifestyle that goes much beyond Bolsonaro's ideology. They will wager, with whatever candidate is available, on moral frameworks from the Old Testament, on the power of money, and if needed, on the militarized violence of a "just war," to implement their revolutionary political program. They believe in community, not in society; in righteousness of character, not diversity. They believe in correcting humanity. In all cases, these groups know that today they can count on enough votes to win the main elections in the country. If this continues over the next few years, there will be no need to shut down the current political government for its totalitarian project to develop.

Police officers, informal workers, entrepreneurs, lower middle classes, religious people, and even characters from the national world of crime have adhered to the Evangelical wave that expanded over the last three decades. The movement we see growing politically, with its revolutionary political program, seems to have a form of popular legitimization par excellence in the Evangelical world, particularly in "small" or neighborhood churches (Almeida 2019; Marques 2019). These ethnographies demonstrate that even though Evangelicals make up a heterogeneous group, 70 percent of them voted for Bolsonaro, promising an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Market liberals in Brazil do not seem to fear the possible fusion of Evangelical fundamentalism with the military police. Fundamental political regimes coexist well with contemporary neoliberalism, which is above all monetarist, just as Western democracies do. The first need the movement of the masses, however, more than the latter.

Acknowledgements

I thank FAPESP (Process 13/07616-7), and CNPq (Process 305531/2016-6) for their funding of the research from which this text is based.

References

- Almeida, Ronaldo de. 2019. "Bolsonaro presidente: Conservadorismo, evangélicos e a crise brasileira." *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 38 (1): 185–213.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The origins of totalitarianism*. San Diego: Harvest Books.
- Côrtes, Mariana. 2018. "O dispositivo pentecostal e a agência dos governados." *Em Debate* 10 (1): 31–38.
- Feltran, Gabriel S. 2007. "Vinte anos depois: a construção democrática brasileira vista da periferia de São Paulo." *Lua Nova* 72: 83–114. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-64452007000300004>.
- . 2010a. "Crime e castigo na cidade: Os repertórios da justiça e a questão do homicídio nas periferias de São Paulo." *Caderno CRH* 23 (58): 59–73.
- . 2010b. "The management of violence on the periphery of São Paulo: A normative apparatus repertoire in the PCC era." *Vibrant* 7 (2): 109–34.
- . 2011. *Fronteiras de tensão: política e violência nas periferias de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Editora da Unesp/CEM.
- . 2017. "A categoria como intervalo: a diferença entre essência e desconstrução." *Cadernos Pagu* 50. <https://doi.org/10.1590/18094449201700510005>.
- Marques, Vagner. 2019. "As igrejas menores nas quebradas de fé: a construção da hegemonia do pentecostalismo nas periferias de São Paulo (1990–2010)." PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo.
- Sader, Eder. 1988. *Quando novos personagens entraram em cena: Experiências, falas e lutas dos trabalhadores da Grande São Paulo, 1970–80*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Thompson, E. P. 1978. "Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?" *Social History* 3 (2): 133–65.
- Tilly, Charles. 1998. *Durable inequalities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.





Gabriel FELTRAN is a professor in the Department of Sociology at the Federal University of São Carlos in Brazil, researcher at the Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP), and author of *The entangled city: Crime as urban fabric* (Manchester University Press, 2020). His current research looks at criminal and political groups inscribed in illegal markets in Brazil.

*Gabriel Feltran
Department of Sociology
Federal University of São Carlos
Rodovia Washington Luiz, km235, CP676, 13565-105
São Carlos, SP
Brazil
gabriel feltran@pq.cnpq.br*